

8. Conclusion

One of the main arguments of promoters of mass migration to Manchuria from the impoverished Japanese countryside in the 1930s and early 1940s was the inevitability of such a move. It is noteworthy that until a few years before the founding of *Manshūkoku* the resettlement of Japanese peasants on the continent was regarded as a hopeless endeavour, because the living standard of Chinese peasants and prices for agricultural products in the region were so low that Japanese peasants were not seen fit to compete in that market. As late as 1928, Yamamoto Jōtarō, president of the South Manchurian Railway Company, advised against bringing larger numbers of Japanese farmers to Manchuria. Up to 1931, the most influential magazine for the rural region, *le no hikari*, recommended emigration to Brazil. Even Nasu Hiroshi, who later became the most active proponent for Japanese emigration to Manchuria in academic circles, doubted in 1927 that mass migration to Manchuria could remedy the problem of the presumed overpopulation in Japan (Wilson 1995: 256, 259).

With the expansion of Japanese dominance in Manchuria, the mood changed. Different interest groups came together at the beginning of the 1930s and started advocating the creation of Japanese settlement in *Manshūkoku*. The Kantō Army, the military power in the region, saw these settlements as a way to spread Japanese influence over wider areas of the vast Manchurian countryside, as a reservoir for future soldiers, and as a source of food for the army. The influence of these local military advocates of Japanese immigration into the region can be seen especially in the test phase from 1932 to 1936, when the majority of settlers were reservists sent to Manchuria with the proverbial hoe in one hand and a rifle in the other. Emigration was often seen as a service for the empire, just like service in the army. In the beginning of the migration movement, settlers were therefore immune from military conscription. However, this promise was null and void in the last phase of World War II when nearly all male settlers between 18 and 45 years of age were drafted into the army (Young 1998a: 354, 408).

The counterparts of those in Manchuria wanting to pull settlers to the continent were forces in Japan that were looking for a solution to the economic problems of the countryside. The general conviction among scholars of agriculture was that in Japan's rural areas too many people were competing for too few resources. In many

villages this led to a high percentage of labour migrants, i.e., mostly young people moving temporarily to other localities to work in the industry. Besides this seasonal migration, emigration to another country in search of a job was a classical solution to the problem and had been practised in Japan since the country opened up to the outside world after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. This population movement was an important factor for the economic development of Japan and was often aided by government support in form of contracts between the Japanese government and the government that received the immigrants, as well as by a number of associations and agencies helping and counselling the individuals aspiring to resettle abroad.

Thus the idea to advise those wanting to leave their home areas in Japan to emigrate to Manchuria was nothing spectacularly new. Different public figures had proposed such a move, but the idea to send over large amounts of settlers organized in groups was mostly the brainchild of Katō Kanji. His motivation for the occupation with Manchuria was the search for room to realize an ideal agrarian society. First Katō had tried to realize his vision in agricultural training centres where young people from the countryside should learn to lead a self-sufficient life as peasants not afflicted by the ills of modern urban society. However, the realization of such a life “rooted in agriculture” – the literal translation of the Japanese name *nōhonshugi* for this ideology – within Japan, with its rapid industrialization and all the capitalist structures that had already reached the countryside, was nearly impossible. Thus the untouched land of Manchuria – also seen by many others as a field for experiment – became the centre of Katō’s vision of a new agrarian utopia. After he came into contact with proponents of Japanese agricultural settlements in Manchuria, he began to lobby for financial support of the Japanese government for an emigration programme for those willing to build settlements based on his idea of self-sufficient peasant communities.

After the Manchurian Incident of 1931 and the ensuing war in the region, public interest in Manchuria was high in Japan. In the general enthusiasm that followed the formalization of Japanese influence in the region with the founding of the puppet state of Manzhouguo, the plan to send emigrants to the new state seemed plausible to many. Katō Kanji, who could rely on a network of former fellow-students and friends from university who had built academic careers or become influential in the bureaucracy, along with his students and followers from his agricultural training centres, used the public interest in Manchuria to submit his first emigration plans to the Japanese government. However, for the first four years of the lobbying for government spon-

sorship for emigration Katō's efforts were stymied by Takahashi Korekiyō's staunch opposition as Minister of Finance to allow larger sums of the government budget to be spent for an emigration programme.

Nevertheless through the constant lobbying by migration advocates in Japan as well as in the Kantō Army, and the highly publicized resettlement of some groups of paramilitary settlers, the perception of the possibility of Japanese settlement changed from highly unlikely to absolutely necessary. When the argument of Japanese emigration to Manchuria as a necessary move took over, the feasibility of the endeavour became increasingly irrelevant.

The change of the concept of large-scale emigration to Manchuria from a utopian vision of some agrarianists into the major goal of the Japanese government occurred in the increasingly nationalistic climate after the February 26 Incident and the ensuing shift to the right in politics. It was enabled by the combination of the migration idea with the ongoing nationwide effort to revitalize the rural economy. The Japanese government had financially supported a programme administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry which tried to revitalize the rural economy by rationalization in agriculture, control of resources and promotion of self-help in the villages. This Rural Revitalization Campaign, however, reached only those households that were already better off and had resources that could be rationalized or used to diversify the family business. The rural poor did not profit from the Rural Revitalization Campaign.

Agricultural scientists and intellectuals claiming to represent the interest of Japan's rural population saw the scarcity of farmland as the main reason for the persistent poverty in many villages. The general opinion in the first half of the twentieth century in Japan was that a rural household should have a certain minimum of farmland to be able to survive economically. The minimal size of this area was even computed based on surveys conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and adjusted to the climatic conditions of the prefectures in question. The concentration on the size of fields available to rural households supported a conviction that had been discussed in academic circles for several decades, i.e., the existence of a large "surplus population" in Japan. The idea that a minimal amount of farmland was necessary for the economic survival of a rural household resulted in the conclusion that only a drastic reduction of households in the villages could save the rural economy. This assessment of the problem of rural poverty clearly neglected the importance of sideline

businesses and the influence of market mechanisms on agricultural products. It furthermore tackled the situation in Japanese villages from a merely statistical point of view. Farmland was measured by the community and statistically distributed among the registered households. If the amount of farmland per household resulting from this mathematical exercise fell below the benchmark given by ministerial bureaucrats, the village was deemed overpopulated.

This view from above totally ignored the traditional structures in the villages, where farmland was not evenly distributed among cultivators living in a more or less egalitarian society. In most villages, large amounts of land were in the hands of a few landlords, who rented out plots to the many village poor. Hardly anybody owned plots with the recommended standard size that according to the opinion of agricultural functionaries ensured household self-sufficiency. Thus the idea to relocate “surplus population” from the villages and thereby somehow bring about the increase of the remaining households’ plot sizes was far removed from reality.

On the other side, the declaration of standards for farmland sizes per household and the discussion of the ideal population in villages reflected a general trend in Japanese social politics not only in the first half of the twentieth century, i.e., the idea that it was the task of the government to actively manage society and therefore to interfere heavily in all kinds of economic and social development. The concept of the management of society by the government involves a heavy responsibility for the managing agents for the results achieved by the measures they prescribed. In the case of the Rural Revitalization Campaign, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, as the managing agent, could not just walk away from the unsolved problems left over by the shortcomings of the campaign felt especially by the rural poor.

For those dedicated to improving the economic situation in the countryside, the new government policy of 1936 asking for the resettlement of one million Japanese households to agrarian settlements in Manchuria over the course of 20 years offered an ideal solution to the predicament of the presumed number-one problem of Japan’s rural areas – overpopulation. The idea of a large-scale government-sponsored and orchestrated migration scheme as a measure of social welfare politics met the demands of those advocating a large-scale colonization project of Manchuria for political reasons. Whereas the administration of the resettlement in the trial phase was mostly managed by the comparatively small and weak Ministry of Colonial Affairs, the

large and powerful Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry took over the recruitment effort within Japan after the merger of the Rural Revitalization Campaign and the mass migration programme for Manchuria.

However, despite the heavy involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in social management in the countryside, the recruitment of the high numbers requested by the mass migration planners was a real challenge. Deciding for political reasons that a permanent population of a million peasant households was desirable for the Japanese expansion on the Asian continent and the stabilization of its influence in Manchuria was the easy part of the Manchuria migration scheme. Administrators in the central Japanese bureaucracy based their plans for the implementation of the “Millions to Manchuria” policy on this desirability. They drafted five-year plans for resettlement that seem to have never been tested for feasibility or even for plausibility in the light of experiences of earlier planners with ideas for the resettlement of Japanese farmers to the Korean peninsula (Duus 1995: 289-323).

The hard part of the mass migration scheme was the recruitment of volunteers for migration and the implementation of the resettlement plans at the grassroots level. Contrary to a simple order-obedience mechanism, the rural “surplus population” could not just be ordered to emigrate to the continent. Social management mainly works through the instrument of moral suasion, i.e., the persuasion that certain government measures are in the own interest of the people the measures are targeted at. To successfully manage desirable social developments – in this case the out-migration of large parts of Japan’s rural population – it is necessary to include the managed subjects in the process and entice their cooperation with the government programme by giving them the impression that most of the measures they are participating in are actually their own idea and that the government is just helping them in their realization.

In implementing the mass migration plans for Manchuria, the planning bureaucrats encountered a grassroots-level activism that was carried by mostly young people who were looking for practical measures to improve the economic situation in their communities. Most of these people had already been active in the Rural Revitalization Campaign and were frustrated by the outcome of the campaign for the lower income groups in village society. These locally active young people belonged to a newly emerging rural elite that was trying to break the grip of the traditional elite of

landlords and rich peasants on village politics. Some of these young people had come into contact with the ideas of agrarianism and underwent a sort of vocational training in agriculture in Katō Kanji's school, where he not only taught practical subjects connected to agriculture but also the ideology of *nōhonshugi*. Thus Katō Kanji not only brought his vision of the creation of self-sufficient peasant communities in Manchuria into government and academic circles through his personal networks of friends from his days as a student of agriculture at Tokyo Imperial University. Through his work as an agricultural educator he also dispersed his ideas among rural activists looking for concepts that could be employed to change the desperate situation in the rural economy and society.

Since emigration to Manchuria was made available as one such solution to the problems in the countryside, some of these local activists started promoting out-migration from their communities to Manchuria on their own. Young classifies the Manchurian colonization as a social movement, but without specifying which part of the complex mass migration endeavour resembled a social movement and which characteristics of the Japanese emigration movement substantiate this claim (Young 1998a: 307, 318). A look at the history and range of social movements shows that, despite the differences among them, a common characteristic of social movements is that they have the form of a campaign with collective claims and an agenda of meeting, rallies and statements (Tilly 2004). In this general perspective, the promotion of out-migration in organized groups from the Japanese countryside to agrarian settlements in Manchuria was a campaign with a collective goal propagated in meetings, statements and rallies. More important, however, is the question of the target of a social movement. Many such movements targeted authorities that did not grant certain rights (e.g., the labour movement, the peasant movement, the socialist movement). Often social movements lobbied for legal changes or some kind of reform to be brought about by government institutions. For the mass migration movement to Manchuria, however, the question of the movement's target as well as the question of a charismatic leader, often a requirement for the start of a social movement, needs to be examined a little further.

The first local activists in Nangō certainly had a clear target when they founded their local committee to promote mass migration. Their enemies were the local landlords dominating the village economy. But the idea to split the village of Nangō in half and open a new village for the disadvantaged with sufficient farmland in Manchuria, out of

the reach of the landlords, was not exactly a reform that would enforce a redistribution of wealth in the village. It was more in line with the general idea underlying the whole concept of sending the village poor to Manchuria, i.e. the eradication of poverty by exporting the poorest part of society. The start of the village-centred migration campaign in Nangō had most characteristics of a social movement: a group of people with a common goal as well as a common adversary, organizing themselves in order to attain their goal around some local leaders. The movement did not succeed in its original goal, since the traditional economic structures in the village of Nangō did not change, and the disadvantaged who resettled to Manchuria did not build their own community. They nevertheless brought a concept into the discussion about the implementation of the abstract mass migration plans that, although it was not totally new, revolutionized the Manchuria emigration policy.

Since the local activists of Nangō belonged to a network of followers of Katō Kanji's agrarianist ideas, news about Nangō's plan to manage the emigration of people from the village by village-division spread in the circles of those interested in solving the economic and social problems of their villages by out-migration. The idea to take the decision to emigrate away from the individual (the unit initially targeted by government propaganda) to the village level was born in the discussion among activists at the local and prefectural levels who were trying to put the abstract government plans with its horrendous quotas into something manageable at the grassroots level.

At this intermediate level, however, the propagation of emigration was no longer a real social movement. Since mass migration was an official government policy, local activists did not have to fight against institutions and authorities to change legislation or institutional practice to realize their goals. They did not have to petition the government or organize protest rallies, since they were the new favourites of government agencies, who without the local connections and local knowledge of the village activists had surely been much harder pressed to recruit enough volunteers to fulfil the ambitious migration quotas.

The interesting phase of the whole emigration movement is the short period when the campaign was taken out of the hands of local enthusiasts by a government apparatus. Detached from reality and caught by the imperative to fulfil quotas, the bureaucracy turned the campaign into an oppressive, top-down command mechanism. This mechanism was perpetuated to save face politically. It had nothing to do with the

original idea of offering a better life to the needy. It took approximately two years from 1937 to 1939 to conclude this process. In the end, the Village-Division Campaign was no longer a grassroots movement but had to be forcefully implemented by the prefectural and central bureaucracies. From 1940 on, the early phase when activists had shaped the campaign was conserved in a propaganda campaign which used the image of the activists as local heroes to entice peasants against their better wisdom to fill the dwindling ranks of Manchuria volunteers.

The local activism which propelled the migration campaign in the beginning was heavily influenced by the mainstream opinion that the Japanese countryside had a “land problem”. The local activists all focused on the scarcity of farmland in their communities. As recommended, they arithmetically computed the “overpopulation rate” when drafting plans for the out-migration of up to one-third of the village population. In all the early cases where local activists, imbued with genuine enthusiasm for Katō Kanji's agrarianist visions, planned the village-division, the plans mechanically “redistributed” a statistical amount of farmland left behind by a statistically computed number of surplus households. For today's reader it is hard to understand why those with local knowledge about the local land ownership and traditional power structures seemed not to have realized that the “land problem” was not so much a general scarcity of farmland but a problem of distribution its ownership. Most local activists had to admit at some point that the real problem in their villages was not that many peasants wanted to farm larger plots, but the economic recession which affected the sideline businesses like sericulture, charcoal making, or seasonal labour migration. Since the official rationale for the mass migration movement was an unfavourable ratio of farmland to households, local advocates had to play along: they were competing for additional government funding for revitalization measures in their communities when they conformed to the official policy.

In the decision-making process for village-division at the grassroots level, local activists played a decisive role. If the economic situation and its assessment by the village office had been the main criteria for the government help and subsidies that came with a community's commitment to participate in the migration scheme, bureaucrats would have chosen the participating communities according to the communities' neediness. In reality, Ministry planners accepted village-division plans from villages where local activists had drafted them, and must have scrapped villages from their list of candidates that did not follow up after the first draft. Although the initial enthu-

siasm in some villages was strong enough to produce a village-division plan, plans were more or less completed only in a few exceptional cases. One was the village of Ōhinata, which propaganda for the Village-Division Campaign of the 1940 turned into a model for the nation.

Before this village rose to national prominence it was a typical case of a community in northeast Japan with a few local landlords, a high tenancy rate, mounting private debts as well as an unbalanced village budget and a high reliance on sericulture and charcoal production. It was brought to the attention of promoters of Manchuria migration in its home prefecture Nagano, which was among the most active emigration advocates, through an embezzlement scandal that led to the purge of large parts of the old village elite from local politics. Under the auspices of the prefectural office, a young academic with roots in the village and contacts to Katō Kanji and his agrarianist network was made village mayor. Having such a prototypical local activist at the apex of the village administration made the otherwise average community an ideal test case for a mass migration scheme administered at the village level with the help of the prefectural office and the Ministry of Agricultural and Forestry. Because of the special attention of the prefectural office as well as prominent advocates of Manchuria migration coming personally to the village, decision-making and implementation for village-division was especially fast in Ōhinata. The mayor, Asakawa Takemaro, found an ideal partner in another local activist, the organizer of the local charcoal makers' cooperative, Horikawa Kiyomi. The swift implementation and relatively high quota fulfilment of Ōhinata's Village-Division Campaign was to a large part due to Horikawa's popularity and reputation in the village community.

A rare coincidence of various factors favoured a quick decision-making process – one that led to the departure of the first settlers from Ōhinata before the Sino-Japanese War on the continent erupted on a large scale and changed public perception of the resettlement in Manchuria, plus exceptionally weak opposition to migration plans within the village, where the old elite had been purged – resulted in a nearly ideal development of Ōhinata's village-division. This lucky course of events, along with the special attention the village received because of its rather accidental role of being Japan's first divided village, made out-migration from Ōhinata the ideal object of an academic study about the impact of village-division on the mother village and the conditions in the branch village in Manchuria. This study, conducted by a team of students around Katō Kanji's collaborator, the professor for agriculture Nasu Hiroshi,

revealed that despite the efforts of the activists and organizers and the emigration of a quarter of the original village population, the economic situation and amount of farmland available for the average household had improved little. Because mostly poor families with little or no land resettled, the amount of farmland left behind for redistribution under the aegis of the village's industrial cooperative was far too small to change the economic situation of the households which stayed behind. This was the general experience in all communities which sent off large parts of their population. But it should have come as no surprise to those planners and local activists who had sufficient knowledge about the rural power distribution.

The real problem behind the existence of rural poverty was hardly ever discussed. The propaganda of the emigration movement and especially that for village-division using the case of Ōhinata was based on the model of a harmonious rural community where no class tensions or conflict of interest existed between local landlords and rural have-nots. Contrary to socialist ideas, which saw the landlords as the natural enemy of the tenant, agrarianism saw urbanization and industrialization as the biggest enemy for the inhabitant of rural areas. Instead of tenant unrest instigated by advocates of socialism, the adherents of agrarianism propagated a frugal self-reliant lifestyle as a shield against the commercialization of agriculture. Consequently those looking for solutions to the economic problems of rural households could not discuss a better reaction to capitalist market forces by rural producers of sideline products like silk or charcoal. Instead of making young peasants fit for the market economy or recommending they move into full-time jobs in the growing industries, advocates of the agrarianist-inspired simple life had to focus on the provision of enough farmland for agricultural self-sufficiency. This vision presented a dilemma to its advocates. Since a revolutionary redistribution of farmland, feasible in the socialist universe of thought, was out of the question for the proponents of a harmonious community, land for the poor had to be sought outside Japan. Even those who understood that the simple arithmetic of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry used in the village-division plan would not change the reality in the Japanese village were able to propagate large areas of farmland as the main incentive for volunteers to go to Manchuria. For the activists themselves, the creation of new communities overseas provided well-paid leadership jobs in administering the settlement.

An important conclusion, already employed in the Rural Revitalization Campaign, from earlier attempts to improve the economic situation of poorer rural people was

that any effort at rural reform should not challenge the power and influence of the old elite (Young 1998a: 336). Some local activists had to learn this lesson when their efforts to mobilize not only a part of the village population (and so its labour force) but also funds from village coffers were blocked by the traditional elite, who saw no sense in spending money they paid into the village budget to send away their cheap day-labourers. Although the official chronicles of the Village-Division Campaign tried to convey the impression that three different forms of implementation of village-division were designed to provide a choice for all possible situations in communities applying for village-division, the distinction into a Nangō emigration style (out-migration from one community into several settlements), a Shōnai style (out-migration from a larger area in Japan as one group into a settlement), and an Ōhinata style (out-migration of a substantial part from one village into a branch settlement in Manchuria) was no more than an after-the-fact rationalization of the evolution of community-based out-migration concepts – concepts that in most cases did not work out because of the opposition of the old village elite, as in Nangō and Shōnai. Only in the rare ideal case of Ōhinata could such concepts be implemented as desired.

Opposition, or at least passive non-cooperation, of the traditional rural elite was an important obstacle for the Village-Division Campaign. But because the campaign's guiding ideology negated class conflict as a root problem in the countryside, this aspect could not be openly discussed. When opposition against the local activists' plans was discussed in the circle of promoters of village-division, it was usually only to recount how initial opposition turned into support for the migration movement (Asahi shinbunsha 1939: 64-65, 102-107).

In the implementation process, social differences within the village were discussed only in terms of the necessity to help poorer families. The wealth of other families was not mentioned. The possibility to send a considerable part of the population to a country where they could become landowning peasants or often even landlords renting out plots themselves offered a solution to the "land problem" – one that allowed the wealthy to keep their land and status. This did not automatically lead to all the better-off villagers accepting the village-division plans: the plans would still cost their tax money and deprive them of labour. In post-war interviews, villagers from Ōhinata admitted that even in the national model village for a harmonious village-division there was opposition from wealthier villagers to the migration scheme, and that the

general perception of the time was that the better-offs were telling the village poor to go ahead to Manchuria as they would follow later – something that in most cases did not happen (Yamada 1978: 339). One of the prominent members of the Economic Revitalization Committee in charge of implementing Ōhinata's village-division was Hatakeyama Shigesama, one of the richest people in the village. He was not only president of the industrial cooperative of the village; he was also vice-mayor and the chairman of the farm practice association of the hamlet of Hongō, the richest part of Ōhinata (Yamada 1978: 338). He is an example for those wealthy villagers who actively supported village-division without resettling themselves – probably thinking that the offer of farmland in Manchuria for the village poor would justify his own landholding and wealth and would help to keep the social peace in the village.

The implementation of out-migration without major disturbances in the village society was a challenge for local organizers. They not only had to find volunteers for the emigration group; they also had to find ways to justly administer the redistribution of emigrants' belongings. Since most of the volunteers were heavily in debt, the organizers had to devise methods to regulate the debts of prospective settlers that would not further antagonize the wealthy villagers who usually were the creditors. At the same time they had to offer a prospective to indebted individuals that made emigration an attractive way to get rid of the family's debt. Important agents in handling the practical side of out-migration were the village industrial cooperatives, a traditional field of activity for local activists and reformers. So another contribution of local activists to the Village-Division Campaign was administering the resettlement in a non-confrontational way, i.e., settling financial and other practical matters without antagonizing the traditional village elite. The degree to which this strategy to preserve harmony was successful determined how much cooperation the activists received from the elite. Where the migration plans interfered with agendas of local entrepreneurs who relied on low-income villagers for cheap labour (as in Yomikaki), parts of the elite withdrew their support for the campaign.

An important characteristic of a social movement is that it mobilizes participants on a voluntary basis. Participants usually join the movement because they believe in its goals and hope to profit from its achievements. In the Village-Division Campaign, this was certainly true for the first enthusiasts who propagated out-migration and often resettled with the first groups from their villages. But setting migrant quotas often led to drafting people who were not really volunteers in the latter parts of the campaign.

Even in Ōhinata some of the emigrants were more or less pressured to resettle (Yamada 1978: 342). The enthusiastic voluntary participants often followed a charismatic leader, but the topic of “leadership” within the Village-Division Campaign poses another problem in the assessment of the campaign as a social movement.

Some social movements are closely associated with their charismatic leaders – people who represent the movements’ concerns in public appearances. These leaders often symbolize the cause of the movement by fighting against discrimination or other problems that they themselves face. The agrarianists in Japan surely had a charismatic leader in Kato Kanji, who in a biography written as recently as 1984 is depicted in a sage-like way (Nakamura 1984). Katō must have been a very convincing advocate of his cause, mobilizing intellectuals and politicians, as well as infecting pupils with the emigration virus in his lectures on agrarianism. These followers then carried this virus back to their home communities.

For the Village-Division Campaign, however, the charisma of local leaders was much more important than the general influence of Katō Kanji. Although Katō, as well as other emigration proponents such as Sugino Tadao, travelled the countryside giving lectures about the endeavour, the real mobilization effort had to be made by local proponents. They were the ones who talked their fellow villagers into joining the campaign, and sometimes led them to the continent by volunteering for resettlement themselves. The emotional attachment of emigrants to the migration movement happened at the local level, not at the national level or through a direct connection to Katō Kanji.

The Village-Division Campaign that unfolded on a national scale did not have a charismatic national leader, but was administered by a bureaucracy implementing social management measures. To successfully implement those measures, respected local leaders and activists were co-opted. They became the local agents of moral suasion, convincing their communities that participation in the government policy of migration was in everybody’s best interests. The incentive for the activists themselves often was the possibility to further their careers in the new settlements. Activists who decided to join the emigration groups were treated with special consideration during the recruitment and training process. Potential local promoters of the migration idea were treated to inspection tours on the continent; local leaders and specialists of the Village-Division Campaign were given a special training apart from ordinary settlers;

they were awarded generous payments in their jobs in administering the new settlements. Although some of the new leaders in the Village-Division Campaign, like Horikawa Kiyomi, came from a humble background and fought for the rights of the lower level of village society, most of these leaders were not the type of social movement leaders who fought against their own poverty or discrimination. Rather, they were acting as paternalistic caretakers claiming to represent the interests of the village poor who could not organize themselves of their own accord.

When the campaign ran out of genuine local enthusiasts, the implementation process changed. After the first nationwide hype depicting Manchuria as paradise on earth, reality set in. People became increasingly aware that Japan was actually fighting a war on the continent, and that resettlement was no guarantee for a carefree life. In most cases not enough volunteers could be recruited to complete the local village-division plans.

This was not only due to passiveness or disinterest among the rural population. The home communities implementing village-division plans also closely followed the progress of the resettlement of their fellow villagers. Some of the results were less than satisfying, so deterred the undecided from registering to emigrate. A commission from Yomikaki village which spent 23 days on an inspection tour in Manchuria in March 1939 encountered a settlement for their branch village that had many problems. They assessed the implementation of Yomikaki's village-division plan very critically. Some even felt cheated (Takahashi 1997: 212-213, 262-264).

To counteract this, the propaganda effort explaining the necessity of emigration and the benefits of the Village-Division Campaign for rural areas was stepped up. *Ie no hikari* featured Manchuria emigration in nearly every issue in 1940. This was a propaganda effort that had started with a few features a year in the early and mid-1930s, accelerated with more features accompanying the evolution of the Village-Division Campaign, peaked in 1940 and 1941, and petered out with occasional features until 1943. Thus the stepping up of the media campaign followed the ebbing of the grassroots enthusiasm, as did the usage of the story of Ōhinata's village-division in a novel, play and movie. This propaganda campaign substituted the local activists – who were now lacking in many villages – with the idealized role models of the depictions of Ōhinata. In the process, the story of these locally active people was changed slightly to turn them into local heroes. These heroes on their own came to

the conclusion that village-division was the only solution to their community's problems, and they put their ideas into practice without much social conflict within the community. The major agency for implementing village-division in the 1940s – the government, through the prefectural office and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry – appeared in the propaganda only as a helping hand in the background: one that supported the local activists but did not interfere in their local affairs. This is a classical case of moral suasion that aimed at suggesting to the targeted part of the population that the measures prescribed by the government were actually the natural solutions to people's problems and in their own best interests.

The rural population reacted with passivity to these government efforts. The recruitment of settlers in the 1940s often used considerable pressure and was not accompanied by the same enthusiasm as in the early phases. A logical consequence would have been the discontinuation of the whole programme. Instead, the settlers became "victims of the empire", as Young calls them (Young 1998a: 399-411). Wilson puts the continuation of the emigration movement down to the takeover of military priorities within the political bureaucracy. She argues that emigration had become a symbol of Japan's advance into the ranks of the powerful nations and saw itself as the civilizing force necessary in Manchuria (Wilson 1995: 284-286). In this perspective settlers were actually regarded as objects to be moved around for the sake of the empire.

The provocative question is, why did some rural people let themselves be treated like this? The committee from Yomikaki that went on the inspection tour to Manchuria and the Yomikaki settlement there in March 1939 first made an effort to voice its dissatisfaction with the development of their village-division scheme. They compiled a proposal of five points aiming at a better implementation of Yomikaki's village-division, but in the end they did not dare to stop the whole project, and against their better judgement published a positive report of their tour to Manchuria in the village gazette (Takahashi 1997: 262-264). Most emigration plans, especially when the Village-Division Campaign was officially changed into a District-Division Campaign providing considerable leeway in the scope of settlers' recruitment, were implemented despite the difficulties in recruitment. It was implemented by bureaucrats who tried to do their job by fulfilling abstract migration plans with unrealistic quotas, without thinking about the consequences for the people affected. Although settlers were not recruited at gunpoint or forcefully sent to Manchuria, the campaign of the 1940s often employed

considerable pressure to fill the ranks of the emigrant groups. Moral suasion, or the reasonable suggestion that a certain behaviour or action was beneficial to the individual or household, often turned into group pressure in village communities exercised upon the most vulnerable members of the rural society to persuade them to leave.

This was surely not what the early activists wanted. They had shaped the mass migration movement into a community-based campaign aiming at resolving the economic problems of rural areas, and they contributed to the implementation of the biggest government-sponsored mass migration movement in Japanese history by administering the out-migration from their communities. Some of these activists became the new elite in their Japanese home village after they were co-opted by the planners of the Village-Division Campaign. Those who decided to take up a leading position within the migration movement and resettled to Manchuria, however, shared the fate of all the ordinary settlers at the end of World War II.