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Searching for New Perspectives on Contemporary History of Korea: Rethinking
Decolonization, Military Occupations, and the Ideas for a Democratic Korea

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Conference Proceeding

Decolonization on the Waterfront: Fukuoka, Pusan, and the End of Empire

Hannah SHEPHERD
Yale University

From August 1945, crossing the maritime boundary of the Tsushima Strait transformed colonial subjects into citizens, and settlers into repatriates. In the immediate wake of Japan's defeat and Korea's liberation in 1945, the waterfronts of Pusan and Hakata became hubs of decolonization.

In this paper I offer a regional perspective on the period on either side of August 15, by tracing the perspectives of actors who lived and travelled through the two key repatriation ports of Pusan and Hakata, to understand how this moment was understood and experienced by those on the ground, as well as how longer histories in both port cities affected, and were affected by this turbulent transition. First, how did the attitudes of those "on the ground" impact these processes? Over the longer term, how did these processes affect the urban histories of these two key repatriation ports? Finally, how are these processes remembered—in local history and urban space—today? Using sources such as the *Minju Jungbo*, the successor Korean-language newspaper to the colonial era *Pusan Nippō*, and the local Fukuoka zainichi publication the *Seiki Shinbun*, I ar-

gue that the incremental processes and logistics of decolonization, and the perspectives of those involved in their mechanics, must be understood in a longer-durée regional perspective, both prior to August 15, 1945, and in the weeks, months, and years after it as well.

Hannah SHEPHERD is an assistant professor of history specializing in modern Japan and its empire in the Department of History at Yale University. Before joining the Yale faculty, she was a Junior Research Fellow in History at Trinity College, University of Cambridge. She holds degrees from Harvard University (AM, PhD), SOAS (MA), and the University of Oxford (BA Hons). Her first book, *The Narrowing Sea: Fukuoka, Pusan, and the Rise and Fall of an Imperial Region*, is due to be published in December 2025 by the California University Press.