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Koreans as Japanese as Manchurians: Korean Nationality in Manchuria

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KOREANS AS JAPANESE AS MANCHURIANS

KOREAN NATIONALITY IN MANCHURIA

by

SANTIAGO J. RAVELLO

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

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Introduction and Context

The post-World War One international order gave strong emphasis to notions of ethnic self-determination espoused by both Woodrow Wilson and Vladimir Lenin. This would lead to major reforms in understandings of international relations, such as the eclipse of the empire by the nation-state as the primary political unit. These changes emboldened movements of colonized people in asserting their freedom and claiming a physical state for their ethnic nation.

These challenges to the old order of strong imperialist states asserting their control over their backwards colonial subjects would create problems for many imperialist powers, including the Empire of Japan. Despite its relatively recent introduction to the industrial era and imperial enterprise, Japan rose quickly in global prestige through the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, defeating and overtaking China; the historically dominant force in East Asia. Japan continued to challenge racial stereotypes applied by the West, and had asserted themselves as a world power to be reckoned with after their victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.

Despite its rapid ascendancy, however, the new post-World War One order and its alleged condemnation of imperialism would cut short Japan's imperial ambitions. In response to these changes, pan-Asian and anti-West rhetoric came to be used frequently in justifying the Empire's actions. Early pan-Asian thinkers in Japan, such as Koderu Kenkichi, who helped popularize the discourse in Japanese politics in the 1910s, also feared a confrontation between Asia and the West. Within Japan, Koderu emphasized closer Sino-Japanese ties as a means to create a united front against further Western incursions into East Asia. Although it was seemingly a defensive position from which Japan sought to establish closer ties with China, the rhetoric used revealed certain caveats to pan-Asianism as understood by Japan. Koderu referred to Japan as the "strongest nation among the yellow race," while referring to China as "backward"

and their lack of modernization as a “disease” that could only be cured with Japanese help. He justified Japanese interest and interference with Chinese affairs by claiming that the stability of China was pertinent to Japanese security.¹ While urging cooperation with China, Koderá’s language made it clear that he meant for Japan to lead Asia and was of the opinion that China lacked the ability to organize itself effectively against Western imperialism.

Following the publishing of Koderá’s seminal *Treatise on Greater Asianism* in 1916, his views on what Japan’s relationship to East Asia should be became mainstream. Although pan-Asianism took many forms and had several debates raging on within its discourse at any given time, Koderá’s call for an Asian alliance, led by Japan, is visible in much of pan-Asian literature. While never formally adopted as a policy by the Japanese government, the greater opportunities for expansion presented by this discourse led future imperial gains to be justified along these pro-Asian, anti-Western ideals.²

One area where this ideological shifts become visible is in Japanese expansion into the region of Manchuria located in Northeastern China.³ Beginning in 1905 with the acquisition of it as a protectorate, Japan began its expansion in the area by making claims on behalf of the Koreans. This process, and the kinds of claims being made, would intensify following the annexation of Korea into the Japanese Empire in 1910. The strategy of gradual expansion through their Korean subjects was, however, replaced with outright invasion by the Japanese Kwantung Army in 1931. The result of the invasion (which was launched without the permission

¹ Sven Saaler. "The Construction of Regionalism in Modern Japan: Koderá Kenkichi and His 'Treatise on Greater Asianism' (1916)." *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 6 (2007): 1276-77.

² Saaler, "Construction of Regionalism in Japan," 1276-77.

³ A note on terminology: "Manchuria" refers to the geographic region known as Manchuria which consists of what could be called modern Northeast China. "Manchukuo" refers to the nation-state and its political borders as they existed from 1932 until 1945. When the term "Manchurian" is used however, it could refer to either to the geographic region or the political entity depending on context.

of the Japanese home government), precipitated the establishment of the “independent state” of Manchukuo. It claimed to emerge from alleged co-operation between Japanese forces and Manchu nationalists pursuing national self-determination, following the collapse of the Manchu-ruled Chinese Qing Dynasty in 1912.

Manchukuo was founded in 1932 and would be superficially presided over from 1934 by the former and final emperor of Qing China, Puyi. The region was in fact the homeland of the Manchu ethnicity who had conquered and established their dynasty over China in 1644. Emperor Puyi declared that his state would have “no discrimination with respect either to race or creed.”⁴ Its state motto of “Harmony between the Five Races (Han Chinese, Manchu, Mongols, Koreans, and Japanese)”⁵ reflected ideas from the pan-Asian rhetoric that had existed for the past decades. As a member of the minority Manchu ethnic group that had ruled over China during its final dynasty, Emperor Puyi claimed to represent Manchu, and more broadly, pan-Asian interests in his role as the nominal leader of Manchukuo. An investigation group known as the Lytton Commission (after its head investigator) was dispatched by the League of Nations to gather information on the Japanese invasion and the legitimacy of the new state. Citing Japan’s role in

⁴ Rosalia Avila-Tapias. “Co-Ethnic Spatial Concentrations and Japan's 1930s Concord Project for Manchukuo.” *Geographical Review of Japan Series B* 88, no. 2 (2016): 49.

⁵ It should be pointed out that there is some contention over which ethnicities formed the Five Races. Alternative to the five presented above, there is evidence to suggest a line-up that included Russians but not Han Chinese (Tamanai, 253). The logic of this is two-fold: by including Russians, Japanese could demonstrate Manchukuo’s toleration to Westerners and Christianity in attempt to have the West look favorably on the puppet-state. Furthermore, rather than being removed, the Han Chinese were instead counted as Manchurian (滿人) in order to inflate the appearance of Manchurians in Manchukuo (Han Chinese made up 90% of Manchukuo’s population) (Lytton, 25). This version of the Five Races is corroborated through the Japanese document recognizing Manchukuo that asked all references to Han Chinese (漢人) be replaced with Manchurian (Dubois, 758). For the sake of this paper, however, I have chosen the version I have for a few reasons. In Manchukuo, Russians were given relative autonomy in forming their own legal systems, meanwhile, much more policy is aimed at standardizing laws for the version of the Five Races used in the thesis. Furthermore, in the rich graphic archive of Manchurian postcards and propaganda posters depicting the principle of Racial Harmony (五族協和), the individuals on the posters meant to represent the races of Manchukuo regularly feature distinguishable Han and Manchu characters while Russians were seldom seen. While there was Manchurian propaganda highlighting its Russian residents, they were rarely connected to the racial harmony ideology beyond a superficial level.

initiating the invasion into the region, and the majority Japanese cabinet within Manchukuo's government, the Commission declared Manchukuo a Japanese puppet-state.⁶ In response to Japanese claims of supporting Manchu self-determination, the Lytton Report further commented that Manchuria was "unalterably [Han] Chinese" as a result of the centuries of Han Chinese movement and influence into the Qing lands and administration.⁷ This findings would result in Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations the same year.

The establishment of Manchukuo presented a hope for a pan-Asian state that would exemplify the best traits of the diverse region's respective cultures. Manchukuo, along with the Japanese pan-Asian discourse that governed it, instead featured the same condescending attitude held by the Japanese towards the rest of East Asia. Kodera's vision of Japan as leader of an otherwise lost cause had been widely disseminated. The Japanese administrators in Manchukuo helped to bring legitimacy to this attitude through the implementation of Manchukuo's secondary slogan, *ōdō Rakudo* (王道楽土), or "The Kingly Way." The slogan is primarily accredited to Zheng Xiaoxu, a Puyi loyalists and the first Prime Minister of Manchukuo. It was meant to mix notions of Confucian polity with mechanisms of the modern nation-state.⁸ This slogan brought forth images of a proper Confucian state and helped to justify social stratification occurring under Japanese rule through features like "proper place." It also, however, was meant to appeal to pan-Asian sentiments by demonstrating respect for what appeared to be a traditional Chinese model of ruling.

⁶ Edward R. Bulwer-Lytton. "Report of the Lytton Commission of Inquiry" (League of Nations, Geneva, 1932).

⁷ Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 41.

⁸ Thomas David Dubois, "Rule of Law in a Brave New Empire: Legal Rhetoric and Practice in Manchukuo," *Law and History Review* 26, no. 2 (2008): 293. doi:10.1017/S073824800001322.

This thesis will explore the role of the contradictions between Japanese pan-Asian rhetoric and imperial policy regarding Japanese activity in Manchukuo. Further explored will be the ramifications of the continued disregard by Japan for the new international norms, especially as pertains to its pan-Asian project, Manchukuo. The treaties examined were signed prior to the 1931 invasion and are indicative of the kinds of practices through which Japan enacted diplomacy before the post-World War One system. Through the use of vague terms and broad interpretations of what are now seen as cornerstones of the modern nation-state, borders and citizenship, Japan paid little heed to the trivialities of statehood in order to achieve imperial expansion. In Manchukuo, the Japanese would be unsuccessful in harmonizing their rhetoric and their actions and consequently failed to convince many observers both inside and outside of the Empire that Manchukuo was a legitimate state. In particular, the unsuccessful attempts at establishing something resembling a Manchurian nationality law reveals how Manchukuo struggled to appear legitimate while continuing policies favoring Japanese subjects.

Examining this narrative through a Korean lens is useful for a number of reasons. The treaties examined concerning disputes between Japan and China regarding Manchukuo are either directly concerning Korean interests or used to pursue them in order to expand into the region. After 1932, it was concerns related to Korean subjects that hindered nationality reform and ultimately prevented the passage of a Manchurian nationality law. Lastly, throughout this narrative, Koreans exist in a unique position from which to further understand the contradictions present in the Japanese Empire. Since the 1920's Koreans were subject to harsh "cultural rule" which aimed to replace traditional Korean ways with that of Japan in order to better assimilate the Koreans into the Empire. These policies included banning the use of the Korean language while enforcing Japanese language education, and forcing Koreans to participate in Japanese

religious ceremonies. In Manchuria, however, Koreans, as Japanese subjects, had access to better material resources and security relative to their Chinese and Manchu neighbors. This bred animosity between Koreans and local Chinese who began to think of the Koreans as the henchmen of the Japanese. The Korean perspective is useful in that it offers a view from within the Empire that is simultaneously privileged and oppressed through its status as a Japanese subject.

Historiography

The intellectual framework for this thesis primarily concerns issues that arise via the interplay of citizenship and identity. In understanding this phenomena, two works stand out in their influence on the paper. *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson is known for the introduction of its titular concept in understanding the formation of the modern nation-state. Anderson argues that the spread of writings in the vernacular and the development of print capitalism such as newspapers led the modern-nation state to be thought of as an “imagined community,” held together through language and mass communication. Although Anderson’s work largely overlooks East Asia, it nonetheless provided an interesting framework; notions of this “imagined community” can be seen in the use of pan-Asian rhetoric to legitimize the Japanese Empire.

Attempting to establish a proper framework for examining the Empire-building attempt by the Japanese, Eiji Oguma’s *A Genealogy of Japanese Self-Images* has been instrumental. Oguma charts the different discourses on Japanese identity that were present in Imperial Japan and helps to understand how Empire changed Japanese racial discourse. As the Empire widened, it began to incorporate more non-ethnic Japanese peoples into the category of Japanese subject. At home, racial rhetoric began to adopt pan-Asian ideas to widen who would be thought of as

“Japanese” while simultaneously engraining negative stereotypes held by the Japanese towards their non-Japanese subjects into their acceptance of new colonized peoples.

Louise Young's *Japan's Total Empire* provided as a useful means to understand the larger narrative of Manchukuo and its ties to Japan. Not only does it provide a comprehensive political history of Manchukuo, but its thesis is focused on the perception of Manchukuo in the Japanese popular imagination. The string of victories by the Japanese military and increased nationalism resulted in Manchukuo becoming quite popular in Japan as propaganda sought to establish ties between Japan and Manchuria by framing the latter as a lifeline for the former. By providing a Japanese-centric narrative on Manchukuo, Young's work helped to better understand Manchukuo as a puppet-state.

Concerning Koreans in Manchuria *Two Dreams in One Bed*, by Hyun Ok Park explores the Korean experience of economic exploitation by the Japanese through development companies. Paying special attention to Koreans in Kando, Park used “territorial osmosis” to describe the encroachment into Manchuria by the Japanese through the Koreans. Her work also highlights the dispossession of Koreans from their land in Korea for the benefit of incoming Japanese farmers, a notable concern at the time. Although the scholarship focusing on the Korean experience, specifically Kando, is limited, a detailed analysis provides insight in the contradictory nature of Japanese Imperialism.

Lastly, in understanding the legal debates going on during the time written about, The Lytton Report and the Report on the Korean Problem in Manchuria (a study done as part of the Lytton Commission) also served foundational texts in understanding the situation in Manchuria. The Lytton Report was undertaken to investigate the Mukden Incident, a staged bombing by the Japanese to justify their invasion into Manchuria. The report on Koreans was undertaken as one

of many studies of the Lytton investigation. Both reports succinctly summarize the situation that developed in Manchuria and provide in-depth information on Chinese and Japanese claims and the role of Koreans in the region. Additionally, they examine the treaties and laws passed by the nations concerned in managing the increasingly tense situation. The information contained in the two reports on the territorial claims of the two powers are as central to understanding the situation now as they were when they were published.

By examining the experience of the Koreans in Manchukuo and the laws and treaties affecting them through a larger global context and changing international norms, the thesis will demonstrate how this changes presented themselves in law. By understanding the kinds of legal and logical hoops through which the Japanese had to jump in order to preserve their expanding empire, one gains insight into the disorderly manner through which Manchukuo was governed. This is important in understanding Japanese imperialism as it reveals some of the less noticeable pressures that bureaucrats and legislatures felt at this time. As the war situation worsened and Japan sought to take advantage of all available resources they began to grant their non-Japanese subjects something resembling citizenship. The subjects would acquire more rights and as well as obligations, including conscription. This process was hindered, however, by the legal knot that Japan had to untie in discerning the kinds of rights that could be safely given to resentful subjects.

Korea and Manchuria

When discussing Kando (Jiando in Chinese), it is important to first ask whose Kando is being examined. While it is correct to assert that Kando is a region above Korea known for its high number of Koreans living there, extensive research by this historian has failed to produce concrete borders for the region that are agreed upon by the Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese. For

example, the Korean Goguryeo Dynasty (37BCE-668AD), which stretched beyond the Korean peninsula and into Manchuria (including Kando) made it an ancestral home to some Koreans, while other families remained in the region for centuries. This legacy appears in Korean exile and immigrant literature in Manchuria during the early 20th century which frequently used ‘Kando’ and ‘Manchuria’ interchangeably despite obvious geographic problems with that.⁹

Today, the region known as Kando still exists as part of China but has become the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture. The area continues to support a prevalent (if shrinking) Korean presence. It is important to note however, that the modern borders of the prefecture were largely the result of the Kando Treaty, agreed upon by the governments of the Chinese Republic and the Japanese Empire. Perhaps a better estimate of the natural border of the region would be the East Manchurian Mountains, since over half of the Korean immigrants had settled between the Korean border and the mountains by 1929. There they made up around two-thirds of the regional population, making up 395,847 of Kando’s 518,752 people in 1931.¹⁰

There doesn’t appear to be an accurate estimate of the population of Manchuria and Kando before Manchukuo was established in 1932. Despite estimates made by both China and Japan, a truly accurate population count for Manchuria—especially for Koreans in the region—was difficult. Koreans in Manchuria were often counted incorrectly which resulted in inaccurate numbers that underrepresented the actual Korean population. These inaccuracies were the result of several factors, such as Korean families who had been established in the region for centuries as well as those who responded to an invitations from the Qing to immigrate since the 1870s. These families did not consider themselves immigrants and those who had already gone so far as

⁹ Um Hae-Kyung, "Listening Patterns and Identity of the Korean Diaspora in the Former USSR," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 9, no. 2 (2000): 121.

¹⁰ Lee, "Korean Migrants in Manchuria," 201.
Young, "Annex III" *Korean Problems in Manchuria*.

to become naturalized Chinese subjects made classification that much more difficult.

Furthermore, the occasional unwillingness of Koreans to accurately report their nationality to Japanese officials in order to avoid further interference by Japanese authorities affected the accuracy of regional censuses.

Japanese estimates tended to understate the number of Koreans who lived in Manchuria prior to the establishment of Manchukuo, while Chinese estimates tended to overstate them. A report issued concurrently with the Lytton Report estimated the Korean population in Manchuria was between 800,000 and 1,000,000 (3% of the total population of the area), with at least 400,000 in Kando in 1932.¹¹ They were primarily rice farmers seeking more affordable land in Manchuria. Only about 40,000 (5%) of Korean immigrants lived in cities by 1932.¹² Both the city-dwelling and rural Korean experiences in Manchukuo are accounted for as each perspective offers insight into the different opportunities and struggles of the Koreans within the region.

The two main waves of Korean immigration into Manchuria explored here took place between the 1870s-1890s and the years following Korea's annexation by Japan 1910. The first wave of immigrants crossed into Manchuria to escape a famine in Korea. To Koreans, Manchuria was seen not only as a kind of ancestral, but as an untapped frontier land offering many opportunities. This latter image was the result of Manchu attempts to curb immigration into their homeland prior to the 1870s. This created the impression of an unpopulated expanse of Manchuria as untouched land.

The later wave of immigrants started as Japan began to increasingly interfere with Korean affairs during the end of the 19th and start of the 20th century. This interference continued

¹¹ Carl W. Young. "Korean Problems in Manchuria as Factors in the Sino-Japanese Dispute," *Supplementary Documents to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, Study No. 9 (Geneva: 1932), 6.

¹² Hoon K. Lee, "Korean Migrants in Manchuria," *Geographical Review* 22, no. 2, (1932): 201.

beyond annexation as Japanese modernization efforts in Korea made living there unaffordable for the lower classes. Meanwhile, Japan funded Korean immigration into Manchuria through high-interest loans and promises of land ownership given by the state-owned Oriental Development Company. The second wave included significant numbers of anti-Japanese radicals and ultimately helped make up the Korean Communist movement in Manchuria. After 1932, Koreans would make up 90% of the communists in Manchukuo. Despite their zeal, however, their intense focus on freedom for Korea led to their shunning by the Chinese Communists for placing national interests over class interests.¹³

The Kando Treaty

In 1904, a formal agreement was signed between Qing China and the short-lived but independent Empire of Korea (1897-1910) that granted Korean immigrants the right to own land and pay taxes to the Kando administration.¹⁴ Under the treaty, land ownership could only occur after a Korean immigrant became a naturalized Chinese citizen. In Kando, Koreans were required to pay Chinese taxes and were placed under the jurisdiction of Chinese officials. The Qing also pursued a policy of assimilation that sought to culturally integrate the Koreans into China. The assimilation policies resulted in 10-15% of the Koreans adopting Chinese nationality and assimilating. In exchange for adopting Chinese nationality, the immigrants were then exempted from certain taxes and could receive better access to social services provided to them through their local government. The majority, who did not naturalize, mostly became tenant farmers who leased land from Chinese landlords. These people tended to receive from the Chinese, worse treatment and worse quality of land to cultivate relative to those that

¹³ Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution in Manchuria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005): 208, 219.

¹⁴ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 98.

naturalized.¹⁵ To the Chinese, the Koreans entering Manchuria at the start of the 20th century were seen simultaneously as unfortunate refugees fleeing Imperial Japan as well as an economic asset. This attitude changed after Japan annexed Korea and began seeking ways to push into Manchuria.

The Kando Treaty, signed in 1909, was an agreement between China and Japan (acting on the interests of its protectorate, Korea) that seceded the territorial and administrative rights of the Kando region to the Chinese. The treaty was undertaken after several years of territorial disputes between the two parties, following Korea becoming a Japanese protectorate in 1905. The Japanese had feuded with the Chinese over land ownership, citing the majority Korean population as a reason to secede the territory to Korea. This would benefit not only the Koreans but the Japanese as well who would gain a foothold in Manchuria through their status as protector of Korea. The treaty continued the terms of the original agreement that had allowed Koreans to settle and work in Kando during the 1890s. It also, however, gave Japan the right to station police in Kando to guarantee the safety of the Japanese consulate and secure safe trade in larger cities.¹⁶ Ultimately, the treaty could only temporarily solve this issue, which again became problematic following the signing of the 1915 Treaty between Japan and China.

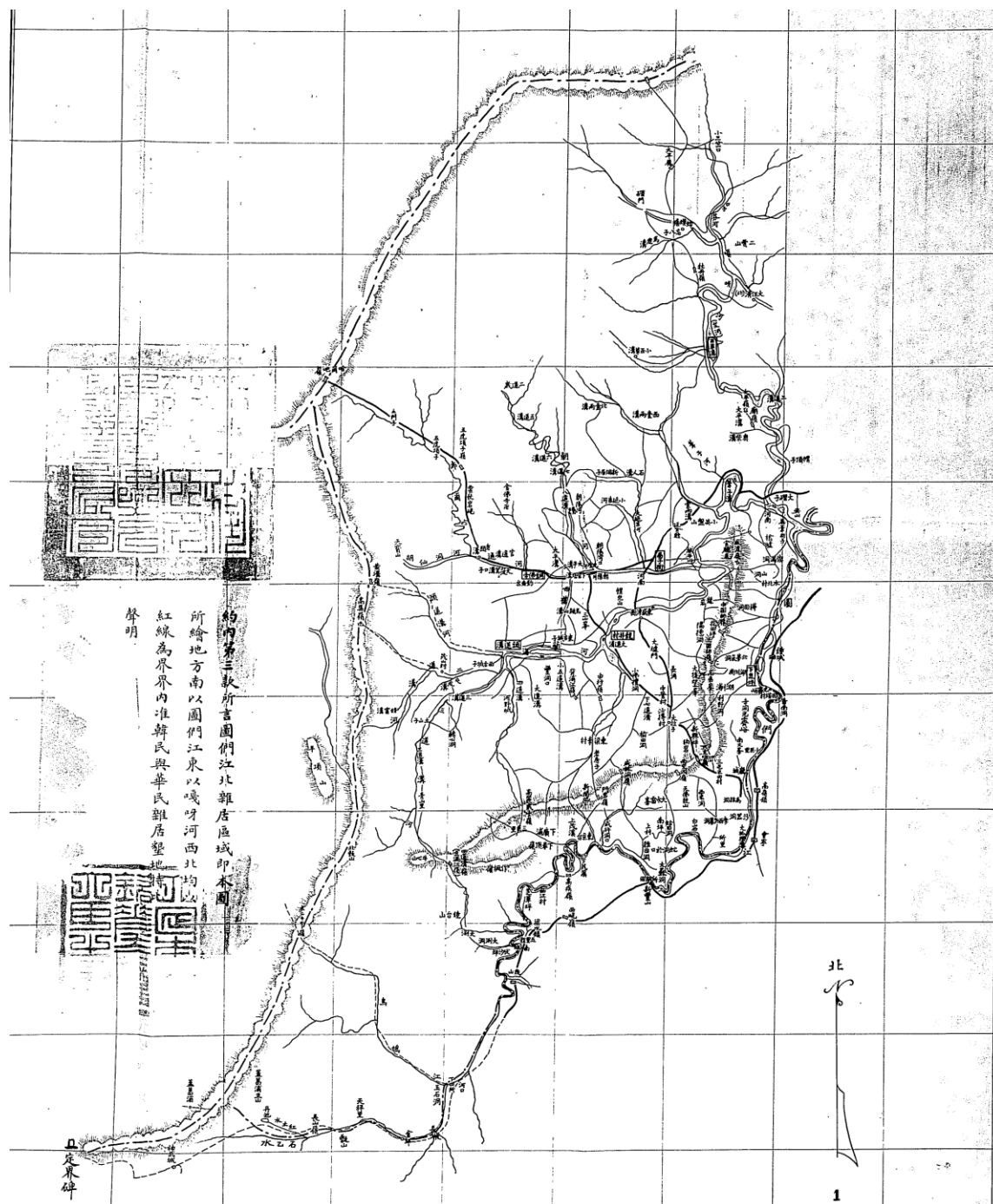
¹⁵ Ibid, 97.

¹⁶ Hyun Ok Park, "Korean Manchuria: The Racial Politics of Territorial Osmosis," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (2000): 207.



Part of a political map of Manchukuo. The L-shaped area northeast of Korea (which has been labeled 日本) is the ministry of Kando (間島) as it existed in Manchukuo from 1932-1945.¹⁷

¹⁷ "Manshūkoku – Kantōshū," *Maps Of, Maps Of*, mapsof.net.



The agreed upon border of Kando according to the Kando Treaty (1909). One can see that it appears to have grown in size upon becoming part of Manchukuo.¹⁸

¹⁸ Empire of Japan, "Pact Between Japan and China regarding Kando," 4 September, 1909. C33. Japan Center for Asian Historical Records.

The 1915 Treaty and the Problem of Nationality

The Treaty and Notes Concerning South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia (hereafter referred to as the 1915 Treaty), gave “Japanese subjects” expanded rights to lease land, travel freely, pursue business interests, and granted legal extraterritoriality in South Manchuria.¹⁹ The controversy over the terms of this treaty resulted from three factors: the Japanese definition of “South Manchuria,” the status of nationality for the Koreans in South Manchuria, and conflicting Chinese and Japanese interpretations of the treaty. To Chinese authorities, the region known as Manchuria was (and still is) known as *Dongbei Sansheng*, “three northeastern provinces,” one of which included the region of Kando. By referring to the region in the treaty as South Manchuria, Japan ignored the already defined Chinese provincial system and instead resorted to a vague geographic interpretation. Through these terms, Japan claimed wider jurisdiction for their interpretation of the 1915 Treaty. The Chinese objected to Japanese claims, maintaining that Kando didn’t fall into “South Manchuria” as that term lacked any true meaning.²⁰

For Koreans in Kando, the Chinese requirement to naturalize before one could own land was often circumvented by non-naturalized Koreans registering land through Chinese authorities under the names of family members who had already naturalized. Alternatively, some non-naturalized Koreans paid officials who sought to increase their bottom line for temporary citizenship.²¹ The official nationality of the Koreans, however, truly became a serious point of diplomatic contention between Japan and China following the ratification of the 1915 Treaty.

¹⁹ "Treaty Respecting South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia." *The American Journal of International Law* 10, no. 1 (1916): 5-7.

²⁰ Lytton, *Lytton Report*, 57.

²¹ *Ibid*, 56.

Following the annexation of Korea, Japan claimed that all Koreans were now Japanese subjects. Accordingly, Imperial Japan argued that the provisions of extraterritoriality in the 1915 Treaty should be extended to all Japanese subjects, including Koreans in Manchuria since they had been Japanese subjects since 1910. The use of “subject” here should be made distinct from the term “citizen.” Koreans, although subjects of the Japanese Empire, were not fully incorporated citizens who possessed the same rights as Japanese citizens. This distinction between subject and citizen is also important in understanding how Imperial Japanese notions of the Emperor’s sovereignty conflicted with more modern conceptions of the state as the ultimate political body. These conflicting approaches to statehood and sovereignty are especially prevalent themes when studying Manchukuo as well, as Japan was able to apply these culturally loaded notions of sovereignty outside of Japan.

Japanese racial discourse began to react to its new subjects’ status in the Japanese social order. During its ascent to world power status, Japan had been competing against Western nations whose racial prejudices handicapped Japan’s growth. This being Japan’s introduction into the international system of the time, Japan applied similar treatment towards its East Asian neighbors. Borrowing from their experience with Westerners, the Japanese used patronizing language comparable to the ‘white man’s burden’ as part of their justification for expanding their territorial claims throughout East Asia. The right to vote, military service, and other liberties were kept from and only gradually granted to Koreans as they were perceived to have obtained a greater level of assimilation in Japanese society.²² Assimilation was conflated with 20th century ideals of what constituted a modern identity and equated becoming Japanese to modernization.

²² Iyenaga Toyokichi, "Japan's Annexation of Korea," *The Journal of Race Development* 3, no. 2 (1912): 221.

During the 1920s and 1930s, theories within Japanese racial discourse would later be implemented in colonial Korea. These policies included forcing Koreans to adopt Japanese names and enforcing Japanese language education.²³ Despite the gradual granting of rights to Koreans, they were kept administratively distinct from the Japanese through separate family registration records, *koseki* (戸籍).²⁴ This dual system addressed the gap between citizen and subject and created distance between Japanese and non-Japanese subjects. The question of how to best assimilate the Koreans into Japan not only resulted in problems within the Empire but in Manchukuo as well. The Japanese also had to consider the nationality of their subjects who would immigrate to Manchukuo and were afflicted with fears of anti-Japanese sentiment held by their Korean subjects. Simultaneously, questions of nationality worried the Japanese in Manchukuo who coveted their extraterritorial privileges

The 1915 Treaty made provisions for Japanese subjects. The Japanese government maintained that the annexation of Korea superseded any prior treaties and that the provisions of the 1915 Treaty should extend to all Japanese subjects, not just the native Japanese as the Chinese had intended. The Chinese government maintained that Korean rights were already clear under their 1904 agreement with independent Korea whose terms had been reinforced with the Kando treaty. They further held that this new treaty did not augment or nullify any previous agreements made before Korea's annexation. The 1915 Treaty itself did, in fact, contain a clause that addressed the subject of conflicting treaties stating that "All existing treaties between China and Japan relating to Manchuria shall, except where otherwise provided for by this treaty, remain

²³ Oguma Eiji, *A Genealogy of 'Japanese' Self-Images*, (Victoria: Trans Pacific, 2002): 140.

²⁴ Katō Kiyofumi and Mitsunaga Tabata, and Mitsuhiro Matsushige. "Manshū no 「Kokumin」 to wa Dare datta no ka" *Chōsensuru Manshū kenkyū : chiiki, minzoku, jikan*. Tōkyō-to: Kabushiki kaisha Tōhō Shoten, 2015.

in force,” however, Korean rights in Manchuria has been negotiated between the Empire of Korea and the Qing Empire, not the Empire of Japan and the Republic of China.²⁵

The status of the Koreans who had immigrated to China during the 1890’s, some of whom had already naturalized as Chinese citizens became another post-annexation problem. When these Koreans initially entered China, it was under Chinese provisions that they immigrated and naturalized. According to two Chinese nationality laws passed in 1914 and 1929, one of the conditions necessary to gain Chinese citizenship was permission from one’s home country; additionally, individuals were not required to forfeit their previous nationality upon becoming a Chinese citizen.²⁶ Under Japan’s nationality law, naturalization in another nation forfeited one’s right to Japanese citizenship and dual citizenship was not allowed. However, an exception was made for the Koreans whereby they could naturalize without losing their status as Japanese subjects. With this, Koreans could become Chinese citizens with the right to own Chinese land while maintaining their place in the Empire. This new rule (where Japanese authorities could enforce it) would be applied to all Koreans living in Manchuria.²⁷

The 1915 Treaty in Effect

Despite the presence of Chinese assimilation policies aimed at the Koreans, most immigrated and lived in Manchuria relatively undisturbed without naturalizing. The 1915 Treaty and the subsequent arguing between Japan and China, however, destabilized the status of Koreans in Manchuria. Japan had begun its process of “territorial osmosis” through their Korean subjects. This process of acquiring land was accomplished through Japanese loans given to Koreans to purchase land. These loans, however, included high interest rates that were difficult

²⁵ Treaty Respecting South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia, 7.

²⁶ Lytton, *Lytton Report*, 57.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

to repay and collected taxes on a flat rate rather than as a percentage of actual crop yield. When Korean farmers defaulted on their payments, the Japanese state would seize the Chinese land.²⁸ This practice displaced Koreans while creating a demand for more loans.

While China and Japan agreed that Japanese subjects would have the right to lease land in China, their disagreements stemmed from Japan claiming sovereignty over both the land and the lessee as part of the Japanese Empire. They further maintained that leaseholders could sell the land as they saw fit while the Chinese argued for a more orthodox implementation of leasing. During the settlement of the 1915 Treaty, China failed to obtain the unanimous power to settle land cases. As a result, both Chinese and Japanese officials served as judges and through Japanese legal influence, a high number of cases were settled in favor of Japanese subjects.²⁹ Responding to these developments, China began adopting harsher policies toward the Koreans who leased the land.

Once seen as victims of Japanese expansionism, under these new aggressive policies, Korean schools in Manchuria were closed and students were instead sent to mixed schools where Chinese culture and language took precedence. Korean associations, meant to provide aid and farming tools to Koreans, were attacked and prevented from accepting new members or collecting membership dues.³⁰ As a consequence of this persecution, Koreans were driven to rely on the Japanese for protection and support. The Wanpaoshan Incident in 1931 occurred on the eve of the invasion of Manchuria. Chinese farmers, upset that Koreans had dug an irrigation ditch beyond their leased territory and into the Chinese territory, called the police which resulted in the arrest of some of the Korean workers. Japanese police were dispatched to protect the

²⁸ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 62.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 76.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 209.

Koreans and had a stand-off with the angered Chinese farmers until the Chinese authorities backed down and the Japanese soldiers over saw the completion of the ditch. This resulted in violent anti-Chinese and anti-Korean riots within Korean and Chinese communities, respectively. Japanese politicians framed these policies aimed at Koreans as anti-Japanese, accusing China of aggressive actions against Japanese subjects. According to the Lytton Report, the Chinese government did eventually admit their policies were anti-Japanese.³¹ Despite this, Park points out that Chinese aggression towards the Koreans was based more on politics than it was ethnicity.³² This is supported by early 20th century Chinese scholar, M.C.L. Chen, who explained that Japan's intentional interference with the naturalization process for Koreans forced China to take increasingly anti-Korean policies which necessarily took the form of anti-Japanese policies.³³

Koreans faced discrimination from both Chinese and Japanese policies and police. As members of the Japanese Empire, Koreans were subject to searches by the Japanese consular police. Japan placed police in Kando to manage the anti-Japanese sentiment found among many post-annexation immigrants from Korea, this action also served to extend Japanese military power in the region.³⁴ Despite the heavy Japanese surveillance, however, Korean farmers in Manchuria saw the Japanese as means to acquire land and security from increasingly agitated Chinese communities.

The Mitsuya Agreement

The Mitsuya Agreement was a pact made between the police forces of the Korean Governor-General and the Chinese authorities in 1925 and was named after the Japanese Police Commissioner Mitsuya Norio of the Korean Governor-Generalship. The agreement was signed

³¹ Lytton, *Lytton Report*, 59.

³² Park, *Korean Manchuria*, 204.

³³ Young, *Korean Problems in Manchuria*, 13.

³⁴ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 106-107.

to prevent the spread of communist activity in the region, a mutual goal for both powers. It created a means for police co-operation between the two powers in dealing with Korean undesirables. The agreement curbed the rights of Koreans to bear arms, freely assemble, and held entire communities responsible if a Korean communist was found among them. Punishments for harboring such criminals included expelling the whole community from their land. Additionally, the agreement included a clause whereby Chinese authorities would release Korean prisoners into Japanese custody. This agreement was also used by Chinese officials to denounce Japanese claims that Chinese authorities were intentionally harassing Korean immigrants. This agreement was used to surveil and undermine Korean anti-Japanese movements, which were especially prevalent in Kando.³⁵ The fear of spreading anti-Japanese sentiment also played into the lack of reform over the Koreans' nationality as authorities worried that through becoming Chinese citizens, the Japanese would lose the jurisdiction over those Koreans.³⁶

The implementation of the treaties discussed were confusing and often contained contradictory policy toward the Koreans. Seen as an economic asset by both China and Japan, the Koreans were the rope in the territorial tug-of-war going on between the two larger powers. As such, Korean behavior was dictated and punished by whichever power happened to claim authority in the region at a given time. Despite their animosity, however, Chinese and Japanese authorities managed to begin a form of cooperation that intensified the surveillance of and intervention the lives of the Koreans. Meanwhile, an aggressive Japanese policy of expansion, coupled with the stationing of consular police, strengthened Japanese claims in the area. Koreans would rely on Japanese strength to protect themselves from Chinese policies aimed at curbing Korean rights and business in Manchuria.

³⁵ Young, *Korean Problems in Manchuria*, 25-26.

³⁶ Liu, *A State without Nationals*, 32-33.

The Imperial Context

While the competing interests of Japan and China ceased after the Japanese invasion and the founding of Manchukuo, the legal ambiguity did not. In Manchukuo, Koreans changed from agents of Japanese imperial expansion to those of economic expansion. From its founding, Manchukuo became a hub of Japanese investment as the military cleared out bandits and rebels who resisted Japanese control of the region. From 1932 to 1941, Manchukuo received more investment than the rest of the Japanese Empire combined.³⁷ Despite attempts to industrialize the region, most of Manchukuo's income came from the export of soybeans and other agricultural products. The Manchurian soy industry exported mostly to Europe and Japan and resulted in a global monopoly of the crop.³⁸ Koreans in Manchukuo were primarily used to develop land for agriculture, having an affinity for wet-rice farming. Between 1915 and 1930, Korean contributions in Manchukuo increased rice production from 7 million to 17 million bushels annually.³⁹

Despite having an increasingly functional bureaucracy and large industrial growth, Manchukuo remained a nation with no citizens. Debates over Korean rights hindered the reform process in the Japanese Empire, which continued to be a problem even after Manchukuo passed a temporary residency law aimed at addressing the nationality issue. As Japanese subjects, Japanese, Koreans, and Taiwanese were all kept from adopting a dual nationality within Manchukuo, further revealing the limited extent to which the state was truly dedicated to pan-Asianism.

³⁷ Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999): 42.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 32.

³⁹ Young, CW., *Korean Problems in Manchuria*, 8.

Riding the popularity it received from its string of victories since the First Sino-Japanese War, the military, specifically the Kwantung Army acted increasingly independently to the point of defying the orders of the Japanese Cabinet. With popular support and a string of pro-military acts of terrorism in Japan keeping the Cabinet too scared to act, the Kwantung Army was able to advance into Manchuria with little resistance from home. This Japanese aggression represents what Louise Young describes as a shift away from the arms limitations and international cooperation with the League of Nations at the end of the 1910's towards a "Japanese Monroe Doctrine" that sought to counter Russian, Chinese, and Anglo interests in the region as Imperial Japan moved into the 1930's.⁴⁰

During the years following World War One, when a rice shortage emerged in Japan, the image of Korea as Japan's 'rice basket' became increasingly prevalent. Japan's gradual economic recovery, however, led to a surplus of rice being raised in Korea which Japan no longer needed. Through this economic manipulation by Japan, Korea began to enter a recession as their rice lost its market value.⁴¹ This situation was especially difficult for the agricultural workers who made up the majority of Korea's population. Since annexation in 1910, Japanese development companies had been investing in Korean agriculture and industry seeking to improve the farming methods of their rice basket. This investment raised the prices of goods and services in Korea and income tax tripled in Korea from 1917-1927.⁴² Unable to afford the costs of living, dispossessed Korean farmers came to rely on loans from Japanese development companies who would send them to Kando and Manchuria to develop the land.

⁴⁰ Young, L., *Japan's Total Empire*, 123-127.

⁴¹ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 129.

⁴² Young, CW., *Korean Problems in Manchuria*, 16.

The turmoil of World War One and the Great Depression resulted in new ways to think about national economics. Increasingly, protectionist policies and state-run economics began to rise in popularity in response to the instability of the war and the subsequent recession. For some nations, this took the form of currency blocs that unified a region with several states under the same currency. In Japan's case, the development of the yen-bloc reflected the desire of a self-sustaining economic environment safe from the unpredictability of the world economy.⁴³ The yen-bloc included the Empire of Japan (Japan, Formosa, Korea, and SE Asia) as well as Manchukuo. The bloc unified the currency of its members and ostensibly encouraged trade to help supply the bloc with what they lacked via internal trade. Given that Japan was at the center of both its own empire and the administration of Manchukuo, it is no surprise that the bloc emphasized Japanese interests above those of the others members of the empire.

Both the yen-bloc and the pan-Asian ideals of Manchukuo, however, are just two components of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere. Although not the focus of the paper, the Sphere is a good example of how similar strategies of co-opting ethnic self-determination being used to justify policies in Manchukuo and Korea extended beyond into the other regions of the Japanese Empire. The Sphere was announced in a speech by Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Arita Hachiro in late-June 1940. In the brief statement, Arita asserts that Japan is a "stabilizing force" in Asia that seeks to unite a "geographically, racially, culturally, and economically" similar region for the advancement of world peace. Finally, he chastises Chiang Kai-Shek for opposing Japan's peaceful ambitions and justifies war with China along the same logic. In this announcement, the influence of Koderu's rhetoric is present as Arita claims

⁴³ Okubo Toshihiro, "Trade bloc formation in inter-war Japan. A gravity model analysis," *Journal of the Japanese and International Economies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 214-236.

Japan role as leader of Asia by appealing to its relative strength and good intentions towards East Asia.⁴⁴

Interestingly, Arita highlights the war in Europe to explain the necessity of strong regional Co-Prosperity Spheres while asking the Western powers not to interfere with Japan's actions. He posited that since Japan remained neutral towards the war in Europe (Imperial Japan would sign the Tripartite Pact with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy two months later), that Europe too should limit its interests concerning Japanese actions in East Asia.⁴⁵ Referencing the disunity of Europe, Arita further held that unity and stability within spheres founded on the above mentioned factors are key to world peace as its gives the spheres internal stability from which to begin international cooperation. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was an expression of a world order unrealized. It was meant to be one of a number of spheres that would exist around the world. Whether honest in proposing this system or simply using it to justify Japanese behavior, this proposed system add another dimension to Manchukuo and the yen-bloc. Manchukuo, in this sense, was meant to be a miniature version of an ideal East Asia according to the Japanese. This is supported in the propaganda for Manchukuo which both emphasized the pan-Asian identity of its population while highlighting the varied ethnic groups living there. This "mini-Asia" found in Manchukuo reflects one way that is was used almost as a laboratory for testing imperial policies.

Despite the attempts to foster an insulated economy through the yen-bloc, it ultimately failed during the Fifteen Years War due to the reliance on foreign imports of raw materials, like oil and iron needed for the war effort with little means to bring in the foreign currency needed to

⁴⁴ Arita Hachiro, "The International Situation and Japan's Position" (radio address, Japan, June 29, 1940), University of Virginia, <http://imtfe.law.virginia.edu/collections/tavenner/10/3/doc-1008-international-situation-and-japans-position-arita>.

⁴⁵ Arita, "The International Situation and Japan's Position."

buy it. Any exports to Manchukuo only brought more yen into the Japanese economy, which hindered its performance in the import market. Japan began to sell its gold reserves to bring in the foreign currency necessary to fund its invasion of China. The eventual American embargo of Japanese goods removed one of Japan's top three export markets (the other two being the British Empire and Manchukuo).⁴⁶ The eventual declaration of war by Japan on the United States and the British Empire included the increasing economic pressure placed on Japan by both U.S. and the British in its reasoning.⁴⁷ Manchukuo's yen-based economy drained Japan of its resources and provided it with currency it could not use to buy the materials it needed from the countries that had them. Without the foreign currency to buy needed war materiel, the yen-bloc proved an ineffective economic tool for Imperial Japan and resulted in the ruination of the yen by August 1945 as well as the end of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Both prior to but especially following the Great Depression, Manchuria was seen by investors and hopeful immigrants as an open frontier, under-utilized by the Chinese. Japanese development companies turned the Koreans from a means of extending political influence in Kando into means of economic expansion. The development companies not only allowed poorer Koreans to lease land, but their contractual nature also gave the landlords a means to exercise better surveillance and control over their tenants. The goal of Japanese policy was to create a base of independent farmers through the company collectives where the farming would take place and could be efficiently monitored and taxed. In many ways, the pan-Asian Manchurian utopia that Japanese wanted depended on the success of this economic strategy. No longer being beholden to foreign markets or interests, a self-sustaining yen-bloc would, according to the

⁴⁶ Hugh Byas, "Trade Links Japan to Democracies," *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1939.

⁴⁷ Tōjō Hideki; et al. *Imperial Rescript Declaring War - Original and Transcript*. United States Army Center of Military History. December 8, 1941.

Japanese, solve many of the issues stemming Western exploitation, to say nothing of Japanese policy.

Korean Dispossession and the Development Companies

A popular concern for Koreans living in Korea at the time was that they were intentionally being moved off their arable land to make room for incoming Japanese farmers. This fear of displacement may have been the result of the previously mentioned, but over exaggerated, worries that the Japanese had concerning overpopulation and lack of land within Japan. Sources contradict each other, however, over whether or not this dispersal of Koreans came about as a mere consequence of Japanese economic expansion into Korea, or by an explicit Japanese policy aimed at dislocating Koreans. In any case the actual amount of Japanese migrating to Korea was quite low. By 1930, of the 20 million individuals living in Korea, 500,000 (2.5%) were Japanese. Most of these Japanese worked in public services or professions. In Japan, by the end of World War Two, over two million Korean workers had been brought over as cheap labor. Land assessment in Japanese-occupied Korea is tricky due to the all-encompassing category of “Korean land” under which all land deeds in Korea fell. By 1930 though, 55% of land in Korea was held by the Governor-Generalship of Korea. One 1932 estimate claimed that 10-20% of the land in Korea belonged to Japanese owners.⁴⁸ Despite the large amount of land in Japanese hands, the Empire’s self-sustaining yeoman rice-basket that never came to be. In many cases, Korean land was sold to Japanese landlords who would use cheaper Korean, rather than Japanese, labor. A similar pattern would occur in the cooperatives of the development companies in Manchukuo.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Young, CW., *Korean Problems in Manchuria*, 17-18.

⁴⁹ Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895–1945*, (Durham: Duke University Press 2010): Part 1 – Chapter 4.

In 1936, two development companies, the Korean-Manchurian and the Manchuria-Korean Development Companies, were established. The companies were intended to oversee the immigration of Koreans into the Manchurian region as well as provide funding for Koreans to buy land; many of the Koreans who immigrated into Manchukuo did so as debtors of Japanese development companies. The purpose of the companies' cooperative farms was two-fold: they used the Koreans' skills to convert the frontier into productive farmland while monitoring Koreans who may have been harbored anti-Japanese sentiments. The goal of the cooperatives within the yen-bloc strategy was to create independent landlords who would turn the farms into self-sufficient, profitable pieces of land. Many Koreans were also attracted by the stability that the Japanese military provided in Manchukuo. Despite the interest of Koreans in owning Manchurian land, the project failed to produce independent landowners due to the high interest rates attached to the loans and the lack of support for non-Japanese debtors.

The Korean-Manchurian and Manchurian-Korean Development Companies eventually were absorbed into the Oriental Development Company which was later mostly nationalized under the Manchukuo administration. The cooperatives—organized by the development companies—were meant to emulate the traditional self-sufficient Korean farming community. Each family in the cooperative had their own plot of land to till, however, after the harvest the crops were collectivized and then equally distributed back to the families. It should be noted that the food was distributed after the farmers had payed the collectors from the development companies and purchased more supplies.⁵⁰ While in cooperatives, Koreans described their work in the walled communities as comparable to feudalism with limited mobility and extensive

⁵⁰ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 187.

monitoring.⁵¹ Additionally, wages in Manchuria were low relative to Korea and China with standard-of-living costs at about two-thirds of what they were in China.⁵²

In the communities, debt repayment was set at a flat rate as opposed to a relative portion of what was harvested. The amount used to repay the loan ranged from 45-75% of the crops gathered by a cooperative. If tenants were not able to pay back the debt on time, they were forced to take additional loans to pay for food, seeds, and supplies. If they continued to default, the development companies would evict them off the land, often replacing the labor with other Koreans or cheaper Chinese farmers. Sometimes the development companies would change the terms of or go back on their contracts at the expense of the Korean tenants.⁵³ In this manner, the Korean tenants were further displaced from their land and driven to either seek out another development company who would offer them loans or find life in a city where many Koreans ended up engaging in illicit businesses. Another option was to join the anti-Japanese Korean communist communes that existed in Manchukuo. Due to the constant threat of the Kwantung Army and snubbing by Chinese communists, however, these communes acted more like refugee camps for resistant Koreans rather than organized centers of resistance.⁵⁴

Among the crops planted in the cooperatives was opium.⁵⁵ The Manchurian was especially lucrative on the border between China and Russia as Japan did little to stop its sale and use. Even prior to the 1932, independent Korean farmers were attracted specifically the northern parts of Manchuria, beyond Kando. The Koreans in the region would use their

⁵¹ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 166.

⁵² Lee, *Korean Migrants in Manchuria*, 203.

⁵³ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 59-193.

Driscoll, *Absolutely Erotic, Absolutely Grotesque*.

Lee, *Korean Migrants in Manchuria*, 203.

⁵⁴ Young, *Korean Problems in Manchuria*, 7.

Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 205.

⁵⁵ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 184.

extraterritorial status to legalize the growth and sale of the drug by asserting their extraterritorial rights as Japanese subjects. They could, however, still be subject to punishment, including execution, by Chinese authorities. Throughout the 1930's, Manchukuo contributed to the Japanese Empire's large opium industry.⁵⁶ The debt collectors of the development companies would usually take around 50% of the opium grown as repayment of loans and interest.⁵⁷

Koreans Outside Kando

Beyond Kando and the East Manchurian Mountains lay the rest of Manchuria were for decades foreign interests and business competed for supremacy in the region. While Kando may have been exceptional for its large Korean population, by 1930 an estimated 400,000, or half, of the Koreans in Manchuria lived beyond the East Manchurian.⁵⁸ While the bulk of these Koreans were farmers, there were also an estimated 40,000 that lived and worked in cities.⁵⁹ The experiences of these Koreans beyond Kando were distinct in both their distance from the Korean peninsula and Korean communities in general.

The most popular areas to settle were along the railways of the Japanese-managed South Manchuria Railway or along the eastern border between the USSR and Manchuria. Much of the new Manchurian infrastructure and business brought by the Japanese was concentrated along the railways, Koreans uninterested in farming would try to make their lives in the cities of Manchuria rather than the plains. Of the Korean farmers in Manchuria, a significant number settled along the border with the USSR to take part in the lucrative opium trade there. Since the Qing invitation to immigrants in the 1870s's, Koreans were lured by the availability of

⁵⁶ John M. Jennings, "The Forgotten Plague: Opium and Narcotics in Korea under Japanese Rule, 1910-1945," *Modern Asian Studies* 29, no. 4 (1995).

⁵⁷ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 184.

⁵⁸ Young, CW., *Korean Problems in Manchuria*, 5.

⁵⁹ Lee, *Korean Migrants in Manchuria*, 201.

productive farm land. As they became lucrative, more poppy plants were grown to capitalize off the estimated 1.5 million opium addicts living in Manchukuo in the 1930's.⁶⁰ Farmers along the border were isolated and exposed to some dangerous elements, including having to pay protection money to both police and local bandits. Most times when one of these parties discovered that a farmer was paying protection money to the other, there would be consequences, including at times, execution⁶¹ Over 90% of Koreans in Manchuria were professional agriculturalists, mostly producing either rice or soy as well as other crops in small quantity. Of the Koreans not involved in agriculture, half were estimated to have been engaged in illicit activities including "illegal trading, smuggling, insubordination towards authorities, and tax evasion."⁶²

Although a significant numbers of Koreans were involved in the opium industry they by no means managed the majority of it. In 1922 in the city of Harbin, a formerly Russian city acquired by the Japanese after the Russo-Japanese War, as well as a hub for international trade, Koreans handled less than 1/6 of the 18,000 kilograms of opium being trafficked through the city.⁶³ The largest opium handlers were the Japanese and Chinese merchants who in total trafficked 13,200 kilograms of opium in 1922. Koreans primarily operated the opium dens where addicts could safely use opium under their supervision.⁶⁴ City life could be especially challenging for Koreans. Those with educations who were not idlers or otherwise engaged in trafficking were often hired by anti-Japanese groups. Koreans were not exclusively limited to a

⁶⁰ Jennings, *The Forgotten Plague*, 808.

⁶¹ Ibid, 811.

⁶² Young, CW., *Korean Problems in Manchuria*, 7-8.

⁶³ Jennings, *The Forgotten Plague*, 811.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 795.

life of either farming or crime as a small professional class existed in cities included traders, teachers, and other legitimate forms of employment.⁶⁵

For city-dwelling Koreans, the opium industry was very attractive because of the extraterritoriality they held as Japanese subjects. Since most of the cities in Manchuria were along the South Manchurian Railways, most of them were managed by Japanese officials. Given the increased authority of the Japanese in the cities, the conflicts of the rights granted to Koreans as per the treaties discussed tended to favor Korean and Japanese interests. Following the Mitsuya Agreement, Koreans caught in opium related crimes would often be handed over to Japanese authorities. The Japanese, who took a lenient stance regarding the opium trade, would often release these Koreans unpunished. Despite only about 5% of Koreans in Manchuria being engaged in illicit activities, their participation in these acts and their preferred treatment by the Japanese created stereotypes of Koreans as criminals, drug dealers, and lackeys of the Japanese to the Chinese.⁶⁶ One example of this is in the nickname given to the Japanese by the Chinese: *guizi* (鬼子) or “devils,” while Koreans came to be termed *er guizi* (二鬼子) or “second devils.”⁶⁷

Koreans as Japanese Subjects

Prior to 1932, Korean nationality was less important to the Japanese than ensuring their subject status within the Empire. In Manchukuo, the Koreans were no longer able to avoid their status as subject of the Japanese Empire. Even with Manchuria secured, worries over rebellious Korean subjects still continued to bog down the process of nationality reform. In Manchukuo, Koreans created an obvious rupture between the pan-Asian ideology of the state and the material

⁶⁵ Young, CW., *Korean Problems in Manchuria*, 7-8.

⁶⁶ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 135-136.

⁶⁷ Wikipedia contributors, "Guizi," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guizi&oldid=807146875>

reality of the Japanese Empire. For this reason, the Korean experience as both beneficiaries and victims of Japanese imperialism, offer insight into the nature and organization of Imperial Japan's racial hierarchy.

Despite the abuses by the Japanese through their dispossession of land, as Japanese subjects, the Koreans enjoyed relative privilege in Manchukuo. Korean and Japanese relations did not take place inside a bubble and Koreans maintained an elevated status as Japanese subjects. Especially in the case of Manchukuo, Koreans and Japanese were only two of the five races that made up the Manchurian identity. Through Japanese treaties, Koreans became the beneficiaries of Japanese extraterritoriality in regions where Japanese strength was there to enforce it. As such, the Koreans, through their association with Japan, developed a sense of superiority over the local Chinese peasants.⁶⁸

In the plains of Manchuria, the development companies gave Koreans access to better housing, supplies, and loans than were offered to Chinese farming communities.⁶⁹ The relatively strong ties to Japan allowed Koreans to avoid being stereotyped by the Japanese as harshly as the Chinese had been. The Chinese, having been described as “built for work,” reveals their place in the Manchurian hierarchy.⁷⁰ Instead, the Koreans were given paternal treatment by the Japanese who saw Koreans as a kind of “foster child,” even if in practice this policy turned into one of cultural and economic oppression by the Japanese over the Koreans.⁷¹

With no more restrictive treaties preventing Manchurian land ownership, Koreans further benefitted from their status as Japanese subjects through the assistance they were granted by the *Kyōwakai*, or Concordia Association. The Concordia Association was a Manchurian organization

⁶⁸ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 135-136.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 156.

⁷⁰ Driscoll, *Absolutely Erotic, Absolutely Grotesque*, Part 1, Section 1.

⁷¹ Oguma, *A Genealogy of 'Japanese' Self-Images*, 119.

that sought to encourage the racial harmony espoused by the country and gave financial assistance to the Koreans while concentrating them into designated districts. In this way, Koreans tended to be massed with other Koreans and were able to maintain their cultural and linguistic practices separate from the other races and cultural practices in Manchukuo.⁷² In fact, aside from the Chinese who made up the vast majority of Manchukuo, there seems to have been a pattern of same-race grouping and a failure to truly diversify the region with intermixing of the different peoples.⁷³ Intermixing the ethnicities of the region however, may not have ever been the goal of Manchukuo as the propaganda highlights the cooperation between the Five Races rather than promoting cultural interaction.

When assimilation was called for, such as between Korean and Japan, it was done so not with the intent to merge the cultures of two nations together but to bend Koreans into “proper” Japanese subjects. In Korea, this goal took the shape of policies that suppressed local Korean language and culture and enforced the teaching of Japanese. In Manchukuo, however, in keeping with the pan-Asian image, policies were taken to preserve the diversity of the different ethnic groups in the region, even going so far as to have segregated communities to prevent intermarrying.⁷⁴ Following the Confucian logic that Japan used to justify its place in Manchukuo as the “leader” of the other East Asian races, the same logic made the formation of a racial hierarchy natural within the Manchurian context. Japan’s ethnic policy in Manchukuo was one of proximity rather than assimilation, decrying Western racial theory as too dualistic, they instead sought to find a place for race within nationality. Accusing the West of ignorance over East Asian racial theory while demonstrating their use of Confucian concepts, the Manchurian

⁷² Avila-Tapias, *Co-Ethnic Spatial Concentrations*, 54.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 62.

⁷⁴ Avila-Tapias, *Co-Ethnic Spatial Concentrations*, 47.

administration was able to justify racial segregation as a form of cultural appeasement to the Chinese of Manchukuo.⁷⁵

An examination of the system through which the Japanese Empire determined the nationality and took the census of its subjects reveals a system closer reflecting a first and second-class citizen relationship between the Japanese and the Koreans. It reveals the knot Japan had become tied in due to its insistence on maintaining different categorizations for those who could trace their lineage to the Japanese mainland (*naichijin*), and their fellow non-Japanese subjects (*gaichijin*). Although (lopsided) cultural assimilation was encouraged, very few of the civil rights held by native Japanese subjects were offered in exchange.

As Japan began to modernize following the Meiji Restoration, it developed both a family registry, *koseki*, and registration for nationality, *kokuseki*, in which Japanese subjects would be recorded. The *koseki* was modeled on traditional modes of recording heads of household as had been done in pre-Meiji Japan. It counted one, usually male, head of household under whom the members of his family would be registered. To Koreans, registration into this culturally Japanese system held implications of accepting one's role in the Japanese Empire and accepting Japanese legitimacy.⁷⁶

Questions lingered over defining *kokuseki* however, as Japan's new imperial holdings brought ethnically non-Japanese subjects into the Empire. In applying the system to their subjects, the Taiwanese were able to choose whether or not to continue their traditional way of registering nationality or adopt the Japanese system. Koreans on the other hand, had the Japanese system forced on them with no real solution for the missing *kokuseki* and whether the Koreans

⁷⁵ Kevin M. Doak, "Building National Identity through Ethnicity: Ethnology in Wartime Japan and After," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 27, no. 1 (2001): 29-30.

⁷⁶ Sonia Ryang and John Lie, "Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan," *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009): 5.

held Korean or Japanese nationality as Japanese subjects.⁷⁷ In Japanese legal rhetoric, including the Meiji Constitution, these questions were temporarily addressed through the use of ‘*shinmin*’ (臣民), or subject, rather than ‘*kokumin*’ (国民), national, when discussing those who inhabited the empire. *Kokumin* too, however, was a politically loaded term that was used to describe patriotic citizens. This distinction however, is important is pointing out that even as Japan began to adopt the use of *kokumin*, a further distinction was maintained between national and citizen that preserved the old hierarchy.⁷⁸

In 1909, a law to establish a *minseki* registry was passed. *Minseki* would be replaced by *koseki* as the popular form of registering Koreans in 1920. *Minseki*, whose definition is at times incorrectly translated as nationality, is something more subtle than a mere political status. The *min* character means “people,” *seki* means “registry.” An explanation of the difference between nationality, citizenship, and *minseki* not only explains a finer point of this law but perhaps reveals a key observation about the Japanese understanding of international relations and their own multi-ethnic empire.

While Japan was able to study the West and emulate it to the point of becoming a major world power, it held on to certain cultural features and conceptions that would not fit in the increasingly liberalizing world especially following World War One. Umeyama Kayoko suggests that perhaps because Japan only studied the political developments of the Enlightenment but never had its own “people’s revolution” (市民革命) it lacked crucial experience with liberal values. Demonstrated in the eventual replacement of *minseki* by *koseki*,

⁷⁷ Umeyama Kayoko, *Teikoku Nihon to Koseki: Teikoku Kaitaigo no Kokuseki Mondai, Touyou Gakuen Daigaku Kiyō* 18 (2010): 89-106.

⁷⁸ Kate McDonald, *Placing Empire: Travel and the Social Imagination in Japan*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 13, 112.

while *minseki* might not just apply to an ethnic group, separate *koseki* for different ethnicities further equated nationality to ethnicity by tying one's identity to their homeland. This failure to understand the importance of clear nationality in a world of nations, and instead choosing to rely on ethno-centric census taking methods desynchronized Japan with the emerging understandings of international relations and jurisdiction by national borders.⁷⁹

This diplomatic dissonance is also seen in the other of Manchukuo's slogans: *Ōdō Rakudo*, or the Kingly Way. One way through which the administrators of Manchukuo sought to appeal to Chinese nationalist sentiment was the adoption of this Confucian principle. Without a lengthy explanation of Confucianism, the philosophy holds that the key to a successful state is ensuring reverence from the masses up towards the emperor who in turn is bound to bestow benevolence upon his subjects lest the Mandate of Heaven be lost. This guiding principle violated several important tenants of the liberal nation-state. The Confucian state, unlike the West, was not understood as a contract between governing and governed, but a relationship between ruler and ruled. Borders did not impede the reach of the "benevolent ruler" who held a Heaven-bestowed claim to rule over certain peoples. While *Ōdō Rakudo* was used to appeal to Chinese sentiments, it was also used to justify the inequality that existed between the different ethnic groups in Manchukuo. By claiming that in a harmonious kingdom some groups naturally occupy a superior status than others, Japanese supremacy was given cultural justification.⁸⁰

The fate of Morisaki Minato presents an interesting opportunity to observe the effects of Japan's pan-Asian propaganda on a Japanese subject while noting briefly the attitudes held by the other races towards Japan. Morisaki was the sharp child of wealthy of family who enrolled in

⁷⁹ Umeyama, *The Empire of Japan and Nationality*.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

the Manchuria Nation Building University (満州国の建国大学) in 1942.⁸¹ This university was part of the nation-building undertaken by Japan and accepted students of multiple ethnic backgrounds including Korean, Russian, and Manchu (which included both ethnic Manchu and Han Chinese).⁸² Enamored with what Manchukuo meant to represent, Morisaki upheld that Japan would “salvage Chinese from the Euro-American exploitation,” and that Japan’s actions and intent differed from that of “Euro-Americans,” the Soviets, and Nazi Germany. Minato, believed that “each race has to have its own place of peaceful living, fulfill its obligations, and cooperate [with] each other,” rhetoric reminiscent of Arita’s speech establishing the Co-Prosperity Sphere. He further believed that Manchukuo, under the leadership of the Japanese was the means through which to achieve this.⁸³

As he interacted with and befriended non-Japanese students, he became gradually disillusioned of pan-Asian sentiment especially concerning Chinese struggles. Morisaki concludes that “those who genuinely think of Asia’s future and whom we need as comrades for our ideal, are all on the sides of our enemies. I... respect their anti-Japanese sentiments.”⁸⁴ One thing Minato, among others, struggled with was the difference between the state and the nation and the artificial nature of the state. Quoting Sun Yat-Sen, Minato says: “the group molded by nature... is the race, nationality,” the disenchanted Morisaki became unable to support Manchukuo and further quotes that: “the group formed by... might is the State,” a repudiation of Japan’s actions in Manchuria. Morisaki joined the Imperial Navy in 1944 and committed suicide at age twenty-one following Japan’s defeat. With a belief in the morality of pan-Asianism, and

⁸¹ Tamanoi. “Knowledge, Power, and Racial Classification,” 260.

⁸² Kawamura Minato and Tsujitsu Koji, *Manshūkoku - Sajō no Rōkaku* 「Manshūkoku」 ni Idaita Yabō (For Beginners) (Tōkyō: Gendai Shokan, 2011): 44.

⁸³ Tamanoi. “Knowledge, Power, and Racial Classification,” 260.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 264.

first-hand witness experience to the unfair treatment of non-Japanese in Manchukuo, the inability to synthesize state policy and racial harmony has been proposed as reasons for his fatal choice and that without these thoughts, Morisaki would have chosen life.⁸⁵

Law in Manchukuo

Throughout its existence, Manchukuo was given little in means of independently establishing their politics, instead having to rely on Japanese models and oversight. The Lytton Report placed additional pressure on Manchurian bureaucrats to demonstrate a developed legal system and independent rule to demonstrate legitimacy. One way that Japan attempted to garner international support was to preserve the extraterritoriality of the foreign powers (including Japan) that had been negotiated with China.⁸⁶ Manchukuo's foundational legal systems consisted of the Organic Law (Law of the Organization of the State of Manchukuo) that established a legislative and executive body with an independent judiciary that included independent procurators who both investigated and judged the cases. This law also included a twelve-part Human Rights protection law. It also included a pledge to quickly standardize laws and issue a constitution.⁸⁷ Despite these provisions, Thomas David Dubois maintains that in Manchukuo, the law was viewed as a "practical means" to obtain a moral state but that the rhetoric of *ōdō Rakudo* placed the Emperor, at the center of the political order. He also pointed out, however, that at the time it was common knowledge that Manchukuo was ruled by the Kwantung Army.⁸⁸

In 1937, a Manchurian legal code was introduced that resembled that of Japan's (although it should be noted that by this point China too had borrowed extensively from reforms in Japan). One telling difference is the relative weakness of the Manchurian Diet to the

⁸⁵ Tamanoi. "Knowledge, Power, and Racial Classification," 264-265.

⁸⁶ Dubois, "Rule of Law in a Brave New Empire," 296.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 292.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 307.

Manchurian Emperor (executive branch), when compared to the Japanese Diet and the Japanese Emperor. It has been suggested that the Manchurian Diet's status of "executive assistants" rather than effective lawmakers, was what pro-emperor factions of Japan had hoped the Diet would be in Japan.⁸⁹ Again, Manchukuo acted as a kind of testing ground for policies that were difficult to achieve within Japan. Despite this, however, Manchukuo remained dependent on Japan for legal guidance, shown through the establishment of the Japan-Manchukuo Judicial Services Aid Law in 1938. This law began a process of standardizing Manchukuo's laws according to the Japan's and allowing international law suits without the arbitrations of the countries' respective foreign ministries, easing the application of Japanese law across the Empire and Manchukuo. This process however, was not unique to Japan and had precedence in Europe as Germany had made similar agreement with other nations, including Britain, in the 1920's.⁹⁰

Manchukuo's legal code provided forms of legal autonomy with respect to the custom law of different ethnicities. In areas like inheritance law, Japanese subjects were governed under Japanese law through a biased court system. Russians too, were given autonomy in their laws to demonstrate Manchukuo's respect for Westerns and Christian. Han, Manchu, and Mongols, however, were subject to the same code of laws after a three year-long government research project aimed at standardizing custom law assessed (erroneously) that they operated under basically the same laws. For family law however, Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans were governed under the same laws while Mongols were allowed to follow their own custom law.⁹¹ It should be noted, however, that British observers in Manchuria noted that "there are doubtless some [Japanese officials] who desire to create for Manchukuo, some real independence," the

⁸⁹ Thomas David Dubois, "Inauthentic Sovereignty: Law and Legal Institutions in Manchukuo," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 3 (2010): 756-757. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40929191>.

⁹⁰ Dubois, "Inauthentic Sovereignty," 764-765.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 762-763.

new state was not merely a front for unilateral expansion by the Japanese.⁹² Indeed, large numbers of Chinese initially joined the Manchurian bureaucracy and the answers on their legal exams reflected enthusiastic (if formulaic) answers regarding the role of *Ōdō Rakudo* and the racial harmony in the nation. Many Chinese jurors and judges would, however, resign following Japan's invasion of China in 1937 and the shattering of any pan-Asian hope Manchukuo may have offered them.⁹³

As for criminal law, however, Manchukuo maintained strong policies mostly in the name of national security. These included the 1932 Provisional Law for the Punishment of Political Criminals that targeted behavior that “undermined the state”; and the 1938 National Mobilization Law which gave the state strong powers regarding individual freedoms and property in “times of emergency.”⁹⁴ In Manchukuo, flogging, despite being outlawed in Japan in 1872, was a practice reserved for the Chinese until 1938 when it was outlawed by the Kwantung Army. It was seen (not without critics, including other Japanese) as a fitting means of discipline for a backwards people, and played into notions of people as either civilized or un-civilized determining the kinds of laws that could be applied to them.⁹⁵

Following the introduction of the 1937 legal code, Dubois says that increasingly totalitarian measures were taken in the name of national security and that this process was intensified following Japan's declaration of war on the United States and Britain in 1942.⁹⁶ Through Manchukuo's reliance on Japanese law, and the strength of the Kwantung Army, the laws in Manchukuo, as well as Japan, were bent to suit imperial and military needs. Some

⁹² Dubois, “Rule of Law in a Brave New Empire,” 303.

⁹³ Dubois, “Inauthentic Sovereignty,” 751-754.

⁹⁴ Dubois, “Rule of Law in a Brave New Empire,” 310.

Dubois, “Inauthentic Sovereignty,” 300.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 763.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 751.

examples include the creation of special courts dealing with crimes against the state and the elimination of the accused's right to defend themselves or appeal their sentencing.⁹⁷ Others include a new thought policing law in 1944 whose vague wording expanded the powers of the police, those found guilty of thought crimes would be punished with physical labor as part of their reeducation.⁹⁸ This resulted in huge increases for arrests and convictions between 1933 (25,538) and 1943 (77,997) with the most growth in convictions coming from the category of "special laws not counting opium laws," with a 917% increase over the ten year period resulting in 30,612 convictions in 1943.⁹⁹

Manchukuo appears to have had some levels of popular support for non-Japanese seeking to create an independent pan-Asian nation. Despite this, the weakness of the social institutions and lack of a constitution, as well as the supremacy of the Kwantung Army in politics, meant that the laws of the state were subject to the needs of the Empire and army. One way to consider the situation is through the mass resignations of Chinese officials in 1937. In 1934 a policy aiming to attract more Japanese judges to Manchukuo would result in the firing of many Chinese officials in 1936 in order to balance the number of Japanese and Chinese judges. This prompted a first wave of resignations in 1935 from disillusioned Chinese upset at the Japanese. The huge amount of vacancies, now expected to be filled by Japanese lawyers, led to a decline in quality of those hired, resulting in ineffective and slow courts.¹⁰⁰ The second wave of resignation by Chinese officials came as a response to the invasion of China and the extinguishing of hopes projected on Manchukuo, however, they were only joined by one high-ranking Japanese official. Dubois asserts this anecdote as "perhaps the best evidence" of the lack of regard for pan-Asian

⁹⁷ Dubois, "Rule of Law in a Brave New Empire," 310.

⁹⁸ Dubois, "Inauthentic Sovereignty," 765.

⁹⁹ Dubois, "Rule of Law in a Brave New Empire," 314.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 306.

ideals by the Japanese officials in Manchukuo.¹⁰¹ A general understanding of Manchukuo's legal structures is important in understanding the ways in which they were subverted by the needs of the Japanese Empire through legal dependency. Additionally, it provides insight into what kind of state Manchukuo was developing into by the 1940s.

The 1940 Provisional Citizenship Law

The increasing pressures of war gave an added sense of urgency to the ratification of a law that would help carry out conscription and war-time labor programs as well as foster a national spirit within Manchukuo. In 1939, during the 6th nationwide meeting of the chapters of the Concordia Association, representatives from eight ministries, including Kando, introduced a bill that sought to provide a method through which a nationality law could be introduced in Manchukuo. The Kando representative, weighing in on the proposed law, observed that if a provisional registration system were put in place that it could ease the transition into a complete nationality law. The Kando representative held that all residents, including those who held foreign nationalities, of Manchukuo would be entered into the system equally.¹⁰² Defending the legislation by appealing to the desire to foster a national identity and racial harmony, the provisional law was put into place August 1940.¹⁰³

That December, a nationwide special inspection occurred and police were used to begin registering residents into the provisional system. The provisional law called for the registration of all races in Manchukuo as residents in the name of uniting them all under uniform law.¹⁰⁴

Provisions were also made for foreigners who lived in Manchukuo long enough to be considered

¹⁰¹ Dubois, "Rule of Law in a Brave New Empire," 301-308.

¹⁰² Endo Masataka, "Manshū ni okeru Mibunshōmei to 「Nihonshinmin」 : Kosekihō, Minsekihō, Kiryūhō no Renkeitaisei," *Ajia Kenkyū* 56, no. 3 (2010): 2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

naturalized citizens. The information gathered from the 1940 census was entered into the people's register (民籍簿) and sought to establish their *minseki* (民籍), to say nothing of actual citizenship. The *minseki* of those registered were based on their *honseki* (本籍) which was defined as the place where one's original *minseki* was located. Thus, although all were counted as Manchurian residents, little was done to establish a definition of citizenship categorized by where they came from rather than where they were. For example, a Korean who moved to Manchukuo would have a Korean *honseki*, while an immigrant from mainland Japan would have a Japanese *honseki*. In Manchukuo, the *honseki* of both these people would become their respective *minseki*. This categorization served to determine under which legal codes an individual would be prosecuted.

Although the registration was successful in collecting such details as the members of the family, race, and date they arrived in Manchukuo (among other things), the process ultimately exposed more issues than it solved.¹⁰⁵ One of the most obvious contradictions that stood out in the proposing of a nationality law was the conflict it created between Manchukuo's dual policies of assimilation and respecting the customary law of the different ethnic groups within Manchukuo. Outside of the Five Races that Manchukuo claimed to represent, there were an estimated twenty other ethnic groups who had their own customs that Manchukuo's legal system would have to accommodate.

Recall that Japan's nationality law requires one to relinquish their Japanese nationality before accepting a new one. Under the provisional system in Manchuria, Japanese subjects, despite being part of the Five Races, were registered as alien residents. Advocates for nationality law reform argued that a dual-system that registered Japanese subjects both as Japanese subjects

¹⁰⁵ Endo, *Manshū ni okeru Mibunshōmei to 「Nihonshinmin」*, 3.

and their respective *koseki* (i.e. their place within the Empire) would be confusing and pointless. Additionally, such an exemption would go against the fostering of racial harmony that the tentative law was attempting to do. An exception was eventually made through a law passed December 1942. The law allowed for acceptance of the various *koseki* of Japanese subjects in the register by circumventing of Manchukuo's district courts, requiring only that incoming Japanese subjects report their corresponding nationality to their village chiefs. The result, however, was increased pressure for a dual citizenship law to be passed in Japan.¹⁰⁶

The progress of Manchukuo's nationality law was in part modeled on registration policies that had been applied to Koreans in Manchuria. After 1910, most of the Koreans who had immigrated to Manchuria without naturalizing as Chinese became *Museki Chōsenjin* (無籍朝鮮人), or Koreans with no registered nationality. Since Imperial Japan had declared that all Koreans were Japanese subjects, the Japanese began an extensive registration process. In 1939, the unregistered Koreans were instructed to attach a copy of their *koseki* (which would mark them as being from Korea) when entering themselves in the Manchurian registry. In this way, the unregistered Koreans became registered as Koreans (and by extension part of the Japanese Empire) instead of Manchurians.¹⁰⁷ Despite allowing them to keep their status as Koreans, the rate of Korean registration was lower than expected. It was reported that few had interests in registering, and because many farmers lived in the Manchurian "outback," thorough registration enforcement was made even more difficult. Additionally, it seemed many Koreans simply wanted to focus on cultivating their land while some intentionally avoided registration to avoid further Japanese interference with their lives.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Endo, *Manshū ni okeru Mibunshōmei to* 「Nihonshinmin」, 5.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 6-7.

Initially excluded from compulsory military service, the demands of war led Japan to open up and later compulsorily enlist their subjects into the Imperial Army. An edict in May 1942 began preparations for a conscription program within Korea. Japanese legislators, however, argued that the more pressing issue lay with the conscription of Koreans who lived outside of Korea. This problem was addressed with a temporary resident registration order. A similar order was carried out in 1914 that provided a means to keep track of Japanese nationals (subjects) from abroad. This did not, however, extend to Korean subjects. In Manchukuo, a law that did apply to Koreans was enacted in September 1942. According to it, Koreans living outside their *honseki* area (Korea), as well as those without *honseki* or a clear registration status who lived in an area for over 90 days, would be entered into the temporary residency log. With regards to Manchuria, the Governor-General of Korea announced that the temporary residence would be recorded into the Manchurian *minseki* record, not Korea's. Through keeping more intensive records on the Koreans in Manchuria, Imperial Japan and Manchukuo sought to rationalize the mobilization process.¹⁰⁹ In 1943, a law similar to the Japanese temporary residence law was passed in Manchukuo. Mimicking the Japanese law, people who were living outside their *honseki* for over 90 days were to be entered into the temporary residence record. Exceptions were made for certain groups including Japanese soldiers and military personnel.

Further issues arose, however, around the transitory nature of Manchukuo's population as the country had a large number of foreign laborers who would enter and leave the state for work. Additionally, by 1943, the worsening condition of Japanese war efforts began to affect Manchukuo as Japanese subjects began to evacuate back to their homeland. The problem was worsened as, by this point, Manchukuo still hadn't completed a complete and accurate census. In

¹⁰⁹ Endo, *Manshū ni okeru Mibunshōmei to* 「Nihonshinmin」, 7.

an attempt to curb the number of people leaving, Manchukuo declared the revocation of Manchurian *minseki* upon leaving. Despite this, many left with no intention to return. This revocation of *minseki* also aimed to curb the Chinese migrant workers and roving groups of bandits who would enter and leave the country with fake nationalities. Unable to solve either their nationality or immigration issues, one member of the Manchurian Administration of Justice Department described the lack of clear Manchurian nationality as a “cancer” afflicting the nation.¹¹⁰

In January 1944, the Manchurian newspaper *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun* predicted that by July, the registration of the nation’s *minseki* would be completed.¹¹¹ Despite this, now constitution or definition for citizenship was provided and its completion meant little in terms of civil rights by this point. These would never come to fruition as the Japanese Empire and Manchukuo would fall the next year.

Although the provisional citizenship law may have been a step in the right direction, the ultimate impetus for its non-existence lay in the Japanese Cabinet. Without dual citizenship, the subjects of Imperial Japan would remain nominal foreigners in Manchukuo. The internal debate going on in Japan in regards to a dual citizenship law for Japanese subjects, and especially as pertained to the Korean subjects, undermined similar efforts in Manchukuo. Although able to exercise limited autonomy, Manchukuo’s decision-making ability ultimately lay with the Japanese Cabinet and the Japanese bureaucrats who populated Manchukuo’s administration.

The Nationality Debate in Japan

Despite claiming to respect the traditional laws of the various ethnic groups residing within, Manchurian laws were mostly modeled after those of Imperial Japan. While attempting

¹¹⁰ Endo, *Manshū ni okeru Mibunshōmei to 「Nihonshinmin」*, 9.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

to emphasize the diversity of the Pan-Asian state, Korean and Taiwanese residents in Manchukuo, as Japanese subjects, were held to the laws set by their Japanese colonizers as “custom law.”¹¹² As for the Japanese subjects within Manchukuo, one of the largest contradictions in the case for Manchurian independence was that despite its founding principle of racial equality, Japan held on to its extraterritorial rights until 1937.¹¹³

Prior to the abolition of extraterritoriality in Japan, there had been a demonstration by Japanese in Manchukuo protesting the abolition.¹¹⁴ Many Japanese individuals, urban and rural benefitted from their extraterritoriality and were generally opposed to nationality reform. Even after extraterritoriality had been formally renounced, however, there was still no universal legal code applied to residents of Manchukuo. In fact, the first clause of the treaty ending extraterritoriality stated that Japanese subjects (Japanese, Koreans, and Taiwanese) would be treated according to Japanese law in Manchurian courts.¹¹⁵ The extraterritoriality had been encoded into the law thereby making Manchukuo appear as a more legitimate state at no cost to the Japanese Empire.

A number of factors have been suggested as to why the home government never amended the law to provide a means for dual citizenship including simply that the pressures of war distracted legislators from ever passing such a law. Professor Park has suggested that while Japanese citizens may have resisted losing their privileges, a significant source of nationality reform advocacy actually came from within the Japanese Kwantung Army whose officers populated Manchukuo’s bureaucracy. It has been suggested that one goal on nationality reform

¹¹² Thomas D. Dubois, "Inauthentic Sovereignty: Law and Legal Institutions in Manchukuo," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 3 (2010): 763.

¹¹³ Dubois, "Inauthentic Sovereignty," 751.

¹¹⁴ Liu, *A State without Nationals*, 29.

¹¹⁵ Asano Toyomi. "Shinkirō ni Kieta Dokuritsu - Manshūokoku no Jyōyaku Kaisei to Kokusekihō." *Iwanami Kōza Kindai Nihon Bunkaron 2 - Nihonjin no jiko ninshiki* (Tōkyō-to: Iwanami Shōten, 1999): 216.

would be further autonomy for the Kwantung Army from the Japanese Cabinet.¹¹⁶ In many ways, Manchukuo was a signifier for the internal conflicts within Japan between the civilian government and the increasingly influential military.

Some observations on the kinds of immigrants that came from Japan to Manchukuo offers insight into the willingness of Japanese to change their nationality. Japanese immigration to Manchukuo was primarily done in two waves: the initial investors who occupied the Liaodong Leased Territory following the Russo-Japanese War after 1905, these were mostly investors or factory workers living in urban areas. Agricultural immigrants came as part of a 1936 Japanese policy to encourage the relocation of five million Japanese farmers into Manchukuo over a twenty year period. The initial wave of immigrants mostly came from the upper and middle classes of Japan and were hired either by the consulate, the South Manchurian Railway Company, or one of its various sub-companies that began early Japanese developments in the region.¹¹⁷ The farmers, normally too poor to afford to move, received aid via the same development companies contracting Koreans to bring them over to Manchukuo.¹¹⁸

Japanese immigrants to Manchukuo, however, only had to pay half of their land loans and could take loans three times as large and at a lower interest rate than those given to Koreans. Additionally, Japanese immigrants often became landlords rather than tenants, buying the land that the Korean tenants had developed and then giving preference to cheaper Chinese laborers, further displacing the Koreans tenants.¹¹⁹ Despite the relatively larger access to loans given to them, until the defeat of Japan and dissolution of Manchukuo, the program only managed to

¹¹⁶ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 55.

¹¹⁷ Young, L., *Japan's Total Empire*, 33.

¹¹⁸ Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 158.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

attract roughly 270,000 farmers and their families from Japan.¹²⁰ A 1940 census revealed that the Japanese population in Manchukuo was approximately 820,000 (1.9%) and was mostly concentrated in cities; working in commerce, professions, in the Manchurian administration, or the Kwantung Army.¹²¹ Louise Young concluded that to the elite majority within Manchukuo, the new state was only meant to be a temporary home where they could oversee their investments before returning to Japan.¹²² The incoming farmers did not have the resources to return but relied on favorable treatment to guarantee prosperity in their new homes.

The Japanese who came to Manchukuo to farm, despite having privileges over non-Japanese farmers, led much harsher lives than the more wealthy Japanese who first came to Manchuria to invest and administrate. Japanese farmers that returned from Manchukuo to Japan often faced discrimination in their home country. Some thought that living outside of Japan among so many non-Japanese for such a long time tainted the returnees.¹²³ Many non-military Japanese families were moved to the USSR border to act as a first line of defense as the war situation worsened. Records show wives and children of these frontier farmers were encouraged to learn how to fight in preparation for an impending Soviet invasion. Of the Japanese who were not able to evacuate Manchukuo by the war's end, an estimated 80,000 were killed while others were captured by the Soviets or the Chinese.¹²⁴ Some of the children of the Japanese farmers were adopted by families of other ethnicities and since normalization of Sino-Japanese relations

¹²⁰ Tamanoi Mariko, "A Road to "A Redeemed Mankind": The Politics of Memory among the Former Japanese Peasant Settlers in Manchuria," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (2000): 164.

¹²¹ Avila-Tapias, *Co-Ethnic Spatial Concentrations*, 51.

¹²² Young, L., *Japan's Total Empire*, 44.

¹²³ Tamanoi, *Knowledge, Power, and Racial Classifications*, 270.

¹²⁴ Ishii Shinpei, "The Canary That Forgot Its Song: A Return to Wartime Manchuria," *Manoa* 13 no. 1 (2001): 43.

in 1972, a program of repatriation has been put in place for the now adult Japanese children who were abandoned by Imperial Japan in Manchukuo.¹²⁵

For Korean subjects, one further complicating factor in the nationality debate was the *naisen ittai* (内鮮一体) policy adopted by Japan. Literally, “Japan and Korea as one body,” the policy was rhetorically meant to encourage equality between the colony and the metropole and eliminate the second-class citizen position held by Koreans through assimilating the Korean people not only as Japanese subject but as members of “true” Japan (内地).¹²⁶ In reality, it is an example of a “polite racism,” afforded to Koreans in Japanese assimilationist rhetoric.¹²⁷ While seeming to support Japanese and Korean unity, actual assimilation policies aimed to erase Korean culture and replace it with Japanese culture.

Since Manchukuo’s founding, Korea still lacked the nationality law that would allow Koreans to relinquish their status as Japanese nationals to become Manchurian citizens. Even prior to Manchukuo’s founding, the question of how a separate registration for Koreans fit the *naisen ittai* policy had been raised within the Japanese Cabinet with some claiming that the separate categories were discriminatory and ran counter to the policy. The responses to this claim mostly focused on the threat that such a policy could have on further enabling anti-Japanese movements. By holding certain rights from Korean subjects, Japanese authorities could better monitor and suppress potential subversive activities. As the war worsened, so too did these anxieties. Other complicating factors included that the conditions for Korea naturalization were more complex than those required to allow Japanese naturalization. Since Koreans were subject

¹²⁵ Rowena Ward, “Returning from Exile: The Japanese Citizens from the Former Manchuria,” *Critical Studies* (2008): 99.

¹²⁶ Liu, *A State without Nationals*, 37.

¹²⁷ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 76.

to a separate nationality law and recorded in a separate *koseki*, there was more complicated reform process than there would have been for legislating on Japanese nationality law. Due to the separate legal system, revision of Korean nationality law would have to have through both the Japanese Cabinet as well as the Governor-General of Korea.¹²⁸

It is the opinion of the author that given the increasingly totalitarian policies being undertaken in Manchukuo and the Empire of Japan more generally following 1942, that Japanese bureaucrats understood the costs and benefits of developing citizenship for their subjects (and by extension Manchukuo). They chose to pursue harsh policies aimed at national security above those aimed at assimilation as part of larger calculations in a worsening war situation. Fears over anti-Japanese sentiment had always been in the minds of the Japanese Diet when legislating on nationality, in Manchukuo these fears were especially poignant as the population was at least 90% Chinese at any given time from 1932-1945. If meaningful definitions of citizenship had been in the wings for Manchurian bureaucrats, its introduction in such an increasingly dire situation would be highly unlikely given that civil rights violations would have most likely continued anyways, and introducing a constitution and citizenship would only agitate the situation further. Whether or not nationality reform was only a matter of time, by August 1945 it didn't matter. Until then, Koreans had no means to change nationalities or abandon their new sovereign. Abroad, treatment of Koreans varied depending on the sympathy of that country towards Korea or animosity towards Korea. Korean Associations, set up around the world to advocate for Korean independence would also influence the way they were perceived overseas.

¹²⁸ Liu, *A State without Nationals*, 37.

Koreans Outside Manchukuo

A quick survey of how Koreans were treated in different parts of the world because of or despite their colonizers is revealing of the ways in which the effects of the annexation of Korea, on Koreans, were not limited to borders of the Empire. The internment of Japanese citizens is a notoriously dark chapter in United States history. It is taught in schools as a period of widespread fear in America that led to the indiscriminate forcing of 120,000 citizens with Japanese heritage into camps and the seizure of their property. Further restrictions were placed on those labeled as enemy aliens, such as curfews and heavy monitoring.¹²⁹ As this was being carried out, however, Koreans, despite being acknowledged as Japanese subjects in legal terms, were exempt from internment.¹³⁰ While Koreans were not interred, and at times not as beholden to the above mentioned restrictions on the Japanese, they were both victims of racist views held in the United States that took little interest differentiating between Koreans and Japanese on the individual level. To overcome this, Koreans in America would work hard to distance themselves from their unwanted association with the Japanese Empire.

Korean immigration to the United States began in 1885 when a handful of Koreans fled Japan after being pursued by the police for subversive activity. Until Korea was made a Japanese protectorate in 1905, it sent laborers to Hawaiian sugar plantations. By the time the Japanese ceased the Korean immigration, 7,226 Koreans had immigrated to the United States.¹³¹ Immigration would, however, continue into the United States in the form of “picture-brides” coming to marry Korean laborers or anti-Japanese Korean students who crossed from Shanghai

¹²⁹ Lili M. Kim, “How Koreans Repealed Their ‘Enemy Alien’ Status,” *From the Land of Hibiscus: Koreans in Hawaii, 1903-1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007): pp. 195.

¹³⁰ Ji-Yeon Yuh. “Koreans in Japanese Internment Camps in WW II?” Received by Jim Hoare, *Koreans in Japanese Internment Camps in WW II?*, 21 Oct. 2004.

¹³¹ Howard B. Melendy. “Koreans in America,” *Asians in America: Filipinos, Koreans, and East Indians* (New York: Hippocrene, 1981): 125.

and Manchuria. Following Korean annexation and moving into the opening years of World War Two, Korean immigrants began forming national Korean associations, advocating for Korean independence from within the United States. Additionally, Korean students became government translators and could even enlist in the military during the 1940's.¹³²

By 1940 there were approximately 1,711 Koreans on the U.S. mainland and 6,815 in Hawaii. The June of that same year the Alien Registration Act would be passed. This would require all Japanese subjects living in the United States to register themselves as enemy aliens. However, the Koreans would not be required to wear, as the Japanese were, badges identifying them as enemy aliens.¹³³ Organizations like the Korean Committee, founded in America by anti-Japanese Koreans in the years after annexation, concentrated its efforts on the classification of Koreans as Japanese subjects by the United States. Some began to wear patches that crossed the Korean and American flag together, demonstrating solidarity with America and the Allies. In January 1942, an order was issued from Washington D.C. exempting Koreans from the registration altogether.¹³⁴

Interestingly, one of the only internment camps to contain significant numbers of Koreans was the Honouliuli Internment Camp in Hawaii. Hawaii was home to largest number of Koreans in the U.S. Since it was not yet an incorporated state, Koreans were required to register themselves as enemy aliens in Hawaii under laws exclusive to the territory. The Koreans held in the camp were Imperial Japanese soldiers captured from American campaigns into islands held by Japan. All Japanese subjects – Koreans, Okinawans, Formosans, and Japanese – were recorded into separate categories by the camp. Although considered enemy combatants, tensions

¹³² Brett, "Koreans in America", 129.

¹³³ Kim, "How Koreans Repealed Their 'Enemy Alien' Status", 196.

¹³⁴ Melendy, *Asians in America*, 157.

between the Korean and Japanese prisoners were such that the two groups had to be separated within the camp.¹³⁵ To further distinguish themselves, Koreans prisoners wore black patches with the words “I am Korean” written underneath.¹³⁶ Alien registration was required in Hawaii until May 1944 when Allied victory was mostly assured and the fear that some Koreans may be loyal Japanese agents become less pressing and a law was passed exempting Koreans.¹³⁷

Just beyond Manchuria, Russo-Korean relations existed in the modern era since 1860 after Imperial Russia acquired land neighboring the area from China. In the years following the annexation of Korea, the Russian Far East, as in the United States, became a hub for Korean nationalist sentiment. During the Stalin Era in 1937, Koreans and other ethnic groups were forcibly relocated as part of a Soviet resettlement project to Central Asia, near modern Kazakhstan. Following Stalin’s death in 1953 and the removal of travel bans, many of those moved returned to East Asia. This included many Koreans who traveled to the new Soviet holding taken from the defeated Japanese, the southern portion of Sakhalin Island.¹³⁸

Sakhalin Island lies just north of the Japanese island of Hokkaido. The southern portion of the island was taken from the Russian Empire by the Empire of Japan in 1905. Its invasion by the Soviets in 1945 occurred as part of the larger Manchurian invasion in the final days of the war. An estimated 40,000 Koreans who had been relocated to the South Sakhalin as cheap labor were there when the USSR forces invaded. The Soviets allowed Koreans to learn in Korean, a privilege that had been denied to them by the Japanese who suppressed the use of the Korean language while educating all their subjects in Japanese. Sure in their claims on the island, the

¹³⁵ Rosenfeld, Alan. "Honouliuli (detention facility)," *DenshoEncyclopedia*.
[http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Honouliuli%20\(detention%20facility\)/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Honouliuli%20(detention%20facility)/) (accessed Nov 19 2017).

¹³⁶ Melendy. *Asians in America*. 158.

¹³⁷ Kim. "How Koreans Repealed Their 'Enemy Alien' Status." 213.

¹³⁸ Um, "Listening Patterns and Identity," 121-42.

Soviets prepared to incorporate the Koreans into the USSR. To help promote integration and encourage education, those Koreans in Russia who had been moved to Central Asia were sent to South Sakhalin to administer and teach in Russian and Korean.¹³⁹

In Manchuria, the Soviet invasion was recorded to have been especially violent for Japanese as well as Chinese and Koreans. Additionally, attacks by Chinese peasants on Koreans were also recorded as common and especially spiteful. Those sent to the Soviet prisons came from a wide range of civil and military occupations.¹⁴⁰ An estimated 600,000, mostly military but some civilian Japanese personnel, were moved into Siberian labor camps. Repatriation began in 1947 but by then approximately 60,000 Japanese prisoners had already died.¹⁴¹ Even down to the final days of the war, as Japan's situation worsened, Koreans could still not escape their label of Japanese subjects and were themselves made the targets of violence by upset locals who had watched as Koreans benefitted from their unwanted status.

Within Japan itself existed the most obvious disconnect between the Japanese pan-Asianism and their opinions of other East Asian ethnicities. As the Japanese war effort required an increasing number of men, Korean laborers began to be imported to replace the conscripted Japanese citizens.¹⁴² Over two million Koreans resided in Japan by the end of the war. In the recent past, Koreans in Japan had been scapegoats for when disaster struck Japan such as with the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 where, following the wreckage, Japanese citizens were recorded persecuting and killing thousands of Koreans in anger. Although there was limited Korean representation in the Imperial Cabinet, scholarship on Imperial Japanese-Korean

¹³⁹ Um, "Listening Patterns and Identity," 121-42.

¹⁴⁰ Andrew E. Barshaw, *The Gods Left First: The Captivity and Repatriation of Japanese POWs in Northeast Asia, 1945-1956* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2013): 136.

¹⁴¹ Jonathan B. Chavanne, "Collision in Manchuria: Rescue, Intelligence, and the Cold War in Asia, August–September 1945," *Intelligence and National Security* 32, no. 1 (Nov. 2016): 26–36.

¹⁴² Oguma, *A Genealogy of Japanese Self-Images*, 207.

relations reveal an exploitative relationship between the two people. Additionally, it was not until April 1945 that the vote was given to male Korean subjects, a final bid for Korean cooperation before August.¹⁴³ Even though propaganda in Japan sought to highlight Korean achievements in the war and the equality established between Japan and Korea, there was always an air of condescension.¹⁴⁴

One way that this condescension is captured in Japanese culture is through film. *Manei*, the Manchurian film production company, held a monopoly on the East Asian film market. Films with Korean (and other minority) characters emphasized the adoptive relation Japan claimed it had with Koreans. Since the Japanese and Korean characters were both Japanese subjects, films produced in Japan tended to emphasize the Empire as a unifying factor between the peoples that superseded animosity between the parties.¹⁴⁵ Despite attempts at assimilation, Koreans were often looked down upon or seen as a source for cheap labor when they came to Japan. The failure of the assimilation policies is reflected best in the shift of Japanese racial thought around 1942 as the Japanese war situation worsened. Opposite of the previously promoted assimilation policies, the late-war period shows an emphasis on Japanese homogeneity and a downplaying of the diversity of the Empire.¹⁴⁶ Despite the gradual embracing of other races in Japanese thought since 1905, the quick about-face contraction of Japanese racial acceptance is reflective both of the shock losing the war gave Japan and the weakness of the roots that more inclusive racial theory had taken on the mainland.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 66.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 47.

¹⁴⁵ Michael Baskett, *The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008): 85.

¹⁴⁶ Oguma, *A Genealogy of Japanese Self-Images*, 296.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 72.

Conclusion

The nationality debate in Korea had played a large role in hindering nationality reform throughout the Japanese Empire and Manchukuo. Before anything could be settled, the worsening war situation led to more drastic policy approaches and shift towards prioritization of national security over the integrity of civil institutions. Manchukuo was a nation whose foundation supposedly lay in upholding Pan-Asian ideals of equality between the Five Races. This Pan-Asian foundation sought to appeal to the kind of ethnic determinism being advocated for at the end of World War One. Although Japan had co-opted East Asian nationalism and bitter feelings towards the West, its failure to genuinely follow through on those ideas created several political quagmires for the Empire that were addressed through repressive policies. In the Korean case, while being subjected to Japanese propaganda of pan-Asianism, the reality was the exploitation of those on the peninsula by the Japanese. While the Koreans were used as farmers in Manchukuo or manual laborers in Japan, at home they faced oppressive policies that included the censorship of the Korean language and the enforcement of Japanese customs. Japanese claims that they were encouraging Pan-Asian ideals and ethnic self-rule were completely undermined by its actions. Nowhere is this more evident than in the purposeful undermining of Korean self-determination and extensive exploitation as well as the standard-bearer of pan-Asianism followed by another aggressive invasion of China.

The controversy over nationality extended beyond just the Empire of Japan and Manchukuo. As discussed, Koreans as Japanese subjects were exposed to a varied array of attitudes and treatments depending on where they were. Although Japan claimed through the *naisen ittai* policy that Korea and Japan were one, their treatment of the Koreans betrayed their so-called intentions and this juxtaposition was reflected in places such as the United States which

became host to a strong Korean independence movement. Their status as Japanese subjects did not always privilege them and in fact fostered animosity between Koreans and yet uncolonized targets of Japanese Imperialism.

Following the end of WWII and the signing of the San Francisco Treaty, Koreans and Formosans, freed from Japanese sovereignty, had their Japanese citizenship revoked.¹⁴⁸ Among the Koreans within mainland Japan during this time were those whose families had been living in Japan for decades. Some of these families, still considering themselves Koreans, chose not to naturalize into Japanese citizens following the war's end, others lacked the means by which they could afford to return to Korea. An estimated one-third of the Koreans in Japan were given special status as permanent Korean residents of Japan (*zainichi chōsenjin*, 在日朝鮮人) that allowed them to have Japanese nationality but continues to deny them access to healthcare and public housing services. Those denied the special permission were put into internment camps with other foreigners who would be deported back to their home countries.¹⁴⁹ Beyond the legal sphere, as the Japanese war situation worsened, until their loss, Japanese racial thought contracted from their Pan-Asian ideals into a more isolationist form, emphasizing Japanese homogeneity over pan-Asianism.¹⁵⁰

Studies of Manchukuo tend to focus on the disconnect present between the rhetoric and actions of the Japanese running the state. One problem that came about was the lack of a nationality law, a cornerstone of the modern state. Japan instead relied on its system of familial registration with cultural connotation associated with the Japanese Imperial System. In Manchukuo this allowed for separate judicial systems that Japanese bureaucrats were able to

¹⁴⁸ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Invisible Immigrants: Undocumented Migration and Border Controls in Postwar Japan," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 129.

¹⁴⁹ Morris-Suzuki, "Invisible Immigrants," 138.

¹⁵⁰ Oguma, *A Genealogy of Japanese Self-Images*, 296.

mold into acceptable forms. Koreans found these forms of imperial association especially offensive given the other forms of cultural erasure undertaken by the Japanese in Korea.

The Japanese had profited from the vague legal status held by their Korean subjects in Kando. Treaties were twisted and new lines were drawn over existing maps as the Japanese took advantage of Chinese diplomatic weakness. Although this system gave Koreans certain privileges over Manchurian locals, it also created a system in which the Koreans were guaranteed few rights and Japanese intervention in the lives happened often. Police were placed in Kando and Manchuria to help suppress anti-Japanese activity while Chinese authorities became increasingly skeptical of Koreans such that they, like Japan, began a program of heavy-handed assimilation. Japan in some cases ignored the Koreans who had already naturalized their guaranteed rights as Chinese citizens. The same thing happened to all Han, Manchu, Russians and others in Manchuria in 1932 when they lost their respective statehood only to have it replaced with ‘Manchurian residency’ organized around their nations of origin.

Koreans, from Kando to Manchukuo, perhaps offer the best lens with which to analyze ethnicity as understood in the “pan-Asian” Co-Prosperity Sphere established by Japan. Given the extent to which Japan undertook attempts at assimilating the Koreans, their position overlaps with so many important ideas and moments in understanding racial polity in the Empire of Japan. Mainstream pan-Asian rhetoric in Japan, however, was not founded on attitudes of multiculturalism or with goals of ethnic intermixing. The ideology relied on Confucian philosophy to establish a “natural and harmonious” racial hierarchy in East Asia that allowed the military to justify its harsh policies through the puppet-emperor. Instead of creating a moral order based on an ethnic harmony, these forms of Imperial Japanese propaganda allowed for the construction of an exploitative power structure that always placed Japanese interests first.

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