

The South Seas on Display in Japan: Yosano Tekkan's *Nan'yōkan* and South Seas Discourse of the Early Twentieth Century

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In the spring and summer of 1914, visitors to the Tokyo International Exhibition patiently waited in long lines in eager anticipation to ride Japan's first escalator, hop on an elaborate ropeway system that travelled high across the lake to the opposite side of the fairgrounds, or catch a glimpse of "exotic" foreigners in their "native" habitats at venues spread throughout Ueno Park.¹ The extravaganza celebrating the ascension of the Emperor Taishō not only marked the beginning of a new era, i.e., the Taishō era (1912-1926), but also served as a platform that confirmed Japan's position as an imperialist modern nation on par with the West and raised awareness of a growing colonial presence in the periphery which included regions encompassing the greater Pacific and Southeast Asia known as *Nan'yō* or the South Seas. Prior to the grand opening of the fairgrounds, popular periodicals such as *Tōkyō paku* (Tokyo Puck), *Fūzoku gahō* (Illustrated Monthly Periodical), *Shōjo sekai* (Girls' World), and *Shōnen sekai* (Boy's World), created a buzz of interest for the event by launching advertising campaigns (Miki 2002). As some of the names of these magazines suggest, publishers promoted the exhibition to a generation of Japanese youth who were avid readers of science fiction and fantastic adventure tales laden with militaristic and nationalist subtexts that featured futuristic advanced technologies and exotic far-off lands inhabited by sensationalized savages and ancient civilizations. A special edition of the *Illustrated Monthly Periodical* stressed the "wild" nature of the foreign peoples at the pavilions (Miki 2002: 52). In their effort to boost distribution and entice large crowds, the article pointed out that a group of former cannibals who performed a dance at the *Nan'yō* pavilion—the Sakai people of the Malay Peninsula—had been particularly unruly upon arrival to Japan. In addition to the Sakai, five other ethnic groups from Southeast Asia—a total of 28 people (18 men and 10 women)—formed the contingent for the human display there. These strategies clearly paid off. Attendance figures for the exposition's half-year run reached almost 7.5 million visitors. Admission fees ranged from 15 *sen* for a half day to 20 *sen* for an entire day. Taking into consideration the poor economic climate and that a visit to a local bathhouse cost roughly 3 *sen*, large turnout suggested that attendees were willing to part with a certain amount of disposable income to witness the spectacle (Miki 2002).

By the time the gates at the fairgrounds opened, proponents of southward advance or *nanshinron* had for decades, laid claim that Japan's prosperity and strategic interests rested on economic and political control over the South Seas. The Tokyo International Exhibition provided an opportunity for the country's growing urban populations to experience that vision firsthand in the safe confines of the Japanese capital through a visit to the *Nan'yō* pavilion. The commercial

¹ The attractions that showcased foreign peoples and their artifacts included the Karafuto pavilion, Hokkaidō pavilion, Manchurian pavilion, Taiwan pavilion (official overseas colony), Ogasawara pavilion, and *Nan'yō* pavilion.

press and members of the literati offered commentary on the attraction reflecting a set of tropes that privileged the modern individual by juxtaposing notions of the “civilized and advanced” against the “primitive and savage.” In addition to aligning with *nanshinron* rhetoric, these commentaries drew on a much older South Seas discursive tradition. Occasionally, venues such as the Ogasawara pavilion disrupted such well-established paradigms of “Otherness.” This paper will examine how the Tokyo International Exhibition functioned as a contested site and discursive playground wherein variegated visions of modernity, Japan’s position in the world, and conceptualizations of *Nan’yō* emerged and continue to hold sway, paying particular attention to Yosano Tekkan’s 1914 poem, *Nan’yōkan* or *South Seas Pavilion*.

Modern Japanese Identity Formation and *Nan’yō* Orientalism

International fairs developed in the West during the heyday of nineteenth-century Euro-American imperialism and global hegemony. The introduction of this institution to Japan began as early as 1862 when the Tokugawa shogunate sent its first overseas envoy to Europe (Yoshimi, 1992). Members of the Japanese delegation, including the famous reformer, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), marveled at the sights of the International Open held in Great Britain. He and fellow members of the group did not miss the powerful symbolism imbedded within the spectacle highlighting British power and prestige. Later international fairs concomitantly emphasized the progress of imperialist nations, whilst underscoring the backwardness of dependent states through the display of colonial subjects. Soon after attending the London exposition, Japan participated as a member in the World’s Fair in Paris in 1867 (Yoshimi, 1992). The following year, the Tokugawa regime fell, ushering in the modern Japanese nation with the Emperor Meiji (1852-1912) as head of state.

Islands and oceans occupying the space south of Japan remained largely unknown, mysterious, and ill-defined at the advent of the Meiji period (1868-1912) (Peattie, 1988: xviii). And while much of Oceania had been mapped and colonized by Western imperialist powers, Japanese conceptual frameworks of the South Seas did not neatly fit in the East-West paradigm (Peattie, 1988: 8). Indeed, the space became fodder for debates concerning Japan’s position in the world as *Nan’yō* developed into an independent geographic entity. Subsequently, it served as a discursive field where a Japanese identity could be projected vis-à-vis the various Euro-American countries exerting their control over the region and the indigenous peoples living there. Certain elites envisioned *Nan’yō* functioning as a barrier to deflect or ameliorate the threat of an expanded Western presence in the Pacific and where Japan could assert its own growing influence.

Such ruminations manifested in the aforementioned policy known as *nanshinron* (southward advance). Subsequently, as Japan grew into an imperialist power, a unique form of Orientalism emerged, what Naoto Sudo termed *Nan’yō* Orientalism (Sudo, 2010: 3-6). Edward Said defined Orientalism as a discursive tradition developed in the West which created a totalized image of the Orient and facilitated legitimization of imperialist projects over Middle Eastern societies (Said, 1979). While cultural production on the Orient highlighted a glorious past, it also emphasized an inability among Oriental peoples to recapture their remarkable history and enter into the modern era. The cumulative effect of these narratives injected the notion that such societies were inherently static and diametrically opposed to European civilization in cultural orientation. *Nan’yō* Orientalism and Japanese Orientalism at large were substantively similar but differed significantly in its framing of the “Other.” *Nan’yō* and greater Japanese

Orientalism positioned Japan as a society capable of “advancement” based on its successful transition into the modern age. While non-Japanese populations in the Eastern hemisphere and in the South Seas were similarly cast as “fixed” to the past, *this* “Other” was nonetheless recognized as sharing a history, and at times, a genealogical connection with Japanese peoples. Thus, *Nan’yō* and greater Japanese Orientalism were both inclusive and exclusive in nature. Exclusive in the sense that Japan separated itself from the West. Inclusive insofar as Japan identified with being part of a larger family of Asian and Pacific nations. The catch was that among its brethren, Japan occupied the top tier in a constructed hierarchy. By highlighting its historic transformation into a modern nation, Japan framed imperialist projects in paternalistic terms, promoting itself as the only authority possessing the wherewithal to protect Asia and Oceania from Euro-American encroachment and hegemony (Shinji, Bosco, and Eades, 1991: 99). As Sudo observed, *Nan’yō* Orientalism not only provided space for a divergent modernity that contested Western imperialism to take hold, it offered cover for colonialist projects and the acquisition of overseas territory in the region (Sudo, 2010: 3-5).

Nan’yō Orientalism was neither self-contained nor removed from Japanese cultural production on the South Seas of the past. Indeed, *Nan’yō* Orientalist discourse borrowed heavily from and overlapped with Western discourse on the South Seas from its inception. Accordingly, modern *Nan’yō* discourse could facilitate the creation of a predominately Western-orientated identity, a “distinctly” Japanese one, or one that fell somewhere in-between. For example, prestigious institutions of higher education and feeder schools like Tokyo University and the First Higher School, integrated Western literature that featured South Seas settings as a means to build a “modern” student body and improve English-language competency. Authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson profoundly influenced the elite youth who came to envision the greater world through the imaginative projection of the “Self” onto “exotic” landscapes (Tierney, 2010).

From the late nineteenth century, homegrown works of fiction such as political novels, embellished travelogues, and adventure stories that infused South Seas locales into narratives, borrowed heavily from Western literary modes. These genres played a significant role in determining identity formation by positioning Japanese populations to readily accept *nanshin* ideology and constructed social hierarchies that marginalized *Nan’yō* peoples. They also allowed urban populations to temporarily escape from a humdrum existence and alienation associated with the modern condition. For example, renowned novelist, Natsume Sōseki (1896-1916), explored the unfulfilled life of a recent college graduate struggling with the day-to-day monotony of modern Japan in the novel, *Higansugi made* (To the Spring Equinox and Beyond) (Sōseki, 1912). The protagonist made life bearable through daydreams that drew on an embellished South Seas travelogue by Kodama Otomatsu that actually ran in the Asahi Newspaper (Kodama, 1994). Sōseki revealed that the main character’s vivid imagination began in high school English class where he was introduced to Western adventure novels set in the South Seas. *Higansugi made* demonstrated how *Nan’yō* facilitated the projection of an alter-existence and functioned as a discursive space where one could escape ennui during Japan’s unprecedented era of accelerated industrialization. In a similar novel that explored alienation in the modern age by anti-naturalist writer Shiga Naoya (1883-1971), the protagonist debated whether to visit the Tokyo International Exhibition on the advice of a friend who had attended the native dance performance (Shiga, 1976: 187).

As with literature, international expositions functioned as a nexus where forces associated with modernity found expression. They neatly packaged the latest advancements in media and communication technologies, transportation, and manufacturing for immediate consumption.

Leisure became a critical aspect of “modern life” manifest in numerous forms of popular entertainment as deceptively mundane as window-shopping, cinema-viewing, and international fair-going. By the early twentieth century, citizens throughout industrialized nations synchronically engaged in a conformance of activities which deeply affected subjectivity, a process called coeval modernity (Harootunian, 2000). Indeed, accelerated global access to material and non-material culture that lacked any substantial lag in exchange created a sense of shared experience among “modern” peoples.

Othering the South Seas through the Ages

As for the medieval and early modern eras, various discursive mediums similarly overlapped and coalesced to create a picture of *Nan'yō* peoples that emphasized backwardness and affirmed constructed hierarchies. Military chronicles depicting events of the tumultuous twelfth century from the Hōgen Rebellion (1156) through the Gempei War (1180) documented encounters between Japanese protagonists and “strange” peoples—some described as ogres or *oni*— who populated islands in the seas south of Japan in texts such as *Hōgen monogatari* (Tale of the Disorder in Hōgen) and *Heike monogatari* (Tale of the Heike). Parts of *Hōgen monogatari* followed the exploits of legendary hero, Minamoto no Tametomo (1139-1170). Ultimately, Tametomo fell on the losing side of the war and was subsequently exiled to an outlying island located off the Izu peninsula. There he conquered local peoples and declared himself ruler of Ōshima and the surrounding five islands. Later, Tametomo ventured farther south where he encountered the ogres of Oki-no-shima (Oki Island). Tametomo eventually returned to Ōshima and brought with him an Oni-no-shima islander. This move proved an effective means to consolidate power that instilled fear among the community given Tametomo’s subjugation and enslavement of an ostensibly supernatural being.

Scholars of Japanese history and culture have identified the Oki-no-shima legend as the prototype for *Momotarō* and examined how the story of the “Peach Boy” served as an allegory representing the imperial colonial enterprise that articulated Japan’s unique position in the world as the steward of the Eastern hemisphere to domesticate colonized populations (Antoni, 1991: 172) (Henry, 2009: 218-228) (Tierney, 2010: 110-146). However, prior to the establishment of the *Momotarō* fable becoming indelibly ingrained in the modern consciousness of domestic and colonized populations, writers and artists recast Tametomo’s South Seas encounters throughout the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) in such works as Bushi Gensho’s (1555-1620), *Nanpo bunshū* (Literary Collection of Nanpo), Takizawa Bakin’s (1767-1848), *Chinsetsu yumiharizuki* (Crescent Moon), and in paintings by Kita Shigemasa (1739-1820) and woodblock prints of the famed master, Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861) (Antoni, 1991: 160-170) (Masuda, 2000: 173-174). Tametomo’s adventures in the islands underscore a number of issues related to *Nan'yō* and Japanese Orientalism at large. A constructed hierarchy based on notions of perceived cultural sophistication is brought to bear with relation to Tametomo and the inhabitants of Ōshima and Oki-no-shima. In this case a foreign “Other” was appropriated as a vehicle to exercise power over a domestic population. Placing the foreign on display achieved a political purpose solidifying Tametomo’s authority on Ōshima. This strategy later played out in real terms during the Tokyo International Exhibition of 1914, wherein the government recognized the efficacy of hosting a large-scale spectacle that provided domestic populations a sense of pride with regard to the nation’s expanding overseas presence and colonial projects abroad by juxtaposing the modern against the so-called primitive at various sites.

Urban populations in Tokugawa Japan also developed a conceptual picture of the foreign in carnival-like side-shows known as *misemono*. A form of public entertainment during Japan's period of "national seclusion," *misemono* was the precursor and domestic equivalent of the modern international exhibition. These attractions held at temple fairs featured a vast array of strange and exotic sights (Markus, 1985). In addition to weird beings of foreign origins, *misemono* also showcased beached whales, giant squids, and super-natural creatures such as the "Fejee Mermaid." While an unmitigated hoax, its handlers created a convincingly "real" specimen by attaching a monkey's head to the body of a fish. This practice of doctoring an attraction for sensationalized effect would be repeated at the *Nan'yō* pavilion of the Tokyo International Exhibition the following century. Organizers of the event were well aware that human participants and the rare items brought from faraway lands undoubtedly piqued the interest of Tokyo residents. Nonetheless, to ensure customer satisfaction, they placed dolls of wild animals around the *Nan'yō* display to add an element of "exotic realism." Oddly this fabricated and exaggerated presentation was persuasive enough to receive the following write-up in the business journal, *Jitsugyō no Nihon* (Business Japan):

When you enter the South Seas Pavilion, you feel as if surrounded by the atmosphere of the South Seas. Against a backdrop of South Seas scenery, various kinds of tropical plants grow luxuriantly while dolls representing the natives are hunting for gorillas and boa constrictors... The biggest novelty is a live display in which one can experience native islanders (25 in all) living in realistically constructed huts (Tierney, 2010:111).

This skewed image of a constructed *Nan'yō* inhabited by wildlife of non-Pacific origins continued in the coming decades in a wide range of mediums including music and cartoons.

Daku-daku odori was a dance routine developed in the 1920's that enacted a wedding ceremony between a chieftain's daughter and her male suitor from the Marshall Islands. Dancers representing islanders applied generous amounts of make-up to create a stereotypically darkened complexion reminiscent of the black-faced minstrel icon liberally appropriated in Western discourse—an overtly racist image consistently repeated in numerous forms of cultural production that continues to this day. The physical representation of islanders, lyrics, and choreography suggested that *Nan'yō* peoples were not only backwards but objects that could be possessed individually and collectively in real and metaphoric contexts (Dvorak, 2007: 105-108). In this case, the object of possession involved sexual control over the female body in the colonies. Greg Dvorak observed that in addition to constructing power structures between Japanese and "Othered" South Seas islanders related to sexual dominance, an amalgamation of disparate images having non-*Nan'yō* origins coalesced to form enduring stereotypes. The composer, Yoden Tsuruhiko, ignored geographic realities and mixed unrelated locales and fauna into the narrative. For example, the song maintained that the Marshall Islands lay below the equator with the Indus River flowing through the landscape surrounded by eucalyptus trees. In effect, Yoden projected an otherworldly quality upon the Marshallese people and *Nan'yō* at large (Dvorak, 2007: 105-108). In 1930, *Daku-daku odori* was reconfigured into the hit song, *Shūchō no musume* (The Chieftain's Daughter), which became a mainstay for future recordings and performances such as the "East Asia Co-Prosperity South Seas Dance" (Dvorak, 2007: 128).

Shimada Keizō's immensely popular cartoon serial, *Bōken Dankichi* (Adventure Dankichi) similarly seized on stereotypes in representing South Seas peoples. Set in an imaginary South Seas locale, the comic made its debut in 1933 (Shimada, 1967: 1). The boy hero, Dankichi, and mouse friend, Karikō, drifted in their boat until making landfall on a

fantastic island inhabited by a strange mix of animals and peoples. The animals included a wild assortment lions, gorillas, elephants, and giraffes. At times this amalgamation of creatures went so far as to include dinosaurs roaming the bush (Shimada, 1967: 258-265). Once again, natives were rendered in caricature-form resembling the Western black-faced minstrel icon. Dankichi soon conquered the local inhabitants who crowned the Japanese boy their king. In order to tell islanders apart, he ascribed each of them numbers drawn in bold white numerals on their chests. The symbolism was not subtle. Islanders were nameless and uniform, neither possessing a personality or identity. The numbers served the purposes of Dankichi alone. In ensuing adventures young readers vicariously experienced Japan's "civilizing" mission in *Nan'yō* that mirrored colonial projects of the administrative authorities. The comic also echoed nationalist sentiments throughout its six-year run. Shimada often pitted the island community against Western foils who posed a constant danger to Dankichi's South Seas kingdom.

Yosano Tekkan's *Nan'yōkan* and the Formal Colonization of the South Seas

Imperialist powers had entered into an extraordinary period of inflexible alliance formation when Emperor Taishō ascended the throne in 1912. While the intent of treaties aimed to ensure security, they ultimately proved destabilizing. These agreements obligated countries to go to war if a third party joined, potentially triggering a domino effect that could quickly spin out of control. A naval arms race exacerbated an already tense international climate. Observers sensitive to the fragile state of world affairs argued that global conflict was a likely outcome. In *The Valor of Ignorance* (1909), Homer Lea urged the United States to prepare for future war with Japan. He observed that imperial expansion and naval build-up posed an imminent threat, concluding that the United States would suffer defeat in a military confrontation (Lea, 2001). The following year, a translated version appeared in Japan titled, *Nichibei sensō* (Japan-American War) (Ike, 1911). This publication spurned similar treatises by writers such as naval officer, Mizuno Hironori (1875-1945). In 1913, Mizuno took the pen-name Kitaharu Tetsuo and outlaid a fictional war between Japan and the United States in *Tsugi no issen* (*The Next War*) (Mizuno, 1982). War-scenario literature mirrored the tenuous footing international relations stood at the time and demonstrated how the genre swayed public opinion to its respective national audiences anticipating a worldwide clash. Tensions reached critical mass with the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914. The spark igniting WWI temporally corresponded with the Tokyo International Exhibition. Japan declared war on the Central Powers on August 23. By September, roughly three weeks after the gates at the fairgrounds closed, the navy sent warships to eradicate the German fleet in the Pacific. In quick order Japan established firm control over Micronesia, setting in motion formal colonization of the region which lasted through the end of WWII in 1945.

Literary and artistic movements of the Taishō period similarly reflected anxieties of the day. Advocating for more inward and self-reflective modes of expression and reacting against realism and naturalism, writers, poets, and painters appropriated liminal spaces like the South Seas to understand and critique psychological crises and circumstances caused by modernity (Tenny, 1993). As Robert Exley pointed out in his study of Satō Haruo (1892-1964), members of the literary community published their works in an eclectic stew of print media (Exley, 2005). As a result, writers zigzagged between genres to provide readers commentary on contemporary conditions utilizing non-rational and experimental narrative formats.

A writer who championed the transformation of traditional *waka* into modern forms, Yosano Tekkan (1873-1935), established an association of like-minded poets known as the *Shinshisha* (The New Poetry Association) and founded the successful journal *Myōjō* (Bright Star) (Kato and Chang 1999: 24). Members of the famed group included his wife, Yosano Akiko (1878-1942), Satō Haruo, and Kitahara Hakushū (1885-1942)(Fox 2011).² Yosano and his colleagues shared an appreciation for European romantic poets and painters, particularly Paul Claudel (1868-1955), August Rodin (1840-1917), and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). With respect to creating exoticized South Seas imagery from a Western perspective, Gauguin's landscapes and paintings of Tahitian peoples made a particularly deep impression on Japanese artists and literary figures throughout the century.

Yosano's *Nan'yōkan* (South Seas Pavilion) appeared in print soon after the exhibition ended. The poem examined a fairgoer's experience at the event (presumably the poet himself). This unnamed protagonist visits the well-attended international spectacle with his two daughters. Upon entrance to the crowded *Nan'yō* pavilion, he is immediately displeased with the display and vehemently charges that the exhibit is grossly inauthentic. Moreover, having travelled to Singapore, the main character assumes an authoritative tone and presents his audience with what *he* envisions the South Seas and the inhabitants of the region to be. The speaker articulates an idealized image of *Nan'yō* that is a complete embodiment of the natural world; he goes on at great length to describe a primordial locale where absolutely no separation exists between human, animal, and plant populations. For him, people, frogs, and flowers of the South Seas all interpret and respond to stimuli synchronically and to equal effect. A critical component of the poem involves the protagonist's encounter with a native dance team whose members, he laments, have become spoiled and decayed upon contact with the outside modern world. Given its relevance to this article, the poem is presented in its entirety:

Nan'yōkan (The South Seas Pavilion)³

Translated by the author of this article

Midori no sameta, suna to gomi darake no,
mizuke no nai,
ijiketa, hikui yashi no kodachi,

Wilted greenery, a cluttered mess of sand
No moisture
A stunted low lying grove of coconut trees

Miira ni shita, ugokanai tenguzaru,
shinda, misuborashii, chippokena wani,
kusunda, ōdo to CHOCOLAT no iro o shita
yasumono no, mozō no Jawa sarasa,
mada ichidomo ikichi o namezu, tamashii no
hairanu, hyoro nagai dokuya no kazu kazu.....
Eh?
Kore ga Taishō hakurankai no Nanyōkan?

A mummified and lifeless long-nosed monkey
A tiny shabby dead crocodile
A dull earth-toned chocolate-colored cheap replica
of a Javanese printed cloth
Numerous long spindly poisoned arrows that never once
lapped blood or took a soul....
Huh?
Is this the South Seas Pavilion of the Taisho Exhibition?

Saisho no futatsu no shitsu o mite aruite,
ore wa omowazu ore no kodomotachi ni itta,
“Konnajantai! Konnajantai! Nanyō wa!”

We walked through and looked at the first two rooms
and without thinking I said to my children,
“It's not this! It's not this! This is not the South Seas!”

²Hakushū also collaborated with Yosano in the 1907 collection of travel essays titled *Go soku no kutsu* (Five Pairs of Shoes).

³Hiroshi (Tekkan) Yosano, “Nanyōkan” (The Nan'yō Pavilion) (August 1914). Access to the poem is available online at Aozora bunko: <http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000320/card2565.html>.

The South Seas on Display in Japan

Soshite, ore wa Shingapō-ru o omoïdashita.

Konna janai! Konna janai!
Ano sekido chokka no seikatsu wa konna janai!
PAUL CLAUDEL ga me o mawashita mo dōri,
soko wa hikari to netsu to nioi to iro no sekai da,
hanayakana, memagurushii genshō nomi no
sekai da. Junsuina shinjitsu nomi no kinchō
shita sekai da, banbetsu no chikara ga hakkōshi,
jōtōshi, uzu o maite aremawaru sekai da,
Uchū no saisho no genki ga, kegarezu, majirazu,
yodomazu ni moeteiru sekai da.

Taiyō wa hakukin o yaiteiru,
umi wa emerōdo no yu o tataeteiru,
tsuchi wa pyurumyon o moriageteiru,
kūki wa hi no tanpeeto da,
ame wa gin no raoaju da.

Dono mono ni mo nibui yowai iro ga nai,
makka da, kin da, seppaku da, shōjōhi da,
gunjo da, fumi midori da, murasaki da.
Dono mono ni mo hansana bunrui ga nai,
shokubutsu mo dōbutsu da, ningen da,
ningen mo shokubutsu da, dōbutsu da.

Aru ki wa hige o tare, hyakushu o nobashi,
jū, nijū no ashi o hashira no yō ni tateteiru.
Aru ki wa ōgigata no kishi no kabuto o kaburi,
aru ki wa hosonagai dou ni makkana ebi no
kō o tsuketeiru.

Aru kaeru ga ushi no koe de hoeru.
Aru hebi ga suzu o furu.
Isshaku no yamori ga ningen ni yobikake,
nijō no wani ga ningen o esa ni suru.
Ningen wa maruki bune no kara ni notte
hashiru kai da.
Saru wa shōjyō no hyōjyō to sugata de
daki au ningen da.

Shun ka shū tō no bunbetsu mo nai,
shokubutsu wa me to ha to kareha to,
tsubomi to hana to mi to dōji ni motteiru.
Kata hashi kara jukushite, karete,
kata hashi kara atarashiku unde iku.

Ningen mo sō da!
Te nurui yume ya akogare ya,
shichimendouna meisō ya,
kozakashii shōryō ya, kyogi ya,
bakarashii kōkai ya omoide o
hitsuyō to sezu ni ikiteiku.
Karera wa ruten o ruten no mama ni ukeireru.
Tada chinchō suru no wa aijyō da,
sōdō da, shōri no yoku da,

And then I remembered Singapore.

It's not this! It's not this!
That life right below the equator is not like this!
It's the sort of thing that would make Paul Claudel faint
There is a world of light, heat, smell, and color
A world of only brilliant and blistering hues
A tense world of only pure truth where various
powers ferment and evaporate
A world of swirling storms
A world where the first vital energy of space burns
but is not injured, mixed, or stagnant.

The sun burns platinum
The seas brim with warm emerald water
The earth swells scarlet
The air is the spark of typhoons
Rain is a sudden shower of silver.

No dull or weak color of any kind exists
Bright reds, gold, snow white, scarlet,
indigo, ultra marine, dark green, purple
No complex diversification of any kind
Plants are animals and people
Likewise people are plants and animals

One tree droops its beard and stretches out its hundred
hands while ten to twenty legs are standing like posts
One tree wears a fan-shaped helmet of a knight
One tree has the shell of a deep red shrimp attached to its
long and narrow trunk

A frog croaks like a mooing cow
A snake shakes a bell
A thirty-centimeter gecko cries out to a human audience
A six-meter crocodile makes pet food out of people
Man is a sea-shell that rides a dug-out canoe made from a
from a tree husk
Monkeys are people who hug each other
holding the facial expressions and stature of orangutans

There is no difference between spring, summer, winter,
or fall, plants can have sprouts, foliage, dead leaves, buds,
and fruit all at the same time.
One side of the fruit is ripe and mature,
the other newly born

People are the same way!
Soft in dreams and aspirations
Challenged by contemplation
Shrewd in discussion, deceptive
Going through life holding foolish regret and
placing no importance on memory
They go with the flow accepting life's vicissitudes
To give praise is to love
It is manual labor. It is greed's victor.

Soshite sorera o sanbi no geijutsu da.

Nemutakute neru,
utaitakute utau,
hataraitakute hataraku,
odoritakute odoru.
Koishii onna wa ubattemo aisuru,
nikui teki wa koroshiteshimau,
katta mono wa tadashiku hokoru,
maketa mono wa fukushū o kuwadateru.
Shō, rō, byō, shi wa juntōna ruten da,
hana no kairaku da,
sonna koto o ki ni suru shunkan nanka
motteinai.

Shizen to seibutsu to ga onaji myaku o uchi,
onaji tamashii to onaji iyoku o mochi, onaji
sei no chikara o haritsumete ugoku bakari da!
Moshi junsuina jinsei o horyū shite iru karera ni,
shochi no dotoku o toite kikasetanara,
karera wa mekado o tattete okoru darou,
soshite iu darou, “Dai shizen no kokoro o
shiranai, darakushita ningen no yokeina
higami da,” to.

Karera wa sekirara de iru,
taiyō ga sekirara de iru godoku ni!
Soshite, karera ga hanayakana Jawa sarasa
no ippen de,
mata wa shinsenna hito eda no ki no ha de,
ningen no ki no mannaka ni tsuketa sei no
konomi o ouu no wa,
reigi demo nan demo nai,
yashi ga sono mi no kaku o kokuhi no naka
ni osamete,
fū to chūjyū no gai o fusegu yōni,
karera mo mata tōtai shu no miya o,
teki to dōbutsu no gai kara mamoru no da.

Konna no janai!
Ano iki iki shita Nanyō wa!
Ore wa kō omotte tsugi no shitsu e itta.

Soko ni wa byōninrashii Nanyō no
danjyō ga,
aoguroi, shinabita hada de,
kinori no shinai usō no hyōjyō to,
“Omaetachiwa usō o shiranai hazu da
no ni!”
Hari no nai ukichōshi no koe to de,
semāi butai ni,
“Aa, omaetachi wa sangoshō no shima
ga koishikarō!”
Odottari uttatari shite iru.
Kawaisōni!

Those are the arts of gratification

If they are tired, they sleep
If they want to sing, they sing
If they want to work, they work
If they want to dance, they dance
They pine for the woman they threw away
They kill their hated enemies
Victors hold righteous pride
Losers design plans for revenge
Birth, old age, sickness, death are the proper vicissitudes
As is the blooming and wilting of flowers
they possess no traditions to notice such things

The pulse of nature and all living beings is synchronized
They all possess an identical soul and will,
and are covered in the same life-force that drives them!
If they were to put aside their pure life and asked to explain
shameful morals,
they would respond with an angry glare and likely say,
“You don’t understand the heart of absolute nature
and your depravity makes you all the more jealous!”

They are stark reality,
Like the sun is stark reality!
And, as with a piece of brilliant
Javanese printed cloth,
and as with a fresh leaf from the branch of a tree,
the nut that holds one’s true nature concealed in the
middle of the human tree contains neither manners
or etiquette of any kind
That nut is also lodged within the shell of a coconut
The coconut protects its pit against harm caused by
wind, rain, and wildlife
Likewise, the coconut protects them (South Seas people)
and their palace of noble birth from harm caused by
enemies and animals

It’s not this!
This isn’t that South Seas which is full of life!
And as I thought this I went into the next room

Assembled there were sick-looking
South Seas men and women
with faded bluish black skin and a
halfhearted and insincere expression
on their faces, I said to them,
“Hey you! You who are supposed to know
nothing about lying!
You must be longing for a coral island!”
Lacking any springiness or pluck
and in a listless voice they danced and
sang on the confined stage.
How pitiful!

The South Seas on Display in Japan

Karera wa koya ni ippai ni natta
mimono kara,
“Nanda! Omoshirokumonai!
Yaban da ne!” to
ōbira ni nihongo de tsutawareteiru.

Kanbochya no odori o hometa Rodan ga,
kono mimono no naka ni iru no janai,
Iya, sonna guranmeetoru ga itatte
Kono Nan’yōkan o mitara nigedasu darō.
Aa! Donna ii mono demo,
Donna shinkenna mono,
Nihon no kūki ni fureru to,
Taitei mina shinabitteshimaun da!
Seishin o nakusurun da!

Ore wa chikagoro Yōroppa no ōfuku ni,
Shingapo-ru o ni do mite,
Nanyō no seikatsu o urayamazu ni iranakatta.
Soshite Pari ya Ro-ma o mite kita ato ni mo,
yappari Nanyō o urayamashii to omotta.
Naze da?

Jinsei o mukidashi ni shite,
shinjitsu no ai to sento to ni chikara
ippai ikiru,
jiyūna sekai toshite wa,
Pari mo Ro-ma mo
Nanyō no shima mo
kanari ga nai kara da!

Ore wa atafuta to Nanyōkan o dete shimata.
ore wa fukubiki ni isogu, chitsujyo no nai,
uzōmuzō no komiau naka o,
kodomoto tsurete,

Migi ni nui, hidari ni nui shite aruita.
Sore de mo kanari oozei ni butasukatta,
konna bai ni PARDON o ii awanai no ga
Dai Nihon da!
Soshite, yatto no koto de ue o muku to,
Ore no me ni haitta no wa, banen de
kasareta kozue to,
Ōshū de wa Doitsu no ichibu de shika
mi ataranai shiki no
iya na seseshyon no kenchiku to,
Matsui Sumako to iu jyōyū no kanban da.

‘Otōsan, hayaku kaerimaseuyo.’
‘Yoshi!’

(1914, 24, August)

And from the hut of this now
standing-room-only attraction they
were chided in Japanese without
hesitation, “What the hell! You’re
nothing special! You’re barbarians!”

The Cambodian dance that Rodin
praised so highly was definitely not
the one performed here at this attraction.
In fact, had the Grand-master been here to witness
the South Seas dance, he would have run away.
Indeed! No matter how good or earnest a thing is,
it almost always wilts when touched by the air of Japan!
It loses its spirit!

Not too long ago I made a round trip
to Europe and saw Singapore twice.
I did not need nor did I envy the life of the South Seas
Yet after going to see Paris and Rome
I thought it over again and felt envious of the South Seas
Why?

Life bears its nakedness
Sincere love and combat live to and exercise their
fullest power
As for a free world,
there isn’t much of one in Paris or in Rome
or on an island in the South Seas
for that matter!

Hastily I left the South Seas Pavilion
Despite having no gambling system, I hurriedly
took my children through the center
of the crowded mass to the raffle drawing

We weaved left and right
We bumped our way through the crowd
This was no time to be polite and say,
“Pardon me” here in this great Japanese nation!
And finally
as I turned upwards what caught my eye,
along with a sooty wilted tree top
I spotted an unpleasant example of secession architecture
that can only be seen in one part of Germany in Europe,
and a billboard of the actress Sumako Matsui.

“Dad, Let’s hurry and get home!”
“Right! Let’s get going!”

Yosano's protagonist was convinced that *his* conceptualization of the region was authentic and real. He prescribed to the idea that South Seas peoples were inherently incompatible with modernity and that physical exposure to industrialized societies led to their near instant demise. Conversely, he bemoaned that members of "advanced" nations lacked the tools necessary to reproduce a relationship with the natural world that was both primordial and direct. To him the modern world prohibited channeling the otherworldly. Only firsthand engagement with *Nan'yō* could provide modern observers an opportunity to access and experience a hyper-natural idealized state. Given this regrettable acknowledgement, the poem ended without resolution as the visitor was shaken out of his ruminations by his daughters and forced to deal with the modern capitalist consumer culture of Taishō Japan. The protagonist's call to connect with an elusive and primordial state accessible via engagement with the South Seas anticipated a shift in *Nan'yō* cultural production going forward. Nonetheless, a hard primitivism projected in the poem and in discourse surrounding the attraction conjured images of savagery and irreconcilable backwardness.

The Ogasawara pavilion stood in sharp contrast to its *Nan'yō* counterpart by disrupting *Nan'yō* Orientalist paradigms. Miki Haruko discussed how the islander contingent working as wait staff at the venue contested preconceived notions of South Seas populations and their assumed customs (Miki, 2002: 48-53). Their unique ethnic make-up of Hawaiian and Anglo-Saxon ancestry combined with using English to communicate with patrons at the coffee shop contradicted fixed stereotypes held among Japanese who visited the attraction. Miki argued that this encounter contributed to the development of a softer primitivism and made *Nan'yō* an even more ambiguous and malleable conceptual space (Miki, 2002: 53). This observation aligned with the trajectory South Seas discourse took during the decade. It also marked the moment when perceptions of *Nan'yō* increasingly gravitated towards identification with Micronesia.

The Tokyo International Exhibition and Yosano's *Nan'yōkan* generated an amalgamation of imagery that reconstituted and disrupted preconceived visions of the South Seas. These images—many completely fabricated—provided an ambiguous-yet-arguably cohesive conceptualization of the region and its peoples. Both a real and imagined South Seas served as a discursive space to formulate notions of what it meant to be a modern individual via projection, omission, and juxtaposition. As Japan formally colonized Micronesia, an otherworldly sense of *Nan'yō* that tied an affirmation of colonial projects to intangible ideals associated with self-discovery grew. A primordial connection of the likes Yosano's protagonist yearned could now be actualized via direct engagement. A new-found-but-long-lost identity took hold resembling the noble savage motif Europeans imposed upon Pacific populations during the age of scientific exploration and enlightenment. The Western tradition of constructing an exotic South Seas greatly informed conceptualizations of *Nan'yō* and the "Self" in modern Japan. However, the element emphasizing a common ancestry with South Seas peoples allowed Japanese discourse to remain independent from Western paradigms. By doing so, justification for colonization took added significance as Japan painted itself as a protector of its Pacific brethren from Euro-American encroachment and imperialism.

A softer image of *Nan'yō* soon developed. No longer considered a hostile environ, the image of the South Seas acquiesced to the needs of the observer who viewed a tranquil and idealized natural landscape through a romanticized lens. The preface of *Nan'yō no fudō* (Nature and Culture in the Southern World) published in 1916 articulated this change in orientation:

The name of the South Seas is easily associated with some hot and humid place where an endemic fever is prevalent and beasts and venomous snakes rampant;

these regions are undeniably hot but are comfortable with sea breezes; in Palau, there are crocodiles but no beasts and venomous snakes, and nobody catches a fever in the plain; such islands as Truk, Palau, and Ponape are especially featured by ‘beautiful sceneries and panoramic landscapes that are really suggestive of the paradise of nature’ (Akimichi, 1997: 245).

Writers, poets, artists, and policy wonks recognized the utility of connecting with an elusive and primordial *Nan’yō* to comprehend the human condition and experience an idealized state of being. Distinguished elites such as Tsurumi Yūsuke (1885-1973), provided an authoritative voice to implore the public to embrace a preternatural South Seas through literary approaches:

Rather than pondering the political and economic matter of developing the lands and ruling the people, I am more deeply moved by the image of moonlight shining through the leaves of a palm tree or a human figure in a sarong in the shadow of a mango tree...I am deeply convinced that our literary and poetic interests have far more deeper roots than our thirst for knowledge and intellectual interests (Tierney, 2005: 140).

Engaging the South Seas in literary terms had ramifications with perceiving and representing *Nan’yō* populations going forward. The most fundamental projection involved freezing islanders in a past that precluded any possibility of becoming part of the modern world without outside assistance.

The assumption that *Nan’yō* peoples needed to be pulled out of the past, aligned with the political mandate outlined by the League of Nations granting Japan oversight of the region following WWI. Colonial textbooks (Miwayuki, 2006), government sponsored propaganda films (Yamane, 1992), and educational programs that sent islanders to the metropole (Mita, 2009), justified colonial projects by showcasing Micronesians embracing modernity in a paternalistic light.⁴ Nonetheless, as demonstrated with the *Daku-daku odori* and *Bōken Dankichi*, traditional tropes held sway in marginalizing South Seas peoples in popular mediums of entertainment to domestic audiences. Shipping companies promoted tourism to *Nan’yō* by drawing on notions of the exotic. A 1930 brochure by the Nippon Yūsen Kaisha (NKK) provided textual and visual descriptions of what to expect on such a voyage. Juxtaposing the “backward” against the “advanced,” it featured photographs of idyllic landscapes and bare-breasted women that undoubtedly evoked the image of the chieftain’s daughter in the song made popular at the time (Nippon Yūsen Kabushiki Kaisha, 1930). Like fairgoers at the Tokyo International Exhibition, part of the draw which the advertisement seized upon involved a claim that the state-of-the-art onboard experience heightened an otherworldly effect without sacrificing any of the comforts at home for passengers. During WWII, the military contracted illustrators to produce animated features that drew on the Momotarō folktale in *Momotarō no umiwashi* (Momotarō’s Sea Eagles) (1942) and *Momotarō umi no shimpei* (Momotarō’s God-Blessed Sea Warriors) (1945). In *Momotarō umi no shinpei*, filmmakers emphasized a harmonious relationship between Japanese and colonized populations who all enthusiastically contributed to the war effort. With the exception of Momotarō, every character was a cuddly animal of some kind. Locals consisted of an assortment of non-native species such as tigers, leopards, squirrels, and rhinoceroses. In addition to garnering support for the war, the film affirmed notions of a culturally constructed hierarchy and reflected efforts to assimilate South Seas peoples.

⁴ Colonial texts and propaganda films also included illustrations and scenes of islanders in native dress and local culture.

Reconfiguring the South Seas in Postwar Japan

A global geopolitical realignment immediately followed WWII with the United States and the Soviet Union becoming the recognized superpowers of the world. Within this new order, Japan fell under US fiat manifest in a six-year occupation (1945-1952) engineered by SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) under the command of General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964). Micronesia similarly fell under American control via an internationally sanctioned mandate called the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) (Hanlon, 1998) (Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci, 2001). In exchange for political and economic development of the islands, the United Nations granted the United States unprecedented leeway to direct policy in Micronesia that met national security needs without challenge or consequence. Unfettered experimentation of nuclear weapons resulted in the region becoming what Stewart Firth described as a “nuclear playground” (Firth, 1987). Priorities reflecting self-fulfilling strategic and military objectives also included extraordinary measures to restrict travel that remained in place until the 1960s. Almost immediately authorities on the ground repatriated all Japanese civilians and military personnel who remained in Micronesia.⁵ Given Japan’s extensive presence that lasted decades, this initiative forced family break-ups among local communities. Part of the rationale behind the policy was to remove any sign of a Japanese colonial legacy which entailed destroying much of the infrastructure that survived the war. Thus, the American government aggressively erased reminders of the past in order to effectively apply its own stamp of colonial rule onto Micronesian landscapes at the dawning of the nuclear age.

In Japan, the United States was busy imprinting a similar stamp by determining the trajectory of social, economic, and political futures of its former enemy. SCAP set out to “demilitarize,” “democratize,” and “decentralize” the country. One important task involved controlling the flow of information by enforcing strict censorship laws (Dower, 2000). All media forms were subject to review to prevent exposure to ideals or messages that contradicted the aforementioned goals (Hirano, 1996: 103-119). Criticism of General MacArthur, occupation officials, and SCAP-led policies were strictly off-limits. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings were similarly denied a space in the public sphere (Dower, 2000). The government withheld actual footage of the attacks and their effects. As a result, the population was prevented from gaining a realistic picture of what had happened. Limits placed on expression were such that overt condemnation and scrutiny could not fully emerge until after the Americans had left.⁶

The occupation officially ended in spring of 1952. Japan regained sovereignty but maintained strong military and economic ties to America. A controversial security treaty was signed that allowed the United States to retain military forces in Japan practically indefinitely. The ongoing war in Korea amplified the need for the United States to maintain a strong presence in East Asia and underscored Japan’s strategic importance as a bulwark to defend communist encroachment in the region. Japan also played a fundamentally direct role in the conflict by transferring materials and troops to the peninsula as well as manufacturing cheap finished goods that could be sent to the war theater and abroad. While such conditions contributed to economic

⁵This repatriation also included foreign laborers and other settlers from the Japanese colonial periphery. This included many Korean workers who lived in the region during the colonial period or were brought there to fortify the islands during the war.

⁶There were a few exceptions but they aligned with SCAP’s requirements by presenting a more benign portrayal of the events. The censors did approve the 1949 book, *Nagasaki no kane* (Bells of Nagasaki), which was then adapted to the screen the following year. This story followed the heroic efforts by a local doctor who while suffering from effects of the bomb courageously attended to those injured from the blast.

growth—a recovery described by many historians as “miraculous”—contingencies associated with the recovery compromised Japanese sovereignty.⁷ The imposed frameworks and geopolitical repositioning set by the United States caused concern and raised unanswered questions among segments of society going forward. The South Seas served as a discursive site where contestation over these issues could be expressed in the immediate post-occupation landscape and decades to follow.

No more so was this evident than in monster movies, beginning with *Gojira* in 1954. Films of this genre often subtly criticized American presence in Micronesia by way of portraying Japanese protagonists in tune with and sympathetic towards native populations. Such positioning not only provided cover to indirectly reveal a contested and complicated postwar relationship with the United States, it also nostalgically invoked the colonial era by delicately framing Japan as the superior colonizer. Many of these movies demonstrated continuity with cultural production of the past by recalibrating old narratives to meet the realities of the postwar and the dawning of the nuclear age.

Mosura (1960) integrated numerous tropes associated with traditional *Nan'yō* Orientalist discourse. Parallels in storyline can be drawn between the film and the Tokyo International Exposition with regard to human display as a commercial enterprise. Yosano Tekkan described South Seas islanders as human beings who remained in tune with the primordial forces of nature. The natives of the imaginary Infant Island similarly served that purpose for postwar theatergoers. Unwavering faith in the giant moth exemplified a strong bond with nature that was juxtaposed against a modern world detached from such connections. While islanders were positively portrayed in this light, they were nonetheless represented as peoples locked in time and subsequently denied agency. Their individual stories and histories were of no real consequence. They existed for modern viewers to consume in order to avoid “Self”-destruction. In contrast to the greedy capitalist from Rosilica (a combination of the US and the USSR), Japanese protagonists were seen as sympathetic to the indigenous community. They tried to heed the islanders’ warnings and respect their way of life. Accordingly, filmmakers metaphorically distanced Japan and the islands from the West. As a conceptual space, the South Seas served as a counter-hegemonic field that highlighted geopolitical realignments and indicted the recognized superpowers. It also affirmed a national narrative that emphasized Japan’s postwar transformation into a peaceful nation. Such positioning correlated to *Nan'yō* Orientalist discourse of the prewar period. Proponents of southern advancement (*nanshinron*) emphasized cultural and historical affiliations with South Seas peoples that drew Japan closer to the region. This discursive strategy facilitated colonization efforts through projecting paternalistic impulses based on assumed cultural and genealogical ties. While not made explicit in *Mosura*, later monster films utilized *Nan'yō* as a setting linking Japanese protagonists to islanders via a shared history that referenced the colonial period.

The 1970s began in Japan with an international extravaganza reminiscent of the Tokyo International Exhibition of 1914. In March 1970, the country again opened its doors to the world to showcase progress and technological advancement with the Osaka Exposition. By this time, the country had solidified its reputation as a global economic power in manufacturing high quality electronics and automobiles. Sharing similarities with previous international fairs, the

⁷During the late 1970s numerous scholars attributed Japan’s postwar recovery to societal forces associated with culturally ingrained characteristics unique to the Japanese people (Vogel, 1979). Since then scholars have reinterpreted the recovery by looking at larger geopolitical changes and the role the United States played in stimulating the Japanese economy as a response to Cold War developments.

exposition juxtaposed the modern against the traditional. In this case, an attempt was made to demonstrate how the two could harmoniously exist with each other. The reconfigured postwar paradigm wherein Japan projected itself as a peaceful member of the international community thoughtful of its developing neighbors was brought to bear. Fairgrounds were aligned with futuristic attractions which creators of giant monster movies had a hand in creating and promoting. Mitsubishi enlisted the producer of the *Gojira* series, Tanaka Tomoyuki, to design their pavilion. Daiei Studios capitalized on the excitement with *Gamera tai Jigar* (Gamera vs. Jiger) (1970), whose release ran concurrent with the opening of the event. This film wove the international exposition into the narrative and drew on tropes associated with traditional South Seas discourse. “Expo” was a huge success that provided domestic populations added validation that they were truly riding on the cutting edge of modernity. The fairgrounds remain a significant site symbolic of the juxtaposition between modernity and tradition by serving as the home for the National Museum of Ethnology.

The South Seas continues to serve as a space that operates in both real and imagined contexts in modes of cultural production that encompass a wide spectrum of engagement that can affirm what it means to be a member of modern society. As with the Tokyo Exhibition of 1914, processes associated with identity formation can be realized in the modern tourist industry. Like Yosano’s protagonist, people travel to Pacific locales to access an “authentic” South Seas. Access can likewise be experienced vicariously through mediums that utilize traditional tropes associated with the Pacific and Pacific peoples. And while South Seas islanders have and always will be real people living in real contexts, Japanese conceptualizations of them and their environs remain largely regulated by a culturally constructed composite of the South Seas that began as early as ancient times but took on substantial significance in the modern era. Tracking discourses of representation and display such as Yosano Tekkan’s *Nan’yōkan*, can nudge the observer to reevaluate Japanese conceptualizations of the South Seas and acknowledge the various lenses by which such conceptualizations have been mediated.

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