

ONO Shinji 小野信爾. *Kyōdaisei Onokun no senryōki gokuchū nikki* 京大生小野君の占領期獄中日記 (University of Kyōto student Ono's occupation-era prison diary). Edited by Unoda Shōya, Nishi Yūko, Nishiyama Shin, Ono Kazuko, and Uno Junko. Kyōto: Kyōto University, 2018. 302 pages. ISBN: 978-4814001255. 3,800 yen.

Recent research has expanded coverage of the Korean War as scholars advance from more traditional questions about the war's origins and nature, such as when the battles started and whether the war constituted a civil or international conflict. A recent compilation of essays edited by Tessa Morris-Suzuki considers the effects of the war on neighboring Asian countries, primarily Japan, but also Mongolia, Taiwan, and US-administered Okinawa.¹ A second collection coedited by Steven Lee and Janice Kim examines micro issues along the Korean peninsula, such as Pusan's wartime situation and Syngman Rhee's decision to release POWs, among other issues.²

Research regarding the Korean War's influence on Japan has benefited from a richer historiography. In addition to extensive attention that the war received in literature on the US occupation of Japan,³ Richard Dingman and Ōnuma Hisao 大沼久夫 separately outline the social and economic changes that the war brought to the Japanese archipelago and detail the direct participation of Japanese on the peninsula, even on the battlefields themselves.⁴ Tessa Morris-Suzuki's contributions to her edited volume further developed this topic. We learn from her contribution that as many as 8,000 Japanese crossed over to the peninsula during the early years of the war, of whom 47 died.⁵

Ono Shinji's 小野信爾 prison diaries reveal a history invisible to this historiography: how the Japanese and US governments handled participants in Japan's anti-Korean War movement. In February 1951, just as Ono was preparing to enter his third year at the prestigious University of Kyoto (京都大学), he was assigned the task of distributing anti-war handbills in the vicinity of the Shimogamo 下鴨 police station by the Japanese communist party, which he had

¹ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, ed. *The Korean War in Asia: A Hidden War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018).

² *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 24, no. 2–3 (2017).

³ For example, John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), and Takemae Eiji, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy*, trans. Robert Ricketts and Sebastian Swann (New York: Continuum, 2002).

⁴ Roger Dingman, "The Dagger and the Gift: The Impact of the Korean War on Japan," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 29–55; Ōnuma Hisao 大沼久夫, *Chōsen sensō to Nihon* 朝鮮戦争と日本 [The Korean War and Japan] (Tokyo: Shinkansha, 2006).

⁵ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "A Fire on the Other Shore?: Japan and the Korean War Order," in *The Korean War in Asia*, ed. Tessa Morris-Suzuki ed., 12–13 (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018).

joined the previous November. These handbills directly criticized the United States' involvement in the Korean War (*Amerika no Chōsen sensō in kyōryoku suruna* アメリカの朝鮮戦争に協力するな). He was immediately surrounded by police and arrested, initially for violating Article 37 of the recently passed Local Civil Servants Act (*Chihōkōmuinhō* 地方公務員法) that ruled it illegal to disturb the work of government workers. The charges, deemed inappropriate, were quickly changed to a violation of Occupation Legislation Ordinance #325 (*senryōhō kiseirei* 占領法規政令) and Imperial Edict #311 (*chokurei* 勅令), perhaps so that his trial could be moved to a US military court in Osaka.⁶ This Ordinance and Edict prohibited any “offense prejudicial to the security of the Occupation Forces,” under which fell Ono’s act of “unlawful . . . dissemination of subversive handbills” (20). He was assigned a trial lawyer who, after putting forth his client’s plea of guilty, did little more than doodle in his notepad (20–21). For his crime the judge handed down a rather harsh sentence: three years of hard labor (*jūrōdō* 重労働) and a \$1,000 fine, later reduced to two years of hard labor with no fine. He would serve just over one year in prison, his release coming at the precise moment that Japan regained its sovereignty—10:30 am on April 22, 1952. Pressure from university officials for him to “voluntarily withdraw” (*jishu taigaku* 自主退学) from school proved unsuccessful, in part due to classmates rallying to his cause. The school settled for his submitting successive leave of absence (*kyūgaku* 休学) requests until his release allowed him to resume his studies (5–8).

Ono’s diary provides information on everyday life in Japanese prisons. He offers descriptions of his fellow inmates, a number of whom were Korean political prisoners, along with the discussions they shared. He lists the books he read, which interestingly included works by leftist writers such as Frederick Engels and Upton Sinclair. The inmates were also given access to magazines such as *Chūō kōron* (Central Review 中央公論), although Ono found it disturbing that this monthly was allowed while the left-leaning *Sekai* (世界) was not (127). The prison also celebrated holidays. For instance, Coming of Age Day (*Seijin no hi* 成人の日) meant a day off from work (153). In late December officials decorated the prison with a Christmas tree and invited a female youth group to perform a song and dance show to entertain the prisoners (141). The inmates were also allowed to compete against other prison factories (*kōjō*) in an autumn baseball tournament (101). His year in prison also included a short time spent in the filth of a concrete-floored detention room (*ryūchijō* 留置場), the reason for which he does not reveal (173–74).

Ono’s entries emphasize the thirst for information from the outside world that prison life left in inmates, be it from the books and magazines they had access to, the occasional letters they received from home, or the news that filtered in through radio broadcasts that officials piped into the prison. These broadcasts gave Ono access to important events across the world, many of which earned brief mention in his diary. Whether as punishment, as a demonstration of control, or

⁶ Ono Kazuko, who offers a detailed description of these courts and how they operated in Japan in this volume, calculated that as many as 10,946 people (the majority of whom were Japanese and Koreans) faced trial in these courts between 1947 and 1952 (270).

simply because of faulty machinery, Ono often reported times of frustration when the broadcasts were suspended, sometimes for a day, but occasionally for weeks at a time. These contacts with the outside world often served as topics of discussions between inmates. Ono noted the pleasures he gained from discussions he shared with a Mr. Pak, a Korean who had spent time in Siberia during the Russian revolutionary period (42). His interactions with fellow inmates constituted an important element of the “criminal technique training” (*hanzai gijutsu no kunren* 犯罪技術の訓練) he gained through prison life. He credits this “training” with deepening his understanding of leftist thought, such as the contradictions he believed to be inherent in capitalist thinking (50).

As a member of the Japanese communist party Ono naturally held negative views toward capitalism and “US imperialism,” as well as the emerging relations that Japan was forging with its erstwhile enemy. His diary contains frequent entries of concern that US occupation policies were leading Japan back toward the militarism they were originally designed to eradicate. He recognized similarities between the military governments of Japan during the prewar years and the Japan that was emerging in the early 1950s. Ono interpreted the April 1951 imperial visit by Douglas MacArthur’s replacement, Matthew Ridgway, as a “Fascist-centered plan to influence a domestic and international reaction” (95). It is slightly ironic—and perhaps decided with intention—that for his work detail he was assigned the job of tailoring clothing for first the US army and later for the emerging Japanese National Police Reserve (*keisatsu yobitai* 警察予備隊). Ono often remarked of the dilemma he felt over whether he should cooperate in this war-related labor or simply refuse to work, which on occasion he did (199).

Ono was particularly critical of the peace treaty that Japan and the United States negotiated in San Francisco in 1951, which went into effect the following year. His primary concern was whether the relations that the treaty renewed would draw Japan into a third world war, one that he believed would end in atomic catastrophe. He expressed this in a rather lengthy memo that he drafted on March 8, 1952 where he criticized the Japanese people for “entering the mountain without seeing it” (*yama ni hairu mono yama ni mizu* 山に入る者山を見ず). The Japanese people had been duped once before into supporting a senseless war; they did not realize that through the separate peace that Japan signed with the United States this history was being repeated (208).

After his release on April 22, 1952, Ono completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Kyoto and advanced to finish a master’s degree and doctoral coursework where he ended his formal education without writing a dissertation (hardly exceptional at this time in Japan). Soon thereafter he secured a teaching position at Hanazono University (花園大学) in Kyoto, where he enjoyed a productive career specializing in modern Chinese history, and particularly the May 4 (1919) movement, up through his retirement in 2001.

Ono’s diary, along with the commentary provided by the book’s editors, underlines the contradictions of the post-World War II US occupations of Northeast Asian territory, particularly those that followed the “Reverse Course” of 1947–1948 when the United States initiated a policy change that prioritized economic and

military revival over the democratization and demilitarization it had emphasized from September 1945. Arrested for utilizing his democratic right of free speech, Ono criticized the US-Japan peace treaty for its promotion of a more militarized Japanese state, despite the fact that Japan's return to sovereignty gained for him (and many others) an early release from prison. This suggests that he most likely would have received a much lighter sentence, if any at all, had he been tried in Japanese civil courts. His experience reveals a fundamental contradiction in US Northeast Asian occupations: the victor's vow to nurture democracy in Japan and southern Korea while utilizing undemocratic means to administer these peoples.

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