

ANNETTE SKOVSTED HANSEN

Memories of War in Asia: How Japanese Technical Assistance Programs Challenged Memories of a Japanese Enemy in Asia, 1955-2005

Alumni newsletters distributed to more than 70.000 alumni from 70 plus countries shape new and old memories as they refer to a new shared and transnational past of development assistance and introduce older shared pasts of war, selectively. Memories of war in Asia played a significant role in the conceptualization and initial implementation of development assistance as part of Japanese diplomacy in the 1950s and 1960s, and partly explain the primarily Asian focus of Japanese development assistance. In 1954, Japan became a member of the Colombo Plan and began an official technical assistance program by financing courses in Japan for Asians including participants from former Japanese colonies. The paper explores how newsletters for alumni from training courses in Japan presented and contributed to developing memories in the postwar period. The alumni newsletters have inspired and sustained new memories of a generous Japan, which promotes development. However, the uses of the word 'co-prosperity' in the 1970s reminded alumni of memories of exploitation and unfulfilled promises of a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere of the 1940s and the blatant favoritism of Japanese interests in economic cooperation of the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, I argue that memories of war resurface primarily as memories of Japanese devastation and victims of the atomic bombs that function as a comparison to subsequent economic success and work for world peace.

Annette Skovsted Hansen, PhD, Associate Professor, Aarhus University