

# Victory through Good Governance: Home Ministry Bureaucrats in Wartime Singapore

**Date:** Friday, 12 February 2016

**Time:** 16:00 – 17:30

**Venue:** JS Meeting Room (AS4/03-28)

**Speaker:** Clay Eaton, Columbia University (PhD Candidate)

## Abstract

In the early months of 1942 the Japanese military faced an administrative crisis: the invasion of colonial Southeast Asia had succeeded beyond all expectation, bringing a vast swath of territory into the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Army and Navy leaders lacked the capacity, and often the desire, to deal with the minutiae of daily administration in these new territories. To make up for this shortfall the Japanese government sent thousands of civilian bureaucrats to staff the military administrations of Southeast Asia. Locally, the military recruited resident Japanese as clerical workers, translators, and sometimes as senior administrators. These men and women worked in uniform, but their diverse prewar experiences informed the approaches they took to local governance. Many found ways to subtly but powerfully influence occupation policy.

These men and women often criticized military policy but supported the underlying goal of creating a “New Order” in Asia. This presentation will focus on a powerful but understudied group of civilian administrators in wartime Singapore (renamed Syonan): bureaucrats and policemen from Japan’s Home Ministry. It will begin with a consideration of Ōdachi Shigeo: mayor of Syonan and bitter opponent of hardline officers in the military administration. Ōdachi was a committed authoritarian, but his paternalistic approach to local residents set the tone for municipal administration throughout the occupation. The presentation will then consider how this style of administration manifested itself in Syonan’s Auxiliary Police Force (APF), an analogue to Japan’s neighborhood associations (*tonarigumi*) that served as a model for the region. The activities of the APF help us to understand the problematic role of Japanese civilians in the management (and mismanagement) of the Southern Co-Prosperity Sphere.

## About Speaker

Clay Eaton is a PhD Candidate at the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University. His dissertation focuses on social policies implemented by the Japanese administration of Singapore during the Second World War. He studies both Japanese policy-making and the diverse local responses to the administration’s initiatives.

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