This is the second issue of East Asian History in the series previously entitled Papers on Far Eastern History. The journal is published twice a year.

Contributions to The Editor, East Asian History
Division of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific Studies
Australian National University, GPO Box 4, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia
Phone 06 249 3140  Fax 06 249 1839

Subscription Enquiries Subscription Manager, East Asian History, at the above address
Annual Subscription Rates Australia A$45  Overseas US$45  (for two issues)
CONTENTS

1  The Concept of Inherited Evil in the *Taiping Jing*
   Barbara Hendrischke

31  Water Control in Zherdong During the Late Ming
    Morita Akira

    Brian Martin

87  The Limits of Hatred: Popular Attitudes Towards the West
    in Republican Canton
    Virgil Kit-yiu Ho

105  Manchukuo: Constructing the Past
    Gavan McCormack

125  Modernizing Morality? Paradoxes of Socialization
    in China during the1980s
    Børge Bakken

143  The Three Kingdoms and Western Jin: a History of China in the
    Third Century AD - II
    Rafe de Crespigny
Cover calligraphy  Yan Zhenqing 颜真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman

Cover illustration  “Seeing the apparel, but not the person.”
Cartoon by Liu Bai 劉白, Pan-chiao man-hua
[Five-cents comics], vol.6, no.1 (1932), p.5
MANCHUKUO: CONSTRUCTING THE PAST

Gavan McCormack

Following Hobbes, who compared the modern state to the monster known as Leviathan, and F. Neumann, who compared the Nazi Third Reich to a Behemoth, should not Manchukuo be seen as that mythical Greek monster, the Chimera, with head of lion, torso of goat, and tail of dragon, where the lion is the Kwantung Army, the goat the (Japanese) emperor system, and the dragon, needless to say, is the Chinese emperor? And the common meaning of Chimera in Western languages is simply illusion...

—Yamamuro Shin’ichi

The struggle to conquer the terrain of the past is on occasion as tough and uncompromising as the contest over terrain on which to build the future, and the path from the one to the other almost always steep and rocky. The process of constructing something to fill the blank hole left in the record by the extinction of the state of Manchukuo in August 1945 is one in which that outcome is still far from certain, although various positions have been staked out on the terrain, in the light of which the complex manoeuvres between the parties become clearer as the turbulent passions that once swirled around them gradually calm. But as the materials build up, so the question of what underlying design should be applied to the construction process becomes more pressing.

What was Manchukuo? The short answer is that it was the state which emerged on the territory of the former ‘Three Eastern Provinces’ of China, in that area bordering Korea and the Soviet Union which in the early decades of this century was first contested by Russia and Japan, with Japan in 1905 taking over the former Russian railway and other concessions and gradually establishing and expanding military, political and economic influence till 1931, when the Chinese regime of Chang Hsueh-liang was overthrown (in the so-called ‘Manchurian Incident’) and a new state established.

The Manchuko state became an empire in April 1934 ruled by the former Ch'ing emperor, Pu-yi 濕儀, under the reign title of K'ang-te 康德. Pu-yi abdicated and the state was dissolved, the territory reverting to Chinese control, on 17 August 1945, following the advance of the Soviet Armies across the border. During the years 1932 to 1945 this was a state with its own monarch, anthem, flag, and army, recognized by the Axis powers, and some other countries (including the Vatican). Since its disappearance it has become perhaps best known internationally through the cinematic representation of it by Bertolucci. “The Last Emperor” is an attempt at an imaginative reconstruction of Manchuko, though like “The King and I” as a reconstruction of the Siamese court of Mongkut, it is far from being the last word on the last emperor and his regime.

Once one moves beyond the stark details of this outline, almost everything else is contested. It is as if both the states most involved with Manchuko, for different reasons, have conspired to maintain darkness over the terrain. China, whose government regained sovereignty over the lands of Manchuko in 1945, has persisted in negating the existence of the state which once stood there by religiously affixing the prefix 'wei' 偽 [false] to the very word—as if correct terminology were more important than understanding what the term signified—and by exclusive insistence on the puppet-like, exploitative, oppressive qualities of the Manchuko state as something unmitigatedly bad, from which liberation and the construction of a modern state followed like a state created ab initio on ravaged and desiccated lands. The question of the collaboration of Chinese with the regime—the degree and rationale of it, as well as the later fate of those who collaborated—remains largely unopened, and potentially at least as serious a social and political issue as that of collaboration in Vichy France.  

The Japanese state, which at the very least was deeply involved in the whole Manchuko venture, totally ignored it once the thing collapsed, particularly anxious to distract attention from any link between the Manchuko emperor, to whom the label 'last' was fast being attached, and its own, who was determined to hang on a while yet. Insofar as the subsequent Japanese state has gradually remembered Manchuko, it is to remember the glorious deeds of the 1930s, to restate the Utopian justifications for the creation of the state, while forgetting the disastrous realities that followed—the nightmare into which the dream turned.

So what China declares black, Japan declares white. These are the two official truths, both, needless to say and like most official truths, untrue. Fortunately there are many more versions of the truth than there are governments with lines to push or histories to peddle, and the range of material, both raw and cooked, with which to reconstruct this vanished state or to float back to the surface this continental Atlantis—has become considerable.

Chinese scholarship is rising above the level of simple negation, and is drawing up blueprints for the state which include complex social and
economic, as well as military and political infrastructure. From meetings with Chinese scholars in North-East China in 1985 it was clear that a considerable academic enterprise was underway, whose constructs will only slowly be erected. The collective research project, known as 'Tung-pei lun-hsian shih-su nien shih' 東北滿洲 十四年史 [History of the fourteen years of the fall of the North-East], being pursued collectively by the Institute of Historical Research of Liaoning Province Academy of Social Sciences, the Institute of Japanese Research of Jilin Academy of Social Sciences, and the Museum of the former 'Palace' in Ch’ang-ch’un 長春, should in due course help greatly towards an understanding the Chinese experience of Manchukuo. At the popular level, furthermore, the Bertolucci film stimulated considerable activity, including a series of what might be called 'Last Emperor Strikes Back' reworkings of the Bertolucci themes. In the Japanese literature, the central thrust of early post-war treatments was the attempt to elucidate the process of the loss of the ‘true’ state-building plans, and the usurpation of the construction project by false architects, the militarists. Out of this slowly emerged the literature of the ‘true’ plans, in effect a prolonged and continuing attempt to construct backwards into the past that which had proved so difficult to construct at the time: the state which was perfectly multi-racial and in which the problems of economic development had also been successfully resolved. The former planners of Manchukuo themselves, and the bureaucrats, businessmen, politicians and ideologues who were part of the project, devoted considerable energies to justifying their efforts, both in substantial volumes of semi-official history and in many volumes of memoirs or short essays. Comprehensive critical studies began to appear in the 1960s, with a series of works by (among others) Andō Hikotarō, Asada Kyōji, Hara Rō, Hirano Ken’-ichirō, Kobayashi Hideo, Matsuzawa Tessei, Nishimura Shigeo, Okabe Makio, and Suzuki Takashi, as well as studies of specific movements such as the Kyōwakai 協和會 or ‘Concordia Society’,4 and of phenomena such as immigration, and the financial and industrial sectors.5 Most recently the memoir material is particularly rich, probably reflecting the fact that those with a story to tell are now near or already in their eighties and know that whatever tale they have to tell had better be told soon, or else have recently passed away, so that their story can be told for them or reconstructed.

3 Ibid., Review, p.59.

Figure 2
Manchukuo goodwill mission of 1938, headed by Han Yun-chieh: meeting with Adolph Hitler
from their papers. Finally, there is also a considerable literature on the grim and often brutal realities of the war, including especially the record of the unit known as ‘Unit 731’ or the ‘Ishii Unit’ which was responsible for bacteriological warfare experiments (and implementation) and which was first publicly admitted to have existed in the late 1970s; and also a whole genre known as ‘zanryū koji’ (left-behind orphans), those children abandoned in the chaos of the Manchukuo collapse of 1945 and officially ignored by Japan till the re-establishment of ‘normal’ diplomatic relations in the 1970s made it impossible to continue doing so. The pitiful and tragic stories told by these now middle-aged Sino-Japanese men and women, as delegation after delegation of them came to Japan for the first time in the 1980s seeking their long-lost families, provided a new and often disconcerting lesson in the history of the Manchukuo experience to a generation which had largely forgotten it.

This rich lode of Japanese language materials is only very partially refracted into Western languages. In English, apart from the literature on the imperial family and the ‘path to war’ studies, the economy has been the major subject drawing attention, from the studies of Schumpeter and Jones...
in the 1940s, through the pioneering work of Ramon Myers beginning in 1959, to Chalmers Johnson's 1982 classic study on industrial policy.9 The literature which aims at a comprehensive survey of modern Japanese history or Japanese imperialism and colonialism tends also to be rather thin in its treatment of Manchukuo and to have a heavy concentration on questions of economic growth.10

What are the questions which may be illuminated by use of the corpus of Manchukuo material that has accumulated? To name but a few, one could put forward the following:

1. The relationship between Utopian vision and economic or political planning.11

2. The pressures for the creation of, and the reasons for the failure of the effort to create, a supra-national political, economic and cultural order, and the tension between Japanese aspirations to multiculturalism or universal culture and the assumption that Japaneseness is a special, non-transferable racial virtue.

3. The relationship of intellectuals and the state, particularly the process by which liberal intellectuals in 1930s Japan came to be mobilized in the Manchukuo venture.


11 For some preliminary thoughts on this, see Gavan McCormack, "Manchukuo: vision, plan and reality," Proceedings of the August 1987 Conference of the Japanese Studies Association of Australia, Griffith University, Brisbane (publication forthcoming).
110

4. The nature of history itself, as an academic discipline and as an industry, and its role in processing the past.

5. The theory of fascism: does the peculiar mix of repression and mobilization in the Manchukuo state qualify it for inclusion in the general comparative and theoretical literature on fascism, in which so far it has been largely ignored?

6. The social and economic dynamics of mass migration and frontier development.

7. More particular matters, such as the history of the modern automobile industry (Nissan), of various industrial and banking groups born in Manchukuo,12 of science and medicine, of bureaucratic practice, and of town planning and architecture.13

The particular, if very broad, dimension on which my own present work is focused is that of the relationship, sometimes contradictory and sometimes complementary, between Utopian aspiration and technocratic organization and planning, present throughout modern Japanese history but nowhere so clearly as in Manchukuo. That same tendency is more recently manifest with similar clarity in various schemes nurtured in the ministry to which so many of the ex-Manchukuo bureaucrats graduated after the war, MITI—the Ministry for International Trade and Industry—for the restructuring of large parts of the globe, including, with the multifunction-polis, Australia.14

The Manchukuo project was the most concentrated expression in the 1930s and 1940s of what would in a later period become known as ‘kokusaika’ 国際化, or internationalization, the aspiration for an international order in which Japan would have a secure place. The relationship with China that was to be prefigured in the Manchukuo state would be the model for that new world order. That it failed, though attributed by its proponents to the excesses of militarism and the fortunes of war, was actually due to flaws at the very heart of the project itself. In the current phase of kokusaika one would expect there to be lessons, both positive and negative, to be learned from Manchukuo.

The initial justification for the movement to overthrow the regional Chinese government of Chang Hsueh-liang in 1931 was that it was a backward, corrupt warlord regime lacking in intrinsic legitimacy and, in addition, an impediment to the forces of modernization and progress. The industrializing efforts of the Chang regime were belittled, and its insistence on the integrity of the region with the rest of China negated. Discontentment and division in the ruling sections of the society of North-East China were able to be exploited, and there was a significant element which was tired of the complications and burdens of the struggles for power in China as a whole and preferred a policy of what was called 'pao-ching an-min' 保境安民 [maintaining the borders and pacifying the people].15 The degree to which there may have been a real revolutionary quality to the Chinese movement to create a new order is also disputed.16 Despite this, however, the building
of the state on a foundation of opposition to Chinese nationalism was an original sin from which the enterprise never fully recovered.

In the light of this, there is a peculiar poignancy in the assessment of these events offered nearly sixty years after they occurred by one of the major protagonists, Chang Hsueh-liang himself, emerging late in 1990 from fifty-four years of imprisonment and detention.\[^{17}\]

Chang's contribution to constructing the past by attributing Japan's aggressive behaviour to a decline in the spirit of bushido among the Japanese military, and apparently exonerating General Honjō, will most likely itself have to be reconstructed in due course since today probably none outside Japan would share his view; the problem is more likely to have lain at a structural level, rather than in the ideological superstructure of bushido. Chang's assessment makes an interesting contrast with that of Bertolucci, who portrays all Japanese as Svengeli-like schemers and plotters, with Amakasu snarling "Asia belongs to us" a typical example.

The force of Chinese nationalism was not to be negated tout court. The sort of direct colonial rule adopted in Korea and in Taiwan was impossible here. Instead Chinese nationalism was sublated, and the idea of a new type of state, prefiguring a new world order, was generated. It would be a multi-racial, harmonious realm of prosperity in which all the corners of the world would gradually come under 'one roof', a new world order beyond imperialism and communism, and beyond any narrow notions of national sovereignty. The social basis of this aspiration, as several excellent studies have shown was in precisely those strata of Japanese settlers in Manchukuo most threatened by Chinese nationalism, the 'pieds noirs' of North-East China.\[^{18}\]

It was, as I have noted elsewhere, an expression of a deep-seated historical tendency to seek 'idealst' solutions to problems and contradictions, whether in Japan's internal social structure or its relations with the outside world. In the former, existing contradictions, exploitation and injustice, have been dissolved in a myth of transcendent social harmony, and in the notion that Japan is a 'family state', or even a divine state founded by the gods, unique, harmonious and virtuous. In the latter, contradictions between Japan and its neighbour countries have been dissolved in the idealistic vision of a harmonious and equal 'Commonwealth'. As Japan began its imperialist aggression into Korea and China early in the 20th Century, this strain of thinking masked the reality of aggression, inequality and exploitation under the veil of 'Asianism' and the pretence of joint resistance to Western imperialism.\[^{19}\]

The ideological stream from which the justification of the Manchukuo state flowed was that Asianist or pan-Asianist one which from the late nineteenth century had expressed a similar combination of progressive, internationalist sentiments on the one hand, and priority for the interests of the Japanese state on the other. The vision generated in the late 1920s by the Manchurian Youth League at the time when it was still a semi-autonomous mass organization—
of a new world order transcending the injustices and distortions of capitalist imperialism and communism—was officially adopted by the Kwantung Army in 1931–32 as the ideology of the new state, and enshrined in the organization that became known as the Kyōwakai [Concordia Society]. Its fate in due course was to become in effect the mass party organ of the Ministry of Propaganda, functioning on lines similar to its equivalent under European National Socialism or Fascism.

The terms of the 'special relationship', which bound the new state by a non-detachable umbilicus to its 'mother' country, were set out in documents whose import was so much at odds with the officially proclaimed propaganda that they were not published till long afterwards. The structural principle was known as 'naimen shidō' 内面指導 [direction from within], according to which nominal Chinese sovereignty became the hollow frame, or tatemae 建前, concealing the reality, or bonne 本音, of Japanese rule. Powers of appointment to and dismissal from important office, the principle of attachment of Japanese 'subordinates' to all senior government posts, and the requirement of the signature of the Kwantung Army Chief-of-Staff to any policy document, thoroughly emptied the new state of any real sovereignty. The principles of puppetry were endorsed at the outset by the chief puppet himself, P’u-yi, in an exchange of letters with General Honjō dated 10 March and 12 May 1932.20

The dreamers and idealists of the early Youth League found themselves stranded on shoals of reality no less remote from their original vision than Willie Lane and his shearer mates had found some forty years earlier when they landed in Paraguay to construct their Utopia; the attempt to create something new ended in the clone-like reproduction of many of the deepest-rooted features of the old.

In 1935, the year following his accession from regent to emperor, P’u-yi visited Japan as the guest of Hirohito. He returned in April, declaring his "absolute unity of spirit with the Japanese emperor" (chin Nihon tenmōheika to seishin ittai no gotoshi 脫日本天皇陛下と精神一体の如し).21 Within
the Kwantung Army, having seen to the establishment of the formal structures of state, the question of ideological reinforcements, cult, religion and ceremony—in effect, the creation of tradition—began to be seriously considered. While the mass-mobilizing Kyôwakai continued to promulgate the general themes of interracial harmony, equality of the five races, and so on, this was thought to need balancing with a form of state cult expressive of the 'special relationship' between Manchukuo and Japan. Katakura Chû片倉栗 (of the Kwantung Army) came up with the suggestion that the cult of a trinity made up of the Japanese 'Tenjin-sama' 天神様 (Sugawara Michizane 菅原道真), the Meiji emperor and the founder of the Ch'ing dynasty (and therefore the remote ancestor of P'u-yi) could be promoted. Lieutenant-General Yoshioka Yasunao 吉岡安直 put forward the most sharply contrasting view to this eclectic mish-mash—that the state cult should be focussed exclusively on the divine founder of Japan, Amaterasu 天照. After Yoshioka accompanied him to the ceremonies marking the 2600th anniversary of the founding of Japan in June 1940, P'u-yi became persuaded of this view. Japan henceforth was to be not merely ally, but mother country (shinpo 親邦).²²

With astonishing speed, immediately after P'u-yi's return from this Japan visit, the decisions were made, announced to the Chinese officials who were the nominal government—a bemused query from Yu Shen-chih 于深澈, Minister for Security, asking 'What is Amaterasu Ōmikami god of?'²³ was brushed aside—and the ceremonies were begun the very next day. In
July the ‘Kenkoku Shinbyō’ 建国神廟 (National Foundation Shrine) was established, followed by remarkable ceremonies by which P'u-yi underwent the transformation rite of incarnating the goddess’s spirit;24 the ‘Three Treasures’ of mirror, sword and jewel and a group of gagakuc court musicians were despatched from Japan, and a calendar of Shintō rites and festivals exactly modelled on Japan’s was inaugurated. The imperial portrait became an object of ceremonial reverence, morning ceremonies of ritual bowing to the palaces in Tokyo and Hsinking were inaugurated, and P'u-yi began to conduct tours of the provincial areas of his domain, modelled exactly on those performed by Hirohito, conducted with a punctiliousness of which Hirohito might have been proud,25 and which is not easily reconciled with his later insistence, to the International Military Tribunal in Tokyo in August 1946 and in his autobiography in 1959, that in all these matters he had acted under compulsion while totally controlled by the Kwantung Army’s Colonel Yoshioka Yasunao or General Umezu Yoshijiro 梅津美治郎. In August 1940, Manchukuo’s equivalent of Japan’s Yasukuni Shrine 雅典神社, a shrine dedicated to the 408,050 ‘martyrs’ of the state’s founding, was also established—the Kenkoku Chüreibyō 建国忠霊廟.26

Never was a tradition created with such speed and lack of inhibition. The wholesale adoption of Japanese structures, cults, formulas and practices was such as to lead Yamamuro Shin’ichi 山室山室 信一, in one of the most recent shifts in the interpretation of Manchukuo, to suggest that the value of the Manchukuo record is that by probing it and identifying its DNA from the copious records that have survived, one is able to track back along the umbilicus and learn the nature of Japan itself, the great mother.27

The paradox of the claim of Manchukuo’s independence as a state with its total subordination to Japan was brushed aside by breathtaking affirmations such as ‘It is precisely because Manchukuo is indivisibly united with Japan that it is an independent country’,28 which might be paraphrased as: ‘Because it is a puppet, it is not a puppet’.

---

24 Ibid., p.671 ff. This ceremony, modelled on Japan’s ‘Daijōsai’ 大嘗祭, centred on the new emperor’s waiting, between 1.50 and 3.50 in the morning, in a specially prepared bed to receive the goddess, ibid., p.671.

25 P'u-yi’s younger brother, P'u-chieh 濮傑, was later to claim that he had gagged on the words of some of the Shintō rituals. See Aishin Kakura Hiro, Ruten no ôhi (Tokyo: Shufu to Seika Tsūsha, 1984), p.68.


27 Yamamuro Shin’ichi, “Saigo no ‘Manshūkoku’ būmu o yonde” [Reading the last ‘Manchukuo’ boom!], Chuokoron (June 1989): 354–62. (The umbilical image is mine.)

This capacity for deception, including self-deception—the ability to look at the naked emperor and praise his dress-sense—is no doubt a common feature in many political systems, but the remarkable aspect of Manchukuo in comparison to other states was the speed with which it was generated. Although nothing of the processes described here was secret and their import was unmistakable, intellectuals, scientists and artists still flocked to Manchukuo from Japan in search of freedom, unable to see that they were assisting in the creation of a farcical duplicate of Japan's own state Shintō.

Despite the contradiction, alongside the creation of Manchukuo imperial Shintō, the dreams and aspirations for Utopian brotherhood continued to exercise a remarkable force, though the spontaneity that marked the early stages of the 'interracial harmony' (minzoku kyōwa民族協和) movement in the early 1930s soon gave way to carefully orchestrated manipulation. The Kyōwakai, launched in July 1932 on the basis of the former Youth League, was placed from the start under the head of state, P'u-yi, as honorary president, and like all other officially sanctioned organizations in Manchukuo was subject to the direction of the Kwantung Army. Its roles of neutralizing then mediating class and racial antagonisms, and then mobilizing the people, are the familiar roles of mass parties in modernizing Third World contexts, and its ideology was appropriately vague and nebulous, anti-capitalist and anti-communist, and anti-(Sun Yat-sen's) Three People's Principles 三民主義

Its role was defined as “strengthening the foundations of the state by the adoption of the royal way as its doctrine and interracial harmony as its aspiration.” Its propaganda role in winning over 'modernist' Chinese, subverting the appeal of communist or other dissident groups and generating a positive image, was considerable. The Kyōwakai slogans commonly emphasized oneness—unity of Japan and Manchukuo, “one country one party,” “unity of government and people,” “unity of upper and lower,” “one virtue one mind,” “unity of all the people”—indicating the divisive and fissiparous tendencies that had to be combatted in order to build the new state.

In these tasks, the Kyōwakai paralleled and reinforced the campaigns in which the Kwantung Army set out militarily to eradicate and crush all opposition by 'bandits', communists, and various malcontents. As the Kwantung Army’s Katakura Chū 片倉章 vividly expressed it, Japan was to embark on its mission “with kokubō kokka 国防國家 [the national defense state] in the one hand and minzoku kyōwa [interracial harmony] in the other,” just like “Mohammad with Koran and sword.” The Kyōwakai was called on to fill security roles directly, especially in frontier and remote
areas, and was gradually converted into an organ of mass mobilization and control, at least quasi-fascist in character. From April 1937 all youths aged sixteen to nineteen were compulsorily enrolled in the Kyōwakai Shōnenndan (‘cadets’ or ‘young pioneers’), and from 1940, when all males over nineteen were conscripted, the Kyōwakai served as the supervisory force. Gradually, the entire population was organically woven into one or other Kyōwakai-dominated structure, and by 1941 the organization had, either directly or through its youth wing, a membership of 2.65 million.

Internally, its former democratic structure was eroded and from 1935 the principle of decision-making by ‘unanimity’, which commonly meant direction from above, was adopted.

In terms of Yamamuro’s problematic proposition about better understanding developments in the ‘mother country’ Japan by studying them in their raw form in Manchukuo, the Kyōwakai organization clearly predates, and prefigures, the mobilization of the Japanese people in the so-called ‘yokusan’ (imperial rule assistance) system. The mass-mobilization phase of the Kyōwakai began from 1936, and that in Japan itself from 1938. Having given Manchukuo its gods and cults, Japan began to experience various ‘favours’ in return.

The structural problem of how to crush spontaneity, which always threatened to flow into undesirable courses, while maintaining enthusiasm and stirring the energies required for nation-building, was evident at some level in all the organizations and institutions of Manchukuo. Each of the students who were recruited to the Daidō Gakuin (Great Unity College), the training institute for the Manchukuo public service, was urged to see himself as a Byron, setting off on a mission similar to the quest for Greek independence. This college was set up in 1932, enrolling Chinese, Koreans, and White Russians, as well as Japanese, with all students being required to live in for six- or twelve-month courses, thereby experiencing directly the meaning of ‘kyōwa’. This multiracialism, the mixing of students from Japan’s imperial and private universities with local students, and the stress on ‘spiritual’ education in the creation of the new order, was in keeping with the aspiration to transcend the prejudices and divisions of the old society and create something new. Graduates served in various capacities throughout all departments of the Manchukuo government. By the time the final class graduated on 15 August 1945 the alumni amounted to about 4,000 in all. The words of the final graduation address on that occasion are not recorded, but it seems unlikely that any reference would then have been made to Byron.

A national university, Kenkoku (Founding of the Nation) University was established in 1937 with the mission of creating leaders for the new state. As with almost everything else, the initiative and original plans came from the Kwantung Army, though the cooperation of a group of real academics was easily secured. Its intake, too, was multi-racial, though with a preponderance of Japanese at least in the early years (first intake: 

---


31 Ibid., p.281.

32 Quoted in McCormack, “Manchukuo.”


34 Ibid. Hirano, “Manshūkoku Kyōwakai,” p.268, gives a table of membership between 1934 and 1942, showing a total of 2,894,646 in May 1942.

35 Eto Toshio, address of 10 October 1932 to the first graduating class of the College; *Manshūkoku*, Sōron, p.251.
seventy-five Japanese, fifty Chinese, twenty-five others made up of Koreans, Mongols and Russians). The prospect of study in a pioneering situation, which many believed offered the prospect of freedom, was such that the seventy-five Japanese could be chosen from 10,000 applicants. The course of study was six years, of which the first three were devoted to ideological stress on the proper spirit (kenkoku seisin 建国精神), military and language training, and labour practice, while the specialized study of politics, economics, literature, etc., commenced from the fourth year. The first Vice-Chancellor was a prominent Japanese scholar of law and economics, Sakuta Shōichi 作田庄一. Such was the early aspiration to create a new institution that would transcend the narrow divisions of nationalism that names proposed for the initial faculty included Hu Shih, Chou Tsou-jen, Trotsky, Gandhi, Bose, Owen Lattimore and Pearl Buck. Such discussions became truly academic, however, with the outbreak of war following the Sino-Japanese ‘Incident’ of July 1937, and in practice the aspiration that it become an ‘Asian’ or ‘international’ university had to be postponed. The draft statement of principles for the university, prepared by Ishihara Kanji 石原莞爾, though never implemented, is nevertheless significant as an eloquent statement of the ideal that was constantly invoked, and which inspired so much of the activity of early Manchukuo. Ishihara suggested five principles:

1. The total rejection of existing university education methods practised in Japan and the creation of new methods unique to Manchukuo; the destruction of all prejudice and corrupt practices including the bureaucratic and academic clique superiority hitherto common in universities.

---

**Figure 10**

*Japanese farmer-settlers departing for Manchukuo (at Tokyo railway station)*
2. The impossibility, and the absence of need, for established professors at the university. Only after having pioneers with on-the-spot experience of the foundation of Manchukuo learning with their students as their elders, researching, building up experience and developing the basic principles of national foundation, will professors and leaders emerge from their ranks.

3. A new and original Manchukuo foundation philosophy, transcending both communism and imperialism, must be accomplished in this university. To achieve this, it is desirable to choose brilliant scholars and revolutionary leaders from all over the world, including the communist world, and contribute to research by applying their criticisms and their original insights.

4. The fundamental purpose of the establishment of the university is the accomplishment of interracial harmony. So far as dealing with the problem of educational content, method, and livelihood for each race is concerned, the absolutely crucial first condition is to be based on the iron principle of total equality, with all living, studying and working together.

5. The students will mostly be drawn from the races which live in Manchukuo, but overseas students will be admitted from Japan, China, India and other Asian countries, which will contribute to strengthening the unity of Asia as a whole.

However, between the original generation and the propaganda of such a high-minded vision and the final, dismal ceremony of the distribution of potassium cyanide capsules to the women and children still left on campus on 15 August 1945 lay a series of compromises and betrayals, such that the light of that original vision had grown very dim by the time it was finally switched off by the Soviet Red Army.

The pressure of the vision, and the tension between it and the reality, was most sharply concentrated on those at the bottom of the structure, both Chinese and Japanese, who in their millions were mobilized, cajoled, intimidated, uprooted, and finally abandoned by it: the agricultural 'pioneer' settlers from Japan and Chinese peasants and labourers.

Before the establishment of Manchukuo, there was already a Japanese population of 269,000, but virtually all were resident in either the Kwantung Province area or in the 'Zone' adjacent to the South Manchuria Railway Line, and hardly any of them on the land. The idea of sending Japanese farmer-settlers was the brainchild of one man in particular, Katō Kanji 加藤完治 (1884–1967), a renowned agricultural educator and
nationalist ideologue who was instrumental in persuading military and political authorities and securing the passage through the Diet of a bill providing official endorsement. The first group of some 423 agricultural 'pioneers' was sent to Manchukuo, after a brief session of training in Japan, in October 1932.\footnote{For a photograph of this group visiting Yasukuni Shrine prior to departure see Yi Hsien-shih, *Nihon no tairiku seisaku to Chugoku tohoku [Japan's continental policy and China's North-East]* (Tokyo: Rokkô Shuppan, 1989), p.313.} The project was considerably upgraded in 1936 as the objective was adopted of settling one million Japanese households—five million people—in Manchukuo and thereby achieving within twenty years a population proportion of about one-fifth of the whole. A Colonization Corporation (commonly known as 'Mantaku') was established with a capitalization of 50 million yen (15 million each from the Japanese and Manchukuo governments, 10 million from the South Manchuria Railway Company, 3.75 million from the Japan-based Oriental Colonization Company, or 'Tōtaku', 2.5 million each from Mitsubishi and Mitsui, and 1.15 million from Sumitomo).\footnote{Sakuramoto, *Mannō kaitaku seisōnen giyūgun*, p.133.} The objectives to be met were several: relief of Japan’s severe agricultural depression and village overpopulation, improvement of Manchukuo’s agricultural output, reinforcement of security, especially in border areas, and consolidation of the bond that linked Manchukuo to Japan.

By 1945, a total of 321,873 Japanese 'pioneers' had crossed to Manchukuo, of whom perhaps 270,000 (less than half the planned figure) still remained when the end came in August.\footnote{Okabe, *Manshūkoku*, p.179; Yi, *Nihon no tairiku seisaku*, pp.310 ff.} As the problem of 'manpower' deepened in wartime Japan after 1937, recruitment was focussed increasingly on youth, including those completing their six years of compulsory primary schooling. Recruitment often depended on the pressures exerted by the Reservists' Association on youth who were commonly reluctant to leave home.\footnote{Sakuramoto, *Mannō kaitaku seisōnen giyūgun*, passim.} Throughout their recruitment, organization, training, despatch and settlement, the ideological stress was much more on the uniqueness and superiority of the Japanese race and especially the emperor—"Just as there are not two suns in the sky, so there cannot be two sovereigns on earth,"\footnote{Ibid., p.109.}—rather than on 'interracial harmony'; and the military mode was characteristic.

It was also inescapable, given the fact that a significant proportion of the lands 'acquired' for their settlement was forcefully expropriated from the traditional Chinese owners and cultivators.\footnote{Ishidō, *Waga itan*, p.215; *Manshūkoku*, p.428; Eguchi, *Jugonen sensō*, pp.82-3; Hanano, *Rekishi noshōnen*, pp.23 ff. (Hanano was himself a graduate of the 4th class of Daida.)} By the end of 1939, 1.067 million hectares of land were in Japanese
hands, of which nineteen per cent had already been under cultivation (and the figure was certainly much higher in the rich lands in the southern parts of Manchukuo). The scale of the process may be understood from the fact that the entire cultivated acreage of Japan at the same time was 6.028 million hectares. 45

The violence of the expropriation process, and the blatant contrast between the colonial reality and the ideology of ‘harmony’ and ‘co-prosperity’, provoked in turn the organization by the Chinese of self-defence and retribution activities in a spiral of violence which belied the rhetoric. Land expropriation was of course not the only cause of resistance, but it was a significant one, and the Japanese ‘pacification’ programme was thorough and effective. A co-ordinated military, economic, and political strategy was adopted. 46 Whole villages harbouring guerrillas were massacred; five and a half million people were relocated in strategic hamlets between 1934 and 1937 with such success that the guerrillas were reduced to starvation or to marauding raids that helped isolate them from the settled villages ‘protected’ by the Japanese structures. In all, Japanese forces killed 65,943 people in counter-guerrilla struggle between 1932 and 1940. 47 In the most intensive campaign, from October 1939 through 1941, 200,000 Japanese soldiers were mobilized. 48 Some frightful atrocities occurred, such as the massacre of all inhabitants, about 2,500 people, of the village of P’ing-ting-shan 平頂山. 49 One of the greatest heroes, Yang Ching-yo 杨靖宇, commander of the North-Eastern Anti-Japanese 1st Route Army, when killed early in 1940 was found to have only grass in his stomach. 50

By 1941 the last surviving guerrilla leaders, including the later Korean leader, Kim Il Sung, had fled to the Soviet union.

As the Manchukuo state entered its last phase in early 1945, the Japanese Kwantung Army’s main forces were withdrawn to Japan and Korea to prepare for the defence of the ‘homelands’, and a special drive was launched to conscript 250,000 Japanese to defend the frontiers facing the Soviet Union, with instructions to rely on bamboo spears, beer bottles and carving knives to defend themselves if necessary. 51 It was such forces, including many of the ‘Pioneer Youth’ settlers, which faced the Soviet Red Army advance that began on 9 August. Many succumbed to the initial assault, but those who escaped and began to flee southwards faced the explosion of long pent-up Chinese resentment.

Evidently no plans had been made for the protection or evacuation of the Japanese civilians, either the women and children abandoned in the village settlements without protection or the men who had been hastily conscripted and thrown into the front lines. The last trains running south were monopolized by (regular) army and army dependents. 52 The horrors of this period are perhaps best evoked in the novel and epic film, “Ningen no joken” [The Human Condition], by Gomikawa Junpei 五味川純平 (alias Kurita Shigeru 栗田茂), who had himself experienced much of what he recorded. Faced with hunger, cold (as the severe winter of 1945 ap-
proached), and the hostility of Chinese villagers suddenly freed from the oppressive fantasies of ‘kyōwa’, and abandoned by the Japanese army and government, the civilian communities collapsed utterly. Probably some 80,000 of the 270,000 settler community died, many in collective suicide pacts killing each other by grenade or rifle, or else by poisoning or drowning or stabbing, or in the case of infants by strangulation.53

Of the whole Japanese population in Manchukuo at war’s end, about 1,270,000 people of the total 2,150,000 (civilian 1,550,000, military 600,000) eventually escaped back to Japan, 250,000 died, while the remainder were captured and sent to Siberia.54 In the chaos, some Japanese parents managed to find kindly Chinese villagers to take their children into care; others managed to sell their children, sometimes for a pig or a bag of beans, and it was these children, grown up forty years later, who came to Japan in the 1980s seeking their parents and families.55

Paralleling the mobilization and then abandonment of these Japanese victims of ‘kyōwa’, though much greater in scale, was the fate of the Chinese citizens of the multi-racial Utopia, not only those killed in the anti-guerrilla campaigns already mentioned, or relocated from their homes into strategic hamlets, or deprived of their land in the interests of Japanese ‘pioneer’ colonization, but also the workers who laboured in the factories and mines. In labour policy, the contradiction between the development and rationalization objectives on the one hand and the need for control on the other was never resolved. From before the creation of Manchukuo in 1932, the dependence on the supply of semi-migratory (‘dekasegi’ 出稼ぎ) labour from North China was high, and it remained so. In 1936, 54.2 per cent of factory workers and 62.8 per cent of mine workers in the Kwantung Leased Territory and the South Manchuria Railway Zone were in this category;56 and the flow of labour from North China remained at high, though declining, levels,57 despite the reluctance to rely on such a source because of the difficulty of controlling anti-Japanese feeling, and the adoption (in 1939) of devices such as the finger-printing (of all ten fingers) of all workers. Manchukuo gradually moved to a system of total government direction and control of the labour market.58 The general mobilization system adopted there in December 1938 predated that in Japan and meant that wages, hours, and the general allocation of labour was centrally controlled. From September 1941 labour was organized under three slogans: “Everyone to Work,” “Respect Labour,” and “Labour Builds the Country.” From February 1942 there was compulsory labour mobilization; enterprises with more than ten workers were compulsorily enrolled in Labour Building the Country Associations (Rōmu kenkokukai 労務建国会); and from November 1942 all males between twenty-one and twenty-three years of age were mobilized to work on projects under military supervision.59 The progress of the Five Year Plan in Manchukuo again stimulated the flow of (seasonal) migrant labour from North China, which swelled to 1.4 million in 1940, but war, inflation, and the deepening economic crisis

53 Arai, Nokosareta Nibonjin, p.166. See also Mitome, Tōi michi, p.148, Sakuramoto, Manmō kaitaku seisōnen giyūgun, pp.276 ff., and the individual accounts in Arai, Nokosareta Nibonjin, pp.148 ff. (Katō Kanji, founder of the pioneer idea, escaped prosecution in the war crimes trials and lived on to enjoy old age in postwar Japan, honoured by the emperor; Sakuramoto, pp.64-6.)
54 Arai, Nokosareta Nibonjin, p.145.
55 Ibid., p.184.
56 Okabe, Manshūkoku, p.131.
57 1933: 565,000; 1935: 445,000; 1936: 364,000; 1937: 324,000.
58 Kobayashi Hideo, Dai Tōa Kyōeriken no keisei to bokai [The formation and collapse of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere] (Tokyo, 1975), pp.275 ff.
59 Ibid., p.466.
caused a decline thereafter to 850,000 in 1943, 650,000 in 1944, and a mere trickle of 100,000 in 1945. By 1945, out of a total worker population of 2.21 million, 15.8 per cent were from ‘Labour Volunteer Brigades’ (kinrō bōkō tai 労労団 17, 10.5 per cent recruited (bōshū 募集), 71.4 per cent ‘quota supply’ (kyōshitsu 供出) or conscripted, and 2.3 per cent ‘other’. Recruitment by the labour market, in other words, played only a minor role; most were unfree labour, many virtual slaves.

Furthermore, despite the official multiracial line, the wage differential in 1939 was: in factories, Japanese 100, Chinese 29, and in mines, Japanese 100, Chinese 29, Korean 39.62 The intensification of labour under the imperatives of war meant increasingly ruthless exploitation. The bones of approximately 17,000 bodies which had been thrown into one of several mass graves at Ta-shih-ch’ao 大石橋 constitute one eloquent testimony to the regime. A 1940 source, from a Japanese author, expressed the anguish felt even then by some Japanese at the sort of world which was being created:

In accordance with the recognition of workers as human beings, whether they die at work or not they should be decently buried and have a marker erected, and the cost of sending their bones or hair in response to the request of relatives should be met by the employer. ... No matter with what vehemence the government proclaims the royal way, or however much the Kyōwakai strive for the construction of a paradise, where is there a paradise, or where is the moral state, so long as the corpse of even one person is left exposed in the fields or fed to wild beasts? I really wish that workers would be shown some consideration.

The location was at the site of the Feng-man dam 豊満, about 130 kilometres from Ch’ang-ch’un, on the construction of which some 80,000 workers had been mobilized between 1937 and 1945 by Manshū Dēgyō 満州電業 [Manchuria Electrical].65 Workers had been accommodated in tented huts, given a single blanket (despite temperatures as low as minus forty degrees), given scraps for food, paid no wages, and worked till they dropped. Here, as one commentator notes, were crimes equal to those of the Nazis, Pol Pot, or Song My, unique only, perhaps, in that they have gone unrecognized by the world, and been ignored by the authorities responsible—the government of Japan. Structural patterns within a single organism being necessarily common and coherent, the experience of the Korean and Chinese mobilized in the construction of the Feng-man dam corresponds closely with that of those (including Australians) mobilized a world away in South-east Asia on the construction of the Burma Railway.

I will not detail here the worst horrors of the Japanese record in Manchukuo—the involvement of the élite of Japan’s medical and biological researchers in the torture and murder of thousands of prisoners in the name of medical research, or the effort to develop viable bacteriological warfare pathogens at ‘Unit 731’ in the suburbs of Harbin—save to mention that such work stands squarely in the history of the Japanese medical establishment
and has yet to be faced by the profession. Here was displayed by the scientific élite the same obsession with ends and blindness to means as by those responsible for the construction of the Feng-man Dam (or the Burma Railroad). This is a past which the Japanese élite is loath to own, preferring instead to insist on the sincerity of its plans for the construction of 'interracial harmony' and 'brotherhood'; it is also a past which the Chinese authorities tend alternately to reconstruct and to forget, at will, in cycles as the vagaries of the Japan-China relationship of today requires more or less pressure to be applied.

Yet the ultimate irony of Manchukuo is perhaps that it is only now, partly at least as a result of the flowering of Japanese productive technology and the pursuit of an independent Japanese vision of what industrial civilization might mean, that, nearly sixty years after the Manchurian Incident and the creation of the Manchukuo state, it becomes possible to think, or at least to begin to think, of realizing truly multi-racial, multi-cultural co-prosperity, in a North-East Asian zone of 'harmony under one roof'. In this post-Cold War time borders are being tentatively lowered, and the trickle of goods, capital, people, technology and ideas that flows across them begins to gain momentum. What stubbornly will not flow, however, is Japanese insistence on the superiority or the uniqueness of the Japanese blood line or imperial destiny, or the hypocritical pretence that such could be consistent with equality.

The Manchukuo experience remains today drifting unassimilated and unabsorbed, largely still not understood, just beneath the surface of the contemporary Japanese state. Like the renowned orchestral conductor, Seiji Ozawa 小澤征爾, all Japanese bow under a hidden and unresolved burden from their genetic past; for Ozawa's parents, like so many other idealists of

---

67 Tsuneishi, *Nihon igaku akademizumu.*

**Figure 13**

*Ishihara Kanji commanding operations for the take-over of the North-East, July 1932*
their generation, chose for him a name which would symbolize the Manchukuo ideals, made up of the ‘sei’ 征 from Itagaki Seishirō 板垣 征四郎 and the ‘ji’ 藤 from Ishihara Kanji, two of the central figures from the dreaming and founding of the state of Manchukuo. As in the 1930s, the world to which they responded, the fatal obstacle to the creation of any new order in North-East Asia remains the suspicion that the olive branch of equality might conceal the thorn of racial supremacy. Only by constructing a recognizable and believable past will Japan be able to create, or contribute to, a future that might be really new.