

COLONIZING MANCHURIA: RACIAL HARMONY AND AGRICULTURAL  
EMIGRATION IN THE JAPANESE EMPIRE

by

KEVIN McDOWELL

B.A., University of Oregon, 1992

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of History)

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standards

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

March 2002

© Kevin McDowell, 2002

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of History

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date March 14, 2002

## ABSTRACT

From 1932 to 1945 the Japanese government sponsored agricultural emigration campaigns to Manchuria designed to restructure rural society in Japan and create enclaves of Japanese communities in the outlying regions of north Manchuria. The agricultural emigration movement fused agrarian ideology with the racial harmony concepts developed by colonial agencies in the region. The primary objective of the *minzoku kyōwa* ideology was first to block Chinese nationalism and later to foster the creation of a 'national spirit' in the new state of Manchukuo. Agrarian activists and Kwantung Army officials collaborated in planning and organizing the emigration enterprise. For Nōhonshūgisha emigration was a solution to the economic and social malaise of the countryside, while the military was mainly concerned with placing the settlers along transport networks and on the border with the Soviet Union, thereby enlisting them as informal auxiliaries in combating Chinese resistance and guarding against Russian invasion. The emigration venture began in 1932 with a five-year trial emigration program and then grew into a plan to locate 1,000,000 Japanese farming households in Northeast China in a twenty-year period. As the scale expanded emigration to Manchuria, bolstered by propaganda, popular media, and a network of migration agencies that extended from the national government to local leaders, organizations, and schools, moved into the public consciousness. Colonists, ranging from young boys to families, were promised empty spaces, bountiful land, elevated social status, and a pioneering role in building a society rooted on racial harmony. Colonizing Manchuria, however, proved to be a difficult and disillusioning venture when propaganda images and *minzoku kyōwa* gave way to the complexities of farming the Manchurian frontier.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	iv
Chapter I      Introduction	1
Chapter II      Chinese Nationalism, the MSR and <i>Minzoku Kyōwa</i> , and Manchukuo	8
Chapter III      Agricultural Emigration to Manchuria, 1932 to 1945	18
Bibliography	54

## TABLES

1. Agricultural Emigration by Population	24
2. Annual Emigration	43
3. Youth Brigade Emigration	49

## Introduction

The outbreak of violence in Manchuria in September 1931 marked a decisive shift in the institutions and organizations of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria. Japan's hold on Manchuria was significantly advanced as Japanese leaders operated to direct the fiscal, military, and bureaucratic organs of the newly declared state of Manchukuo. From the late 1920s the northern advance of Chinese nationalism increasingly alarmed Japanese residents and leading Army officials in Manchuria. In reaction, Japanese proponents of an autonomous state in Northeast China developed an ideology for encompassing all the racial groups into a new state, thereby emphasizing the divide between China proper and the Manchurian territories. After the military advances of the early 1930s, however, Manchuria was transmitted to Japan as a lifeline for economic success and a strategic necessity to balance the looming Soviet threat to the north. Likewise, the rhetoric and rationale for binding Manchuria to Japan promised to propel Japan to the front-ranks of world powers while also leading the nation out of economic and political malaise.

The Manchukuo *minzoku kyōwa* ideology had a powerful appeal for various elements both in Manchuria and in the metropolis. But when transferred from the continent to the homeland, the notion of a new state in Northeast Asia tied to Japan and governed along the lines of the "Kingly Way" and racial harmony notions, pushed Japanese to consider Manchuria and Empire as necessary to the fate of Japan itself. This then plugged into Imperial Way theories and the push for continental expansion along with economic rejuvenation that then led various groups to turn to the continent as a means to break the economic deadlock of 1930s' Japan. Thus, the theories born on the continent, when transmitted to the metropole, were re-directed to new aims and purposes as the initiative for creating a new state shifted to the domestic scene.

Manchuria occupied a primary place in Japanese colonial policy and in the imaginations of the Japanese populace. Manchuria was touted by business councils, chambers of commerce, manufacturers, travel companies, intellectuals and agrarian thinkers (*Nōhonshūgisha*) as a

lifeline, a 'New Paradise' that promised strategic security, abundant natural resources, economic opportunities, and exotic travel. Thus, these disparate groups promoted particular images of Manchuria and mobilized support behind business investment, overseas travel, state-building experiments, and large-scale agricultural emigration. This study will focus on the *nōgyō imin* (agricultural emigration/emigrants) campaigns.

By severing Manchuria from China and ending the warlord government of Zhang Xueliang restrictions on Japanese movement and property ownership were removed, opening up vast tracts of territory and natural resources to Japanese entrepreneurs and individuals. In the early-1930s, with Japanese agriculture mired in depression, prominent Nohonshugisha began to look to the Manchurian countryside as a solution to the problems hampering Japanese agriculture. This intersected with the strategic designs of Kwantung Army planners who proposed to move Japanese settlers to the border regions of north Manchuria to block Russian advances and tamp down Chinese resistance. From the outset agricultural emigration was linked to Army objectives, thereby creating a mix of the military and the ideological that was fraught with contradictions – presenting problems for both the planners of emigration policy and the people who went to the continent as settlers.

The colonizing campaigns represent the conjunction of military and economic motivations that spurred the process from experimental emigration, to mass relocations, and finally to the Patriotic Youth Brigades. Agricultural emigration campaigns fused idealistic racial harmony notions and the imagery of the Manchurian lifeline with colonial ambitions and economic motivations, which then shifted the ideological focus from Northeast China to Japan while also firmly linking the colony and the metropole through the mechanism of mass migration.

Scholarship on Japan's role and objectives in Manchuria has, for the most part, focused on the financial and administrative institutions established to control Northeast China, build an efficient infrastructure and transport system, and extract resources from the region. These studies follow

several different themes, periodizations, and organizational structures. A prominent focus in studies on Japan's involvement in Manchuria is the role of the military in subverting the central authorities in both Manchuria and Japan (in subversive campaigns to install new rulers in the area and terrorist attacks and attempted *coup d'etats*), thereby propelling Japan on a course toward a destructive war with the West.<sup>1</sup> As in many of the articles and monographs dealing with Manchuria the conjunction of world economic crisis, perceptions of corruption in party politics, and unstable international relations provide a fundamental backdrop to the events of the period. That is, those factors are central to explaining why certain elements in the Japanese military set out to shift the direction of Japanese foreign policy and change the political system. The orientation of these works around the activities of the Kwantung Army and the Manchurian Incident necessarily entails a rather tight focus on diplomatic initiatives and military planning in the late 1920s and 1930s. An additional theme in studies on the military's role in shaping foreign policy argues that military leaders were concerned with securing Japan's place in Asia in order to control the strategic resources necessary for protecting Japan and ensuring the wealth of the country; that is to establish Japanese autarky in the East Asian region.<sup>2</sup>

Other works take a similar, if somewhat broader, approach to the problem by viewing it from the perspective of international organizations and/or great power relations. Akira Iriye's study, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East*, documents the formation and breakdown of the Washington Conference framework for maintaining stability in East Asia and initiatives by Japanese statesmen to forge an independent policy for Japan *vis-a-vis* China. The failure of Japan's initiatives to end the impasse over China and the lack of consensus among Japan's policymakers created an opportunity for the military to enact its own plan for solving

---

<sup>1</sup> See Sadako Ogata, *Defiance in Manchuria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), Takahashi Takehiko, *Conspiracy at Mukden* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), and Alvin Coox, "The Kwantung Army Dimension" in Duus, Myers, and Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937*, (Princeton University Press, 1989) as representative studies of the military in Manchuria.



problems with China and Manchuria. This was the result, Iriye argues, of the inability of Japan and the Western powers to establish mechanisms for easing tensions in the region. In *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism*, Ian Nish follows the process of the Manchurian Incident through the lens of the League of Nations. He posits that this period marks a decisive point in modern Japanese history, in that, after the Manchurian Incident, the military emerged as the primary arbiter of power. The military then set Japan on an independent course in Asia and ended Japan's efforts to maintain a balance between international cooperation and expansion.

While the studies noted above provide a detailed examination of events in the 1920s and 1930s by marking the activities of the Kwantung Army as central to Japan's push into Northeast China, other works shift the focus to the civilian organizations and institutions of Japan's struggle to maintain and expand Japan's grip on Manchuria. While recognizing the significant role of the army, these studies examine the development of the particular process of colony building that emerged after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 and centered on the South Manchuria Railway Company.<sup>3</sup> The primary function of these studies is to follow the development of colonial policy from the early period of institution-building up to the Manchurian Incident, noting shifts in ideology and imperial objectives, and relating changes in the political, economic and diplomatic scene and the ramifications for Japanese in Manchuria.

More pertinent to this study, perhaps, is the scholarship on the momentous changes in Guomindang China before the Manchurian Incident of 1931. This focuses on the advance of Chinese nationalism into Northeast China; which then emphasized the idea that the Nationalist

---

<sup>2</sup> See, in particular, Mark Peattie, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West*, (Princeton University Press, 1975), and Michael Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War, The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Bix, "Japanese Imperialism in Manchuria, 1890-1931," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1972, and Kenichiro Hirano, "The Japanese in Manchuria, 1906-1931, A Study of the Historical Background of Manchuria, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1983, provide detailed accounts of Japanese empire building in Northeast China before the Manchurian Incident by examining the SMR, economic conditions and factors, educational institutions, and the rise of Chinese nationalism. Raymond Meyers' study of the South Manchuria Railway focuses on the role of the SMR in shaping the development of imperial policy. Raymond Myers, "Japanese Imperialism in Manchuria: The South Manchuria Railway

movement was set to overwhelm the Japanese community and governing agencies in Manchuria. Perceptions that the government in Tokyo was unconcerned with the fate of Japanese nationals in the Kwantung Leased Territories and SMR controlled areas amplified the sense of crisis. David Egler focuses on this period and the development of the *minzoku kyōwa* ideology, which through the agency of the Kwantung Army, became the ostensible motivation for Manchurian independence.<sup>4</sup> Egler looks at the period just prior to the formation of Manchukuo, when certain elements of the Japanese community, especially mid-level employees of the SMR reacted to the rising threat of the Guomindang government by forming a group that hashed out an ideology for securing Japan's position in Manchuria through the creation of an autonomous state. The new national ideology would ensure that the main racial groups enjoyed equal status, thereby shutting down and forcing out the effects of Chinese nationalist aims in the region and protecting Japan's special rights in the region. Egler follows this governing ideology as it merged with Kwantung Army aims and was used to pacify Chinese opposition in the area.

As news of the fighting in Manchuria reached Japan, followed soon after by announcements of victory after victory over Chinese troops, excitement regarding Manchuria produced a sort of 'Manchuria Boom,' as notions of the Manchurian lifeline brought the Japanese public into the state-building enterprise<sup>5</sup> Racial harmony ideas turned Japanese citizens to the civilizing effects of Japan's imperialism on the continent, while investors and agrarian theorists promoted the region as a panacea for economic ills. This then introduced a wide range of new attitudes and ideas attached to an expanded scope of interest among various groups and individuals interested in the wide-open bounties of Manchuria.

---

Company, 1906-1933," in Duus, Myers, Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937*, (Princeton University Press, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> David Egler, "Japanese Mass Organizations in Manchuria, 1928-1945: The Ideology of Racial Harmony," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona, 1977.

<sup>5</sup> Louise Young's work, *Japan's Total Empire, Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), provides an overall study of the many ways that the idea of Manchuria was envisioned by various disparate groups in Japan, showing shifts over time as Manchuria moved from strategic bastion, economic and natural resource treasure house, and finally to an agricultural paradise.

Historiography on the period after the Manchurian Incident reflects these changes. An early study by F.C. Jones provides a comprehensive outline of the institutional and ideological forces used by military and civilian Japanese advisors and handlers to construct the new state; including an analysis of industrial and commercial policy, a description of immigration efforts, education measures, and the move to inculcate Manchurian inhabitants with a 'national spirit' through propaganda and education.<sup>6</sup> While this monograph provides an overview of the colonial administration in Manchuria, it largely ignores the impact of the new state on the domestic scene and overlooks the sub-groups and individuals mobilized by ideology and/or self-interest to venture into nation building in Northeast China.

Several studies examining Manchuria and Japanese imperialism, however, have shifted direction away from the main agents and governing organs of the colonial edifice in Manchuria. These focus instead on how Manchurian ideas and ideologies were constructed and re-constructed in the homeland,<sup>7</sup> the way racial identity was established or removed, based on shifting notions of inclusion and exclusion,<sup>8</sup> and examinations of the role played by various sub-groups in the overall implementation of Japan's rule in Manchuria. This scholarship shows the complexity of relating propaganda and received concepts to real contact and interplay in the Manchurian colonial arena.

The groups of agriculture settlers sent from Japan to the peripheral regions of Manchuria represent the confluence of several important strains of imperial aspirations and imaginings of the period after 1931. Louise Young has written extensively on the *nōgyō imin* movement and the domestic consumption/construction of Japanese colonialism in Japan.<sup>9</sup> Her main aim is to follow the 1930s 'Manchuria Boom' as it merged with domestic concerns and concepts to spur large-

---

<sup>6</sup> F.C. Jones, *Manchuria Since 1931*. (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1949).

<sup>7</sup> Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire*,

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Brooks, "Peopling the Japanese Empire: The Koreans in Manchuria and the Rhetoric of Inclusion," In *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues of Culture and Democracy 1900-1930*, Vlastos, Minichellio, eds., (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), and Mariko Asano Tamanoi, "Knowledge, Power, and Racial Classifications: The 'Japanese' in 'Manchuria,'" *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.59, no.2, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Young, "Colonizing Manchuria, The Making of an Imperial Myth," in *Mirror of Modernity, Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, Vlastos, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)

scale recruitment and propaganda movements geared to mobilizing farmers to move to Manchuria. This was done by creating a pantheon of heroic emigrant settlements, providing images of a new paradise of bountiful harvests and healthy babies, and underscoring the vital importance of the settlement mission to the creation of a harmonious state. Wilson's "The 'New Paradise': Japanese Emigration to Manchuria in the 1930s and 1940s," analyzes the process and motivations behind the movement of rural settlers to the continent, and concludes that, ultimately, the notions of a new paradise simply masked the military designs of the Kwantung Army.<sup>10</sup> Paul Guelcher's 1999 dissertation offers an overall look at the emigration campaigns, imperial images (through an analysis of postcards portraying Manchurian customs, Japanese civic construction, and colonial lifestyles) the interactions of Japanese and native (mostly Chinese) residents, and finally the headlong retreat from the advancing Soviet Army. Guelcher uses a variety of sources in an effort to get at the experiences and memories of individual settlers; these include the aforementioned postcards, personal interviews, and Japanese and English primary and secondary sources. Finally, Ronald Suleski's slightly earlier work gives a tight account of the Patriotic Youth Brigades (*Manmō kaitaku Seishōnengiyūgun*) in Manchuria.<sup>11</sup> This work is set primarily in Manchuria, outlining the tense relations between Japanese settlers and their Chinese neighbors, as the boys of the Youth Brigades, Suleski explains, were guilty of a variety of crimes - rape, robbery, murder - that naturally drove a wedge between the two communities. Suleski's account isolates the Patriotic Youth Brigades from the events preceding their relocation to Manchuria and the subsequent attitudes and forces that produced the rural emigration program; that is, the domestic recruitment, training, and propaganda surrounding the Youth Brigade movement.

This study takes the years just prior to the Manchuria Incident as a starting point and follows the development of a ruling ideology for the new Manchurian State to Japan to examine the

---

<sup>10</sup> Sandra Wilson, "The 'New Paradise': Japanese Emigration to Manchuria in the 1930s and 1940s," *The International History Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald Suleski, "Northeast China Under Japanese Control, The Role of the Manchurian Youth Corps., 1934-1945," *Modern China*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1981.

domestic reaction to and refashioning of the colonial currents coming from Northeast China. Thus, it will chart the ideological trends and policy shifts bridging the Manchurian Incident that formed the basis for linking Japan's rural communities to the strategic and military goals of the Japanese Empire. That is, the conjoining of racial harmony ideas with agrarian idealism, emperor worship, and strategic goals by domestic planners and policy-makers and high-ranking military officials will be examined through the lens of agricultural emigration in the 1930s and 1940s. This will focus on the trial emigration years, the move to large-scale migration and then the Patriotic Youth Brigade movement. The agricultural emigration project brought the imperial lifeline to the homeland rural economy and in the process layered the colonial venture with racial harmony concepts and Shinto/agrarian ideology that, in turn, informed emigration propaganda, influenced government policy, and shaped imperial imagery.

## **II. Chinese Nationalism, the MSR and *Minzoku Kyōwa*, and Manchukuo**

The rise of nationalist sentiment in China and the Guomindang Army's successful advance into north China from 1926-1928 solidified support for the "recovery of natural rights" movement and prodded various Chinese groups in Manchuria to resist Japanese rule and campaign for greater independence in Northeast China. Resistance took the form of strikes, boycotts, and demands for the return of Chinese education rights and the gradual elimination of foreign enclaves of informal empire. Internationally, foreign powers began the process of returning autonomy to the Chinese government.<sup>12</sup> Treaty revisions in 1928 that introduced new tariffs were negotiated by the Nationalist government and Western countries, "signaling the end of the informal empire in China by foreign powers."<sup>13</sup> But as Western countries were disengaging from informal empire, Japanese leaders were digging in and seeking new, more effective ways, of maintaining their hold

---

<sup>12</sup> See Bix, "Japanese Imperialism in Manchuria," and Hirano, "The Japanese in Manchuria."

<sup>13</sup> Myers, p.128

over Manchuria. Manchuria was taking on increasing importance for both military and civilian officials and the Japanese resident community in Northeast China.<sup>14</sup>

The Nationalist program for regaining rights, articulated by the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, C.T. Wang, set out the goal of ending foreign influence in China: "China would aim first at the recovery of tariff autonomy, next at the abolition of extra-territoriality, next at the return of foreign settlements, then at the return of leased territories, and, finally, at the recovery of rights of railway operation, inland navigation, and coastal trade."<sup>15</sup> Ominously, for Japanese in Manchuria the Kwantung Leased Territory and the South Manchuria Railway were targeted as part of the Chinese movement to regain full autonomy. By the late 1920s the Mukden government was growing increasingly amenable to the Guomindang line on rights recovery. Equally worrisome, in 1930 the Manchurian government attempted to restrict Japanese landholding and reclaim land already possessed by Japanese residents. Further, the Zhang administration was making plans for railway construction and harbor development, while also diversifying into mining, forestry and other endeavors: thereby pitting burgeoning Chinese industrial development and nationalist sentiment against Japan's economic interests in Manchuria and threatening the SMR's near monopoly on freighting and transport. By directly entering into competition with Mantetsu, Zhang was threatening the entire Japanese colonial structure in Manchuria, since the SMR and its affiliate subsidiaries was pivotal to the viability of Japanese residents in Manchuria.

The world economic crisis that began in the late 1920s and continued into the 1930s converged with nationalist agitation and the right recovery campaign to add to the sense of decline and vulnerability among resident Japanese. The steep decline in soybean prices after 1929 reduced the SMR's freight revenue, thereby lowering Mantetsu's profitability and slowing overall economic growth. Bix shows that, "during July 1929, the Mantetsu carried a daily average of 26,453 passengers and 59,194 tons of commodities. During July 1931, it carried only 17,832

---

<sup>14</sup> Myers, p.128

<sup>15</sup> Egler, p.53

passengers and 37,653 tons of commodities. In the same three year period, 1929 to 1931, company profits fell from 11.8% to 3.3%.<sup>16</sup> The declining economic performance of Mantetsu and other Japanese companies, combined with competition from a nascent Chinese industrial infrastructure and the unrest resulting from the burgeoning nationalist and rights recovery movement sparked real fears about the viability of Japan's position in Manchuria among the Japanese community, colonial government, and Kwantung Army. Calls for reform and efforts to formulate a new model for managing Manchuria took on a greater urgency. Informal controls seemed to be breaking down under the changed circumstances. In response to perceptions of a weakening colonial organization, the ideology of racial harmony began to take shape and assume prominence as a method for reviving Japanese economic interests in Manchuria and restoring confidence among the Japanese community. The propagation of *minzoku kyōwa* concepts linked Manchuria as a lifeline to the metropole.

Shifting to an emphasis on racial harmony, which ineluctably called for some sort of separation from China proper and autonomy for the Northeast territories, was prompted by pressure from Chinese nationalism and the thought, current among many Japanese in Manchuria, that the home government was either indifferent to the fate of resident Japanese or inept at handling colonial affairs. While racial harmony notions were not new, the stress on *minzoku kyōwa* as a binding force for an independent state and a mechanism for shoring up Japanese control in Manchuria took on renewed emphasis in the years prior to the Manchurian Incident. Manchurian Japanese, feeling increasingly isolated and ignored by the Tokyo government, turned to racial harmony ideology as a means of asserting Japanese rights and delineating the Manchurian border, thereby clearly separating the Northeast area from China and blocking the advance of Guomindang nationalist ideas and military power. Thus, as a reaction to growing affinity for the Nationalist government among Manchurian Chinese, it was argued that Japanese, "should make sure of their consciousness of (belonging to a) small and weak race. The only way

---

<sup>16</sup> Bix, p.219

to survive . . . would be to join hands with the various racial groups in Manchuria . . . to devote themselves to the harmony of races . . . and to bring about a paradise-like republic in Mongolia-Manchuria backed by Japanese civilization.”<sup>17</sup> Japanese residents then staked their survival in Manchuria on creating an alternate nationalism centered on racial harmony, while also clearly setting out Japanese as the central orbit of the various races.

The Manshu Seinen Renmei was the primary driving force for putting this ideology into action. Organized in 1928, when the Japanese position in Manchuria was looking increasingly precarious, the Manchurian Youth League aimed to press the home government for more support, stabilize the existing institutions, and improve the lot of the Manchurian Japanese community. This was to be accomplished by implementing a governing ideology founded on *minzoku kyowa* principles. Specifically, “the league urged that the SMR cut back on dividends and use reserves, along with large subsidy from the Japanese government, to encourage a rapid, large-scale industrialization of Manchuria by Japan. The league also demanded that the Kwantung prefectural model of administration be abandoned, and that Japanese administer outright the Liaotung and SMR managed properties . . . Finally the league called for a greater effort to promote cooperation between Japanese and Chinese in the region.”<sup>18</sup> This radical push for greater centralization and government control, along with the calls for racial harmony in Manchuria was focused outward to the Tokyo government and inward to the administration in Manchuria urging greater support from Japan and a realignment of the colonial institutions in Northeast China.

League directors, mainly mid-level Mantetsu officials, held that a reorganization of the ruling institutions in Manchuria, along with a consistent colonial policy from the homeland and an imperial ideology centered on racial harmony, would foster the creation of a “national spirit,” thereby obviating the effects of Chinese nationalism. This then would clearly set Manchuria apart from China as a separate state. From its inception, the Manshu Seinen Renmei program for

---

<sup>17</sup> Sadako Ogata, *Defiance in Manchuria, The Making of Japanese Foreign Policy, 1931-1932*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), p.93



Manchuria had two principle aims: to seal Manchuria from the destabilizing fissures deriving from the spread of Chinese nationalism and to stimulate co-prosperity and cooperation among the various racial groups in Manchuria. The MSR ideology promoted the formation of independent, self-governing communities with joint Japanese and Chinese participation in the legislative, judicial, police, and military functions of the state, with an emphasis on the development of a particular Manchurian identity that would obscure racial differences. Peattie, writes, “ Separated from China, this state would nevertheless be Manchurian, not Japanese, its authority derived from popular support of all races, not the Japanese bureaucracy.”<sup>19</sup> To accomplish this, however, the MSR argued that Japanese had to shed the “colonial mentality” that prevented true racial cooperation, and aim at building a type of imperialism that incorporated all of the elements of Manchurian society and promoted unity and prosperity for all the racial groups in Manchuria.<sup>20</sup>

Manshu Seinen Renmei leaders argued that innate Chinese governing patterns and conceptions of the relationship between the state and the individual, along with the idea that Manchuria was a “frontier” region with no fixed notion of race and ruling power, provided conditions conducive to forming an autonomous, multi-racial society. Thus, the most important elements of the re-worked *minzoku kyōwa* ideology were centered on the idea that Manchuria was a discrete region, with only loose ties to China proper, and that locally oriented Chinese loyalties could be propelled by a powerful foreign force to adhere to a central state organization.<sup>21</sup>

Disassociating Manchuria from China opened up new policy directions and options for Japanese imperialism. MSR members envisioned Manchuria as an open space fit for forming a unique polity rooted in intra-ethnic alliances. Egler asserts that, “In the Manchurian Japanese view, it was possible to regard Manchuria-Mongolia not as part of China but as socially and politically “neutralized.” It was “virgin” territory, a “clean slate” in which it was possible to “start

---

<sup>18</sup> Myers, p.130

<sup>19</sup> Peattie, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation With the West*, p.145

<sup>20</sup> Egler, p.95

over” to realize a state which could take advantage of the newly emerging political and economic methods of the day – state management, state welfare, and even a single party dictatorship – while resting on *minzoku kyōwa*.<sup>22</sup> All this would be supported by Japanese technology and modern management techniques, thus centering the new state around resident Japanese and the benefits offered by Japan’s advanced civilization and technological know-how.

Beginning in 1931, the Manshu Seinen Renmei stepped up efforts to propagate its reform program. This was driven by a new sense of urgency amid the feeling that the Japanese government was disinclined to support Manchurian Japanese and the economic malaise that drove down agricultural prices and reduced MSR profits. The league distributed propaganda pamphlets and sponsored speaking tours in Manchuria and Japan. MSR propaganda attempted to raise awareness of impending crisis and underscored the idea of Manchuria as a lifeline for mainland Japan. “In March (1931), they distributed a pamphlet entitled ‘The Truth Concerning the Man-Mo Problem,’” sending some 10,000 copies to home Japanese government officials, diet members, media, and provincial officials, and youth groups and to areas in Manchuria and Korea as well.”<sup>23</sup> The pamphlet described Manchuria as a “strategic buffer” and detailed its critical role in supplying natural resources for military use and agricultural produce for the home market.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the pamphlet noted how Chinese nationalism threatened Japanese rights and interests in the region, stating, “the rights already acquired are in imminent danger of being thrown away and we need to wake up, and reflect seriously on this.”<sup>25</sup> The MSR propaganda campaign had only mixed results in Japan, however; a few conservative politicians and right-wing groups expressed sympathy for the group’s concerns, but, on the whole, reaction was lackluster and discouraging to MSR members.

---

<sup>21</sup> See Egler on sinologist Tachibana Shiraki’s conception of Japan’s role in Chinese state formation, pp.100-107

<sup>22</sup> Egler, p.97. As will be noted below, the concept of Manchuria as a “virgin territory” was important to the *nōgyō imin* as they envisioned open, unpeopled pastures and plains of readily available fertile land.

<sup>23</sup> Egler, p.127

MSR perceptions of official indifference to the tenuous Japanese hold on Manchuria pushed the group to move in two different directions to try to preserve their special position in Manchuria. First, the League tried to clarify its *minzoku kyōwa* ideology and align itself with like-minded Chinese officials to work out a program for Manchurian independence vis-à-vis both Chinese warlords, the metropolitan bureaucracy, and the Kwantung Leased Territories Government. Ogata notes the MSR was in contact with a Chinese group that was seeking Manchurian autonomy and harmony of the major racial groups.<sup>26</sup> The MSR also became more openly critical of Zhang's administration of the areas of Manchuria under his control, and "a great deal was made of the evils and backwardness of warlordism," while also stressing that only some form of autonomy for Manchuria would provide stability for Japanese residents and bind together the peoples of Manchuria around a unique national spirit, fostered by *minzoku kyōwa*. At the same time, MSR leaders abandoned the idea that racial harmony could arise "organically" and, therefore, turned to cooperation with the Kwantung Army, thereby implicitly recognizing a military solution to the problems accruing from Chinese nationalism and Zhang's attempts to compete with Japan's economic and colonial institutions in the region. This fused nicely with Kwantung Army plans for effecting massive changes in the administration of imperialism in Manchuria.

In the months leading up to the military operations of September, Kwantung Army leaders began to make contacts with Manshu Seinen Renmei officials. Ishiwara Kanji, in particular, recognized that the racial harmony ideology and ideas of Manchurian independence offered a viable direction for Japanese policy in China, as an autonomous Manchuria navigated between the demands of foreign powers and the Guomindang government, while providing an image of

---

<sup>24</sup> Thereby tapping in to the notion of an autarkic state, then a topic of major concern for many of Japan's military leaders.

<sup>25</sup> Egler, p.128

<sup>26</sup> Ogata, p.40. Egler likewise describes meetings between the group of Chinese officials led by Chang Ku as important both before and after the Manchurian Incident. Chang Ku's calls for a defense alliance between Japan and Man-Mo centered on ideas of racial harmony became important to the MSR's

Japan as a liberating and civilizing force in the area that played nicely for the domestic audience. The MSR propaganda machine, connections to Chinese and Japanese groups, and operational experience could be turned to supporting military purposes. Peattie asserts that, "In Manchuria itself the Kwantung Army staff began to realize the value of the Youth League in uniting and organizing the Japanese community against the hour when the military would need help in the management of an occupied territory."<sup>27</sup> Thus, for political and practical reasons MSR ties to the Kwantung Army grew tighter as the *minzoku kyōwa* ideology merged with military aims for a stronger control over Manchuria economic and political directives as plans were laid for bringing about a new form of ostensibly autonomous government in the area.

Like the MSR, the Army's shift towards instituting policy directives centered around autonomy and racial harmony was neither wholly self-serving nor completely altruistic, but rather a viable means for entrenching Japan's power in the region, while maintaining a degree of legitimacy aimed at offsetting Western and Guomindang protests and placating vacillating domestic politicians and officials. Indeed, for some high-ranking military personnel, notably Ishiwara Kanji, and civilian officials, *minzoku kyōwa* represented a radical departure from previous modes of colonial control; that is the racial harmony ideology offered a mechanism for freeing Manchuria from warlord rule and breaking through ethnic divides, while redirecting the Manchurian government and society towards the Japanese Empire. And, while this was linked to strategic and economic considerations, military leaders and SMR officials departed from previous policies to advocate economic and political initiatives for raising the social and economic standards of all racial groups in Manchuria.<sup>28</sup>

While the *minzoku kyōwa* ideology called for recognizing racial rights for the benefit of the peoples of the newly established state it also set out a kind of hierarchically organized

---

propaganda efforts, and, Egler suggests, was influential in shaping the direction that MSR ideology took after 1931 as *minzoku kyōwa* became the "touchstone of an artificial Manchurian nationalism," p.107

<sup>27</sup> Peattie, p.146

arrangement that relied heavily on Japanese technical and administrative know-how to support the government, economy, and industry. The Kwantung Army, Manshu Seinen Renmei and other groups held that superior Japanese technology would serve to bring Manchuria into the modern industrial age while Japanese officials and administrators acting behind the scenes would guide the other races towards a prosperous civilized society. In a slightly later context, Peattie's examination of Ishiwara's vision of a racially harmonious society shows the mix of "cultural dominion" through technology and modern administrative methods and cultural and racial progress that largely characterized rhetoric and policy after 1931. "In his view all races were to have 'equal opportunity;' the Japanese in Manchuria were to shed all sense of superiority and claims to special privilege; and the nation was to be built on the 'popular will.' Yet the 'popular will' was to be determined by a dictatorial body, in which he assumed the Japanese would take a position of leadership."<sup>29</sup> Thus, racial harmony did not imply equality, but rather economic and political ties to strengthen and stabilize Manchurian society; stability and state formation then, powered by Japan's modern industrial and administrative might, would lead to "a paradise of various races" in Northeast China.<sup>30</sup>

Despite some genuine concern for 'civilizing' Manchuria and leading the various races towards modernity, the *minzoku kyōwa* ideology was first a means to navigate between Chinese nationalism and the indifference of Japanese politicians and the domestic public, then later, after the Manchurian Incident, a mechanism for masking Kwantung Army and Japanese control over Manchukuo. As the ruling ideology for a semi-colonized state, racial harmony, while failing to mollify foreign powers, gave Japanese imperialism an aura of altruism and a rhetoric of liberation that went hand in hand with the drive to turn Manchuria into a strategic and economic bastion for Japan's colonial empire.

---

<sup>28</sup> Egler, p.165 and Ogata, pp.123-124, note Kwantung Army sympathy for the Manchurian peoples and concern for maintaining favorable public opinion.

<sup>29</sup> Peattie, p.173

<sup>30</sup> Egler, p.165

Direct military intervention into Manchurian affairs in 1931 set in motion the creation of a puppet Manchurian state. With that all elements of Japanese imperialism were in place.

Manshukoku ideologues and Japanese officials mixed ideas of Japanese cultural dominion that underscored Japan's primary role in directing the Manchurian economy and administration with *minzoku kyōwa* ideals aimed at producing an innate Manchurian national spirit that would obviate the effects of Chinese nationalism in the Northeast territories. These concepts of Manchurian society and state were then transmitted to the metropole, mobilizing the Japanese populace behind the drive to realize a 'New Paradise' in Manchuria and presenting Manshukoku as a lifeline for the Japanese people and national polity.

From the merging of cultural dominion notions, *minzoku kyōwa*, and the metaphor of the Manchurian lifeline, Manchukuo presented economic and military potential for freeing Japan from the stifles of world depression and ameliorating the threat of Soviet/Communist advance into Manchuria. Thus, in the initial aftermath of the Manchurian Incident the mass media sponsored a war fever and 'Manchuria Boom' that was expressed in news reports, songs, magazine articles, and campaign drives.<sup>31</sup> In these accounts the ideology and attitudes formed during the crisis years of the late 1920s, as Japanese residents and military officials in Manchuria faced the seemingly indefatigable march of Chinese nationalism, were plugged into the domestic scene to energize the Japanese populace and offer new economic and strategic options. Intellectuals, financial institutions, farmers, statesman, and military leaders, for different and sometimes dissonant reasons, accepted the notion of the Manchurian lifeline as a way out of 'deadlock' and economic crisis. For farmers as well as entrepreneurs, army staff, and politicians Manchuria was a clean slate; as yet unformed but bursting with potential that needed only the civilizing energy of Japan's colonial institutions to produce a well-ordered and prosperous state.

---

<sup>31</sup> This study is primarily concerned with how the centrality of Manchuria to the Japanese Empire during the 1930s related to agricultural emigration and thus does not address other aspects and consequences of the 'Manchuria Boom'. For a comprehensive examination of Manchuria and Japan after the Manchurian Incident see Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire*.

### III. Agrarian Emigration to Manchuria, 1932 to 1945

The rural population, like other groups and organizations in Japan, joined the movement to realize the promise of the Manchurian lifeline. Agriculturists and social scientists began to seek solutions to the farm crisis of the 1930s in imperial expansion as Nohonshugi (agrarianist) ideologues, addressing population pressure and economic decline in rural areas, began to envision large-scale emigration to the Asian continent as a viable option for farm communities. Thus, from 1932, with the beginning of a five-year trial emigration plan, and then later the mass migration programs that extended to the end of World War Two, Manchuria offered a panacea for rural economic problems. In the process, agriculture was tied to colony building as Japanese farmers were settled in the Manchurian countryside as a bulwark against bandits and Soviets and culture bearers for the surrounding inhabitants.

Emigration planners and army personnel aimed at resolving economic and military problems in Manchuria, but *minzoku kyōwa* remained a key component in the Northeast China colonizing campaigns as an ideological movement verifying Japan's role in Manchukuo. The racial harmony ideological concept – along with the promise of real financial rewards – was activated to support the move to rural emigration, spur hesitant politicians to act, attract government funding and official support and motivate rural residents to venture to an unknown continental destination.

Yet, despite official rhetoric on racial harmony, the ruling ideology of the new state proved to be adjustable when confronted with the economic, military, and national aspirations of the metropolitan populace. Devotion to the imperial cause, strategic goals, and agriculture economies, negated concern for building racial ties with the surrounding Manchurian communities; while the stress on the centrality of Japan's modernized civilization innately subordinated the Manchurian peoples to the minority Japanese settlers. Nevertheless, the racial harmony ideology first envisioned by SMR leaders, retained its vigor as a device for blurring the hard facts of conquest and legitimizing the Manchurian State; but the original purpose of tying together the various races in Northeast China and building a unique national spirit was turned to

moving Manchuria closer to the homeland through the mass migration of Japanese farmers to the continent.

Intellectuals, ideologues, and civilian and military administrators posited a variety of migration theories during the 1930s. Earlier concepts and arguments were reworked to figure in Japan's expanding empire and the prospect of large-scale migration to the Manchurian plains. In the early stages of the theoretical conflicts the heady optimism of the pro-Manchuria migration side was offset by a vast body of collected evidence and experience which called into question some of the fundamental underlying assumptions of the emigration proposals.

Settling farming communities in the region was a cherished plan that dated back to Gotō Shimpei and the South Manchuria Railway centered colony-building that followed the Russo-Japanese War. Indeed, Gotō's *bunsōteki būbi*<sup>32</sup> colonial conquest method proclaimed the necessity of placing 500,000 Japanese colonists in Manchuria to complement the SMR's railway imperialism, thereby orienting the Manchurian infrastructure and economy around Japanese interests. Or, as described by Matsusaka, Gotō "envisioned Japan taking possession of the territory through the gradual creation of a new and indisputable reality on the ground, through a long-term process rather than a single event."<sup>33</sup>

Before 1932, however, settlement efforts had produced a string of failures that called into question the likelihood of successfully creating Japanese farm communities in the colony.<sup>34</sup> From the Russo-Japanese War to the Manchurian Incident three immigration programs had been implemented in the SMR zone and the Leased Territories under the auspices of Japanese authorities (SMR and the SMR subsidiary, the Dairen Agricultural Company, and the Kwantung

<sup>32</sup> Rendered as "military readiness in civilian dress" by Matsusaka. Yoshihasa Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932*, Harvard University Press, 2001, p.81.

<sup>33</sup> Matsusaka, p.81. This represents the notion of imperialism through "cultural dominion," that is to "apply superior methods in an "underdeveloped" area and produce results beneficial to all." Egler, p.11. As will be noted below, much of the contemporary literature on *nogyo imin* perpetuated this notion by emphasizing the "uplifting" effects of Japanese farm settlements on the surrounding native communities.

<sup>34</sup> The *Fifth Report on Progress in Manchuria* published by the SMR Company in 1936 shows that of the 240,000 Japanese nationals "who made their way into Manchuria only a few hundred farmers settled in the Kwantung Leased Territory and the SMR Zone," p.129.



Government) in the region. All three were small-scale ventures originating in the colony, and organized and directed by colonial institutions. The South Manchuria Railway Company initiated the first agricultural immigration plan between 1914-1918, by offering subsidies to former employees who became farmer-settlers. Limited in scope to an initial group of 34 families, by 1937 the plan had largely failed as half of the families had left the settlement. Aikawa Village, the Kwantung Government planned site, was formed in 1915-1916, and like the SMR immigration venture, was marked by failure and abandonment, so that of the original 14 families only 7 remained as of 1936. Finally, in 1929 the Dairen Agricultural Company attempted to attract 500 families as farmer-colonials to a settlement in the Kwantung Leased Territory. Their campaign, like previous endeavors, received little public fanfare and managed to persuade only 73 families to relocate to the Manchurian countryside. As reports of the farm settlements dim fortunes filtered back to Japan the image of a harsh and inhospitable landscape was reinforced, turning academics, administrators, and would-be migrants away from Manchurian emigration schemes.

Before 1931 Japanese residents were limited by narrow interpretations of Sino-Japanese treaty stipulations to the Kwantung Leased Territories and South Manchurian Railway zone. Although Japan's colonial agents argued for sweeping rights to travel, habituate, and establish agricultural and manufacturing enterprises throughout Manchuria, Chinese administrators resisted Japanese attempts to secure long-term leases and establish a firmer footing in outlying regions. Guelcher writes that while "The Japanese government welcomed the new agreements for having secured Japan's supposed legal rights in Manchuria. The Chinese, however, saw matters differently. To the Chinese, the humiliating "Twenty-one Demands" and the follow-up accord on Manchuria were inextricably linked."<sup>35</sup> In reaction then Chinese threw up barriers to Japanese land ownership that stalled Japan's attempts to extend into other parts of Manchuria. For migration advocates this explained the failure of Japanese efforts to establish farming settlements. A 1937 article appearing in "Contemporary Manchuria" bluntly follows this reasoning: "The failure of

Japanese settlement in Manchuria prior to the Manchurian Incident of 1931 was chiefly due to the difficulty encountered in acquiring land owing to the systematic obstruction of the Chinese authorities."<sup>36</sup> The article further notes that the Law for Punishing Traitors enacted in 1915 threatened harsh punishments for Chinese landowners providing land to Japanese nationals and allowed Chinese authorities to violate the strictures of Sino-Japanese treaties, thereby depriving Japanese farmers of their legitimate and legal right to hold property.<sup>37</sup>

Despite some success in covertly procuring land, Japanese interests were sharply hemmed in by extra-legal (to Japanese authorities) Chinese regulations governing land ownership. After 1931 these restrictions no longer applied, freeing Japanese from legal constraints and opening up the possibility of expansion out of the Leased Territory and Railway Zone. Yet, while Kwantung Army occupation of Manchuria and the construction of an autonomous Manshu State opened up new vistas for migration planners, conditions on the ground still presented major obstacles and sparked debate over the viability of rooting Japanese farm settlements in Manchuria.

The theoretical dispute turned on the question of whether Japanese farmers could effectively adapt to Manchurian economic and living conditions. Thus, opponents of Manchurian migration focused their arguments on economic factors, arguing that successfully entrenching Japanese farmers in Manchuria entailed not only matching prevailing Manchurian labor and production costs but also lowering Japanese living standards to Chinese levels. Or as one commentator noted in 1937, "Emigration to Manchuria may not be impossible, but there are three conditions: settlers must not read newspapers or magazines, take baths, or educate their children."<sup>38</sup> Manchurian economic, environmental, and social conditions called for massive changes in Japanese

---

<sup>35</sup> Guelcher, p.7

<sup>36</sup> "The Immigration of Japanese Farmers to Manchoukuo: Its Necessity and Chance of Success," *Contemporary Manchuria*, Volume I, April 1937 to November 1937, South Manchuria Railway Company, p.101.

<sup>37</sup> Guelcher shows that despite Chinese opposition, Japanese were able to surreptitiously acquire land in both south and north Manchuria "through various stratagems such as by employing pliable Chinese and Koreans to act as fronts for Japanese buyers." By these means Japanese gained ownership of over 500,000 acres of land in Manchuria. p.9

<sup>38</sup> Wilson, p.256.

agricultural practices – changes away from small plot farming and towards large fields worked by machines and hired labor. For, as many scholars argued, only large-scale farming – necessitating government involvement and funding – and innovative use of the local Chinese and/or migrant Korean labor force offered any hope of founding successful farm colonies in Manchuria.<sup>39</sup> Further, emigration plans, they argued, violated the dictates of normal migration patterns. Tokyo Imperial University professor, Yanaihara Tadao, for one, asserted that “As a rule people move from an area of low wages to an area of high wages and living standards. Migration in the opposite direction is unnatural, rather like trying to make water flow upstream against a current.”<sup>40</sup> Even emigration backers looked more to Brazil than the Asian continent as a more suitable and profitable overseas destination for Japanese. Up to the Manchurian Incident and even after in the wake of the ‘Manchuria Boom’ a wide range of analysts, professors, and administrators rejected migration to Manchuria as a cure-all to rural economic woes, dismissing migration projects as unsound logistically and unworkable economically<sup>41</sup>

The litany of unsuccessful emigration ventures before the Manchurian Incident seemed to validate official and academic concerns.<sup>42</sup> But, while dissenting voices lingered, by 1932 Manchuria was emerging in propaganda and popular opinion as a way out of the economic slump for rural society. The issue of Manchurian migration, dormant, but underlying imperial debate and strategy since the Russo-Japanese War, moved into the national consciousness through the

<sup>39</sup> See *Manshū Imin no Mura*, pp.52-53.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Young, p.319.

<sup>41</sup> That is not to say that all those opposed Manchurian emigration were likewise opposed to all foreign migration. See *Manshū Imin no Mura*, p. 53.

<sup>42</sup> In 1936 just as the trial emigration plan was evolving into a government sponsored mass migration enterprise, a report on Aikawa Village that detailed the reasons behind the failure of the settlement. Guelcher argues that despite a superficial sop to the optimism of pro-Manchuria migration, the report shows that the villagers faced not only isolation and organizational problems in adapting to the new climate and agriculture conditions of Manchuria, but also “living standards” imbalances that ineluctably tilted economic competition between Japanese farmers and their Chinese counterparts unfavorably against the Japanese.<sup>42</sup> Further, the report notes the exceptional success of two Japanese communities of religious settlers who, because of strict spiritual strictures, maintained a low-income lifestyle. Ironically, the very success of those communities, the authors argued, was a sort of trap in that “To further lower the Japanese standard of living (as measured by Western observers) in Manchuria . . . would only to serve the worst

convergence of imperial fervor and war-time patriotism, economic crisis, and the steady efforts of agrarian activists aligned behind Katō Kanji's campaign to revive the countryside, eliminate population pressure, and nurture a Shinto/emperor oriented *Nōhonshugi* ideology in Japan and the Japanese Empire. Economic realities and the questions raised by the anti-*Manshū nōgyō imin* side were thus gradually overwhelmed as the crisis in agricultural industries fed into the general mobilization behind and support for colonial expansion; rural revival was subsumed in the promises offered by the Manchurian lifeline.

The world economic slump of the late 1920s and 1930s that undermined Mantetsu's performance in the colony also hit hard at Japan's farming communities, and after 1931 made migration overseas an alluring prospect for hard-pressed farm families. Agriculture was faced with a variety of problems. Collapsing commodity prices undermined farm finances and increases in urban unemployment forced large numbers of city residents back to the countryside, thus doubling the burden on many rural households.<sup>43</sup> And, as Kobayashi Kōji notes in his study of agricultural emigration to Manchuria, the impact of the economic crisis showed wide regional variation; variations directly related to the degree of dependence on a single commodity, in most cases silk production.<sup>44</sup> As demand for sericulture products dropped and prices fell, the silk-producing prefectures of northern and central Japan were gripped in an economic deadlock exacerbated by the borrowing and spending of the heady days of high returns.<sup>45</sup> The decline in agricultural product prices and farm profits, along with the flight of urban laborers back to their home villages, heightened differences between landlords and tenants and increased incidences of

---

suspensions of foreign nativists." Guelcher, pp. 10-14. Thus, in general, the migration experiences of Aikawa Village largely confirmed what opponents of Manchurian emigration had argued.

<sup>43</sup> Young notes that "The villages were a major supplier of the urban labor force and when the factories shut down these workers came home to their families . . . Rural society was thus forced to absorb much of the social dislocation of the depression." *Japan's Total Empire*, p.324.

<sup>44</sup> This had a notable impact on emigration numbers as the silk-producing Tohoku prefectures led the nation in responding to the *Manshū nōgyō imin* recruitment campaigns.

<sup>45</sup> Kobayashi Kōji, *Manshū Imin no Mura*, pp. 16-27. Kobayashi focuses mainly on Nagano-ken to show the fall from 'Silk Kingdom' to rural recession, and the subsequent appeals for farm relief measures that then led to the call for mass migration to Manchuria as a means to alleviate agricultural problems.

land tenancy disputes.<sup>46</sup> In response to depression and social dislocation, agricultural specialists, agrarian thinkers, and rural organizations produced a variety of measures designed to ameliorate both the immediate concerns of individual farmers and also solve the pressing issues of land shortages and the over-populated countryside.

Table 1. Agricultural Emigration by Prefecture<sup>47</sup>

Prefecture	Total
Nagano	37,859
Yamagata	17,177
Kumamoto	12,673
Fukushima	12,670
Niigata	12,641
Miyagi	12,419
Gifu	12,090
Hiroshima	11,127
Tokyo	11,111
Kochi	10,082

Initial directives were aimed at fixing the short-term problems gripping farmers. Tenancy and rent disputes increased and agricultural associations demanded fiscal relief measures from local and national governments. But, in a new turn, local farm associations began calling for emigration to Northeast China, circulating petitions, mounting rallies and pressing politicians for efforts to redress rural economic distress through colonial settlements in Manchuria. Emigration moved to the forefront of rural revival plans and Manchuria took on increasing importance within the bundle of initiatives calling for farm relief. In the year following the Manchurian Incident in September 1931, 84 local associations were organized with the explicit goal of studying the possibilities for mass emigration to the continent, outlining migration plans, and pushing the Tokyo government for funding and leadership.<sup>48</sup> With Manchuria opened and largely under Japanese control, Northeast China emerged as a 'New Paradise'<sup>49</sup> fit for Japanese agricultural emigration, and promising economic revival for Japan's countryside. These grass-roots appeals

<sup>46</sup> Young, p. 324

<sup>47</sup> From Young, p.329. This table represents the ten prefectures with the highest number of agricultural emigrants in Manchuria.

<sup>48</sup> *Manshū Kaitaku Shi*, p.33.

were funneled into the larger debate on migration to Manchuria and the fate of the rural economy to fuel the growing demands for official action.

The move to Manchuria campaigns were largely predicated on the 'population pressure' notions that dominated contemporary agrarianist thinking. This view went back to the early years of the Meiji period and the efforts to export 'surplus' residents from the rural parts of Japan which was geared toward righting the population imbalances purportedly dragging down the farm economy. Havens explains that "Overseas expansion, usually based on the *lebenstraun* rationale, had been a persistent sub-theme in Nohonshugi discourse since the 1890s"<sup>50</sup> An article in the South Manchuria Railway Company published *Contemporary Manchuria* neatly sums up the prevailing rationale behind emigration to the continent:

From the standpoint of Japan, Japanese emigration to the new State is necessary; first on the grounds of her over-population lack of sufficient work for her agricultural population, and impoverished conditions of her rural communities. This would then free up the land vacated by the emigrant farmers to the remaining families, thereby solving the population pressure and reviving the stalled rural communities. there is no need to mention here with what rapidity the population of the Island Empire is growing. It is, moreover, an undeniable fact that Japan's rural districts have no space left for accommodating her ever-increasing population.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> The *Manshū Kaitaku Shi* describes the contemporary attitude as follows; "Both the economic world and farm villages looked to Manchuria as a new paradise (*shin tenchi*) that needed to be developed (by Japan)." <sup>50</sup> Havens, p.276.

<sup>51</sup> "The Immigration of Japanese Farmers to Manchuria: Its Necessity and Chance of Success," *Contemporary Manchuria*, Vol. I, April 1937 to November 1937, pp. 96-97, South Manchuria Railway Company. Although this article antedates the trial settlements and details the implementation of the plan for large-scale emigration, it shows the concern for population pressure. Immigration to the United States was restricted after 1924, while Brazilian authorities began to place limits on Japanese immigration in the mid and late 1930s. F.A. Rager, "Japanese Emigration and Japan's Population Pressure," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.14, No.3, pp. 300-321, September 1941. Emigration figures to Brazil for the early 1930s significantly out-distanced the numbers for Manchurian emigration during the trial period. Nevertheless, the sense of limited emigration options was an important feature in the Manchurian migration program. Young shows also that throughout the period limits on Japanese immigration to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, Peru and Brazil were periodically enacted and enforced. She writes, "These restrictions included the White Australia and White New Zealand policies of 1901 and 1903, the Gentlemen's Agreements with the U.S. and Canada of 1907 and 1908, initiatives to curb immigration to Peru and Brazil, and what would always be remembered as the crowning insult, the exclusion of Japanese altogether in the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924." Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, p.313. Thus, while as noted above, Brazil was held up as better emigration option than Manchuria, there was, at least in later perspectives, a growing sense that many foreign nations were drawing up plans to bar Japanese nationals.

The necessity of opening Manchuria to emigration was given credence when joined with the corollary assertion that Japanese citizens were facing increasingly hostile foreign initiatives to shut down the outflow of migrants from Japan. That is just as America, Australia, Peru, and Brazil were throwing up barriers to immigrants, Manchukuo was opening up to Japanese settlement.

As the drive towards settling Manchuria gained momentum, petitions and policy initiatives moved from local farm associations to the highest echelons of the government as agrarian thinkers articulating a vision of *Manshū nōgyō imin* canvassed the political, military, and academic elite for support. With the economic crisis of the 1930s and the opening of north Manchuria to Japanese colonists the enduring idea of alleviating population crisis by funneling surplus farmers abroad became enmeshed in Japan's colonial expansion in China. *Nōhonshugi* advocates took up the question of emigration primarily as a means of delivering farmers from rural economic 'deadlock.' Motivated by Katō Kanji's (and associated scholars labeled collectively the Katō Group) agricultural and Shinto centered ideology emigration to Manchuria moved to the forefront of debate on the rural *jinkō mondai* and rural emigration.

Katō espoused a form of agrarian thinking centered on "imperial agriculture" (*kōkoku nōson*); holding that the sacred/pure work of agriculture rooted the Japanese people in a hierarchically organized system, with the emperor as head, but forming together with all Japanese a national polity (*kokutai*) that was rooted in the sacred task of farming and individual virtue.<sup>52</sup> He stressed that "people were the total foundation. And thus the revival and improvement of agricultural villages likewise rested on people. If only villages were made up of superior humans, conditions

---

<sup>52</sup> Kami Jouichiro, *Man-mō Kaitaku Seishōnengiyūgun*, Chūō Kōron Shakan, 1973, pp. 16-18. Also, see Havens, *Farm and Nation in Modern Japan*, pp. 277-285, *Manshū Kaitakushi*, pp.36-37. Kami notes an important event in the evolution of Kato's thinking wherein one of Kato's young students approached him, declared his devotion to Katō's *Nōhonshūgi* theories. The student, however, was frustrated because, as the son of a small-plot farmer, all opportunities to put Katō's ideas into practice were effectively denied by contemporary economic conditions and the acreage limitations of particular rural areas. This story, as related by Kato, was a crucial motivation for Katō's efforts to redress rural population constraints through emigration to Japan's colonial territories.

would improve. It is imperative then to nurture pure spirits in rural folk.”<sup>53</sup> Katō saw population pressure and the stifled expectations of second and third farm sons as the root cause of rural decline. Unlike other agrarianists, however, he envisioned moving farmers to Asian colonies, making tenant farmers and property-less sons into solid, small-plot farmer/owners, thus circumventing the acreage and economic constraints of the homeland. Kami Jōichirō, relating Katō’s conversion to traditional Shinto beliefs, his rural education work, and firm conviction that land shortages in Japan blocked rural revival, writes, “According to Katō, Japan, as an island country, had insufficient arable land, while China and the vast continent had a surfeit of land.”<sup>54</sup>

Colonial emigration was, for Katō, focused on the necessity of relieving rural land tensions.<sup>55</sup> Katō first sponsored a small-scale emigration program to the Korean peninsula in 1923 and then in 1927 “personally accompanied a second group of would-be colonists to Manchuria” in a project that “failed spectacularly.”<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, Katō continued to advocate sending agricultural colonists to the continent, and after the Manchurian Incident drew up draft plans for emigration that fit in with a rising rural sentiment for colonizing in Manchukuo, and then in January 1932 he began to drum up support for his proposals in high-level military circles.

The merger of colonial emigration and agrarianism in Katō’s thinking reoriented conventional inducements behind migration and reinvigorated the moribund Meiji-Taishō era imperialist goal of peopling Japan’s Asian colonies with settlers. As Young writes, “In the context of Taishō agrarianism movement, Katō’s advocacy of colonial settlement was unusual – one of the few links between the agrarianist and emigration movements.”<sup>57</sup> The infusion of agrarian ideology into the emigration drive was important because it targeted the suffering agricultural classes, tapped into the growing allure of Manchuria’s open spaces for rural agricultural associations, and

---

<sup>53</sup> Kuwajima, p.23.

<sup>54</sup> Kami, p.18.

<sup>55</sup> Kobayashi writes, for Katō “Regarding the migration problem from the perspective of second and third sons of farming families, emigration was possibility or impossibility, but rather was a necessity.” p.63.

<sup>56</sup> Guelcher, p.42

<sup>57</sup> Young, p.318.



countered the hard-edged economic and theoretically based opposing camp with notions of self-sufficiency and service to the emperor.

The fighting in Manchuria in 1931 was followed by a flurry of meetings, planning sessions, and intellectual debate as emigration plans moved from the Katō Group to the Colonial Ministry<sup>58</sup> and then, after deliberations there, to the 61<sup>st</sup> Special Parliamentary Diet Assembly as the “Manchurian Agricultural Migration Plan” submitted for debate in March. The bill called for a national campaign to recruit, train, dispatch and subsidize settlement groups to Manchuria.<sup>59</sup> Progress of the bill was stalled, however, by lingering doubts about the possibility of successfully planting agricultural colonies in Manchuria; doubts based on the dismal failure of previous schemes and the still uncertain security of Japan’s expanded sphere of control in the area. Despite continuing rural malaise and the burgeoning drive for agricultural colonization in Manchuria, Finance Minister Takahashi Korekiyo’s opposition blocked the first emigration plan.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, just after the May 15<sup>th</sup> Plot of 1932, a petition<sup>61</sup> drawn up by the newly organized Association for Self-governing Farmers was presented to the 62<sup>nd</sup> Special Parliamentary Session. The Association called for action on three points: temporary debt relief for farm households, fertilizer subsidies, and, finally, a special fund to facilitate Manchurian emigration.<sup>62</sup> Momentum for colonial migration marched on, matched by a new military-*Nōhonshugi* consensus and collaboration.

Kwantung Army military might in Manchuria and political muscle in Japan forced the linkage of strategic concerns and rural economies in the planning and organization of Manchurian

<sup>58</sup> In the form of a draft outline written primarily by Katō Kanji, “Manchurian Colonial Enterprise Plan,” submitted to the Colonial Ministry in February 1932. See Kuwajima Setsurō, *Manshū Būsō Imin*, Kyoikusha Rekishi Shinsho, 1979, p.57.

<sup>59</sup> *Manshū Kaitaku Shi*, p.41. Education and training was to be based on Katō’s Shinto-agrarian concepts. Thus emphasizing spiritual training, but also including education in agricultural methods, military training, and cooking/nutrition.

<sup>60</sup> Takahashi on one occasion dismissed Manchuria emigration ventures as “like throwing money into a drainage ditch.” (“*Manshū imin wa kane o dōbu ni suteru yō na mono de aru.*”) *Manshū Būsō Imin*, p.77. Guelcher notes that not only was the bill opposed by the Finance Ministry, but also

<sup>61</sup> The petition was drafted with the cooperation of 16 prefectures and signed by 32,000 people.

<sup>62</sup> Kobayashi, pp.28-29.

colonization. Thus, Katō and like-minded ideologues were brought into the state building project in partnership with the Kwantung Army – placing farmer-settlers in the Manchurian hinterlands thereby easing rural population pressure, but also fitting into Army plans to control Chinese opposition and stabilize the new state.

Emigration policy for Manchuria emerged on two fronts, one corresponding to the military dictates of the Kwantung Army and the other reflecting the agricultural activism of the Katō Group. This represented a sort of a dual tracking of independent, parallel plans that over the course of 1932 became interconnected, then revised, and finally implemented in the form of a parliamentary bill authorizing a five-year trial emigration program. On the domestic scene, as noted above, the Katō Group began to actively assert the necessity of continental emigration and present their arguments and preliminary drafts before government administrators (mainly in the Colonial Ministry) and military officials.

While the migration plan proceeded through the Japanese government, the push for emigration was given impetus from the continent in the form of an independent Kwantung Army emigration proposal that emerged out of a 1932 inquiry meeting on Manchurian policy measures. Migration was adopted as a core element of the meeting since Army planners from the outset ignored debate over whether migration should be fostered or whether it was possible, to simply advocate emigration as an essential plank in forming a state in Manchuria. Kwantung Army administrators moved right to the practical matter of dispatching settlers to the colony and shaping the emigration organizational agencies.<sup>63</sup>

Emigration was given high priority at the planning session because it was considered an indispensable part of the *minzoku kyōwa* ideology— an ideology that, authorities presumed, depended on raising the numbers of Japanese in Manchuria as a kind of core group around which the new state would be constructed. In a later March 1932 meeting, Ishiwara argued for the necessity of bringing groups of Japanese farmers to settle on the uncultivated lands of north

Manchuria, where they would guard the Manchuria-Soviet border and bridge the cultural and economic gaps between Japan and Manchukuo.<sup>64</sup> Thus, as conceptualized by Japanese officials, putting Japanese farmers in rural Manchuria would build bonds of solidarity between both groups, and through the influence of the newly arrived Japanese, bring higher living standards to the region.<sup>65</sup>

News of the Army's independent emigration proposal boosted Katō's first plan from obscurity to the floor of the Parliament. Although *nōgyō imin* prospects were still doubted, "In the case of the agricultural colonization to Manchuria, the mere intimation that the military in Manchuria had identified colonization as a pressing concern was sufficient to overcome the reservations of certain important members of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Colonial Affairs." Then, though the Finance Ministry blocked the first settlement bill, the movement was given new drive, when in March, Katō had the opportunity to visit the Kwantung Army Staff Headquarters for discussions with Ishiwara about gaining access to land and facilities for colonists. As a result the Katō Group was brought into line with the Army's aims in Northeast Asia while the emigration drive was given added impetus with the weight of military influence behind it.

Perhaps the most important result of the meeting, however, was that it brought together Katō Kanji with Lieutenant-Colonel Tōmiya Kaneo, thus beginning the partnership of the two figures who became known as the "fathers of Manshu Migration." While Ishiwara was proclaiming the necessity of *nōgyō imin* to *minzoku kyōwa* and state building, Tōmiya was formulating the conceptual underpinning and strategic parameters for bringing Japanese to the continent – with pacifying Chinese resistance and bolstering border defense the main objectives. Tōmiya had been

---

<sup>63</sup> *Manshū Kaitaku Shi*, p.49

<sup>64</sup> Kuwajima, p.61, putting Japanese settlers on uncultivated land was an important point in formulating emigration policy measures in that it was thought it would lessen the likelihood of Chinese opposition, as Japanese colonizers arrived as farmers opening up unused land, rather than in an invasion of settlers and soldiers uprooting native inhabitants. The forced expropriation of land would, however, become a typical characteristic of the *nōgyō imin*.

<sup>65</sup> It should be added that these concepts papered-over arguments about lifestyle and Chinese labor and production costs, that theorists argued would undercut the Japanese colonizers' ability to compete. And,

in Northeast China since 1927, and was active in a number of different events, most notably as on-site director of the bombing of Zhang Zuolin's train in 1928.<sup>66</sup> He pressed for expanding Japanese control over Manchuria by advancing north and agitated for an activist approach to Asian colonization.<sup>67</sup> Young writes, "Tōmiya was an army officer who embraced expansionist causes. He was peripherally associated with right-wing patriotic societies operating in China and imagined himself to belong to the company of *tairiku rōnin*, continental adventurers who conspired to advance Japan's position in China."<sup>68</sup> He regarded agricultural settlers as sort of farmer-soldiers: militarily trained ex-reservists living on the margins of the Japanese Empire, battling bandits, manning strategic transport lines, and defending against invasion.

Although Tōmiya and Katō were driven by different impulses, their tie-up in 1932 led to a two-pronged plan in which Tōmiya organized the acquisition of supplies, land, and facilities in Manchuria, while Katō took charge of leading the propaganda drive: recruiting, selecting and training participants for the *nōgyō imin* program.<sup>69</sup> The military-Katō collaboration moved both sides to take up new themes to smooth over the differences in their respective plans.<sup>70</sup> Tōmiya gave up "some of the overtly strategic" elements of his plan, while Katō began to associate emigration to Manchuria with patriotism and loyalty and acquiesced to the military's desire to settle farmers in the northern border regions.<sup>71</sup>

---

also, ignored, the counter to that argument that creating self-sufficient communities would seal off the Japanese from those pressures.

<sup>66</sup> Kami, p.14

<sup>67</sup> This was famously evident in Tōmiya's haiku poetry – poems with titles such as "Advance North" (*Hokushin*), Kami, p.15.

<sup>68</sup> Young, p.385.

<sup>69</sup> Guelcher, p.53.

<sup>70</sup> In a major shift, the Katō Group followed the military on stationing *nōgyō imin* in north rather than south Manchuria. Though initially surprised that the Kwantung Army would prefer the unstable northern region, Katō, previously unfamiliar with the area, agreed that for the good of the new state and Japan, reservist-settlers should be sent to the still dangerous area. Making north Manchuria the focal point of Japanese migration clearly underscored the essentially military aims of the operation as it placed the settlers in the most unstable areas strategically and in a region with an inhospitable climate and different crops and agricultural methods.

<sup>71</sup> Guelcher, p.53.

Events in Japan helped speed the revised emigration plan through Parliament. A Cabinet shake-up after the May 15th Plot brought an energetic proponent of Manchurian emigration, Nagai Ryutarō, into the Cabinet as the Minister for Colonial Affairs who then immediately put priority on passing the Colonial Ministry's plan through the parliament.<sup>72</sup> The reworked emigration plan was heavily influenced by input from Tōmiya and Katō and with the Army's weight thrown behind the project Manchurian migration was sanctioned by the government in August and money apportioned for the first trial emigration groups. In the same month the Ministry of Defense put out recruitment guidelines, stipulating that the settlers be reservists from northern and central Japan – reflections of the unstable condition in north Manchuria and the economic slump in Japan; as military trained settlers were necessary to combat Chinese resistance, while farmers from the economically depressed north of Japan were most inclined to answer the call to migrate overseas.

The preliminary phase of the emigration movement was set in motion with a five-year trial emigration plan that aimed at putting 1,000 colonists into north Manchuria in the first two years of the program.<sup>73</sup> This first farmer-soldier stage gave rise to many of the long-term trends that characterized the migrations to Manchuria: recruiting in the north and central regions of Japan, locating colonists in strategic zones, a racial harmony ideology, and the creation of a heroic/patriotic imagery used to attract settlers and energize public support behind the movement.

Migration planners began recruiting settlers in September,<sup>74</sup> working with local Imperial Reservist Associations in the Tōhoku and northern Kantō prefectures to muster reservists under

---

<sup>72</sup> In *Manshū Būsō Imin*, Kuwajima argues that the May 15<sup>th</sup> Incident was important in that it allowed a proponent of "Dai Asia," Nagai, into the Cabinet and also because the Plot voiced concerns for the rural classes and called for rural relief (*nōgyō kyūsai*), p. 78.

<sup>73</sup> This revised plan scaled-back the target number of emigrants drastically; the original plan drafted by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs called for recruiting 100,000 households over a ten year period. See *Fifth Report on Progress to Manchuria*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>74</sup> Tōmiya and Kato hastily organized the recruitment and training of the first group in order to have the settlers in Manchuria before Ishiwara's impending transfer and the onset of cold weather and the freezing of the Sungari River. Guelcher, pp. 54-55. Kuwajima also notes this and adds that Ishiwara's thinking was central to the idea of creating a national ethos drawing Manchuria and Japan closer together through racial harmony. Kuwajima, p. 99.

the age of 35 into the first settlement groups. Aiming at attracting 500 emigrants in the first group, with another group of 500 to follow later, the campaign managed to draw 492 settlers, who were then given a brief 19 day training period which “greatly favored spiritual training”<sup>75</sup> and sent overseas to establish farm communities in north Manchuria.<sup>76</sup>

Within a year of the government’s decision to sponsor trial emigration the first two groups had been situated in the Manchurian borderlands. These groups, called “armed settlers”(*manshū būsō imin*) went with overtly military intentions, organized and outfitted like an army unit with swords, pistols, and machine guns – frontier guards against Communist and Nationalist guerilla attacks and border incursions by Soviet forces.<sup>77</sup> Sent to the area where Chinese ‘bandit’ activities were most acute, the experiences of the first two groups were marked by insecurity, internal problems, desertion, and deprivations against local residents.

The initial emigration groups were charged with forming self-defense compounds in the region, thereby quieting unrest and facilitating the transfer of sovereignty to the Japan-backed Manchukuo government. However, the *nōgyō imin* were also expected to unite with Chinese farmers to create the racial harmony bonds emphasized in Manchurian state building. But the latter objective was compromised by the first encounters between Chinese and Japanese. From the first, the armed emigrants were pressed into duty as soldiers; on their arrival “local military authorities had marched the new colonists in rank through the streets of Jiamusi”<sup>78</sup> in an effort to intimidate the locals.”<sup>79</sup> Then throughout the winter the settlers fought alongside the Kwantung Army, while also joining soldiers in misusing the Chinese residents: stealing, swindling, and raping. So by the time the emigrants had reached their settlement site they had already acquired a

<sup>75</sup> Guelcher, p.56.

<sup>76</sup> The first group was prevented by unrest and attacks from reaching their intended destination until after their first winter in Manchuria. Kobayashi, p.70. They spent the first winter in Jiamusi fighting alongside the Kwantung Army to fend off attackers. Guelcher, pp.140-141.

<sup>77</sup> Kami, p.20.

<sup>78</sup> Jiamusi was the closet city to the *nōgyō imin* settlement site. Guelcher, p.144.

<sup>79</sup> Guelcher, p.144.

reputation for brutality that sent the local inhabitants fleeing. The deserted fields and homes were taken over by the Japanese.

Imperial power gave the Japanese settlers leverage for moving in and taking over land. When more fields were needed for the first emigrant group, Lieutenant-Colonel Tōmiya led the land grab, assembling the local residents and paying “the unreasonably low sum of 5 yen per family” c in a process that continued from March into April of 1933. Through these summary methods the settlers acquired large tracts of cultivated land, easing somewhat the transition to Manchuria, but arousing the enmity and distrust of the local people.<sup>80</sup>

And, rather than pioneer virgin land, many of the colonists, aided by the heavy-handed methods of the Kwantung Army, the East Asian Development Company, and the Manchurian government, moved onto cultivated farmlands. Thus, while lip-service was paid to the notion of ‘opening’ new land for cultivation, a large percentage of the fields acquired by the colonists were simply taken from Chinese farmers, with the former owners forcibly pressed into selling their property at prices much below the actual value, and then either moving out or working for their new overseers.<sup>81</sup> In one instance, “more than twenty armed men were sent to the area in question (regarding a land purchase), and they either bayoneted farmers who did not comply with their orders or killed their cattle, dogs, and chickens.”<sup>82</sup> For the Chinese, Araragi writes, the transactions were more like forced requisitions than legitimate deals.<sup>83</sup> Early on in the migration enterprise, the *minzoku kyōwa* ideology was exposed as specious and simplistic. Moving and motivating farmers to emigrate brought out the contradictions in Japanese policy and placed settlers in the dual role of government dupe and colonial oppressor. And neither Japanese nor Manchurian government authorities were able to wholly alleviate the problems facing the settlements when faced with both outside attack and insufficient support.

<sup>80</sup> Guelcher, p.146, Kuwajima, p.160.

<sup>81</sup> Araragi Shinzo, *Manshū Imin no Rekishi Shigaku*, 1994, p.69.

<sup>82</sup> Wilson, p.267.

<sup>83</sup> Araragi, p.69.

Chinese farmers and land holders did not always back down in the face of Japanese might. In spring 1934 just after the agricultural settlers of the first group had been dispersed into separate villages, and a new round of land-buying was announced, displaced Chinese locals rose up in an attempt to drive out both the first group and the newly arrived second group.<sup>84</sup> As many as seven thousand<sup>85</sup> Chinese farmers were involved in the attack and both the settlers and Kwantung Army soldiers sent as reinforcements suffered casualties. After the disturbances the process of obtaining land was reorganized as the army moved into the background and "Responsibility for procuring land was officially handed over to the government of Manchukuo and the private Manchuria Colonization Company."<sup>86</sup> And, in addition, these agencies began to select a greater proportion of uncultivated land for the Japanese emigrants.<sup>87</sup> Yet, despite these measures, the first contacts between the Chinese and the emigrants/settlement authorities drove a wedge between the two communities that undermined racial amity and also contributed, along with disease and poor planning, to demoralizing the emigrant venture.

In the early months of the program the first settlements seemed perilously close to failure. Disease, in the form of dysentery, left around half of the group stricken<sup>88</sup> and forced the settlement administration to send some of the colonists back to Japan.<sup>89</sup> Prior to this, in April, the settlers had selected representatives to take complaints of administrative and operational

---

<sup>84</sup> *Manshū Kaitaku Shi*, pp.114-115. This account blames the uprising on faulty planning and information, the presence of bandits and former fighters in Zhang Xueliang's Army among the village self-defense groups, as well as the locals' fear that inoculations against an epidemic outbreak were actually an attempt to poison them. The authors also state that when the Manchurian authorities began to buy large tracts of land for the second group (after the fighting had stopped), they were careful to involve the neighboring people, pay a fair price for the land, and provide land or jobs for the former owners. In this way, unrest was avoided. See p.118. This reasoning, of course, shifts the blame on to the Kwantung Army and Manchurian government, while playing up the local people's backwardness, and largely absolving the emigrants of any wrongdoing.

<sup>85</sup> Guelcher writes that six to seven thousand were involved in the attack. P.59.

<sup>86</sup> Guelcher, p.61.

<sup>87</sup> Guelcher, p.61. He provides statistics showing a sharp drop in the percentage of uncultivated land purchased by the settlement organizations; In the first group, 32.6% of the land had been previously cultivated, this rose to 71.2% in the second group, and then fell to 2.9% in the third group. However, on average, from 1932-1942, roughly 17.5% of the land taken over by the Japanese was cultivated. Wilson, p.284.

<sup>88</sup> Kuwajima, p.169.



problems to Tōmiya, with grievances involving security duties, communications with the military, improper agricultural tools, and sloppy financial accounting. Kami writes that Tōmiya wanting at all costs to prevent the breakdown of the emigrant community dashed off a notice to the settlers then in July visited the village with Katō Kanji. The excited settlers, some waving pistols, pressed Tōmiya and Katō into one of the buildings, voicing their dissatisfaction with the management of the settlement. Although Tōmiya was able to placate the crowd, and keep the settlement running, over a hundred of the emigrants opted to abandon the group and return to Japan. Furthermore, as these returnees started back to Japan they met the members of the second group as it arrived; giving the newcomers reports of actual conditions in north Manchuria – tales of bandit attacks, illness, and conflicts with the settlement planning agency – and asking them, “Do you think you can successfully farm this kind of agricultural land?”<sup>90</sup> Several from the second party of emigrants joined the exodus back to Japan. Three more groups of trial emigrants were sent after 1934, each placed in strategically important areas, and playing “a role as auxiliaries in the war being waged by the Kwantung Army against Chinese resistance.”<sup>91</sup> From 1932 to 1937 the trial settlements were buffeted by stiff local resistance, dashed hopes, sickness, and desertion, but they were effective in pacifying the countryside and manning posts along strategic transport lines, thus playing a part in the construction of Japan’s imperial system on the continent.

Domestic emigration propaganda raised support for Manchurian emigration with the promise of unpopulated, open plains. Wilson describes a female emigrant’s “image of Manchuria as a vast and snowy plain dotted with log cabins . . . There was no hint that millions of Chinese lived there.”<sup>92</sup> These homey images and grand expectations of course contrasted with the actual situation - continued resistance in the interior, a sullen and suspicious native population already

---

<sup>89</sup> Kobayashi, p.70.

<sup>90</sup> Kami.p.22.

<sup>91</sup> Guelcher, p.64.

<sup>92</sup> Wilson, p.267. Young also notes the prevalence of policies and propaganda that took little notice of the native population. See p.348. Other aspects of the colonial enterprise that emphasized a social structure centered on Japanese contradicted this.

stung by confrontations with the army, a harsh, strange terrain, and a hastily laid-out emigration operation. Guelcher writes, "Fed rather hazy images of the wondrous 'New Paradise' under construction in pro-emigration propaganda, many colonists departed Japan with little more than an equally vague expectation of instant gratification: an extensive landholding, suitable housing, generous financial aid, white rice every day, an honored position atop the rural social order."<sup>93</sup> Instead, when the first groups reached their settlements they were housed in half-finished buildings that far from 'suitable housing' resembled "warehouses rather than military barracks."<sup>94</sup> Food, consisting of millet, corn, and other grains, was both insufficient and nearly inedible – Emigrants were limited to that sort of diet, however, because food subsidies set by Katō and the emigration organization were so low that the settlers could not afford higher priced items.<sup>95</sup> Deflated dreams marked the trial emigration stage of the *Manshū nōgyō imin* campaigns, but rather than defeat the effort, the experiences of the first colonists were transferred back to Japan as heroic episodes that then fed into the mass-migration push from 1937 to 1945.

While the emigrants struggled to adapt to their new landscape and adjust their expectations to Manchurian realities, propagandists constructed a heroic 'pioneering' discourse focused on the colonists' struggle against 'bandits' and desertion, the burgeoning prosperity of the settlements and their role in raising the cultural standards of the local people. Young describes the way the early trials of the Japanese farmers were fashioned into legend by emigration promoters in pamphlets, magazines, journals, and travel brochures. Indeed, the Iyasaka and Chifuri village sites themselves became such popular tourist destinations that "the deluge of visitors was such that many settlers were reportedly forced to give up farming altogether in order to devote full

---

<sup>93</sup> Guelcher, p.140.

<sup>94</sup> Kuwajima, p.139.

<sup>95</sup> Kuwajima, p.139. Kuwajima depicts the angry emigrants saying, "We didn't expect it to be like this." "This food is terrible. Are we supposed to eat this?" "We were tricked by Katō and Tōmiya." The settlers' food consumption was intended to be similar to the diet of the surrounding Chinese population. This was aimed at producing living standards that matched the local level, thereby avoiding competition with neighboring villagers. pp.139-140.

time to 'showing people around.'"<sup>96</sup> An article in *Contemporary Manchuria* pays tribute to the bravery of the first settlers in resisting bandit attacks in this passage: "This was an initiation terrible enough to have prematurely ended Japan's attempt at colonization in Manchoukuo but the Japanese are made of sterner stuff . . . They had no intention of leaving. They had come to Manchoukuo to be colonists and colonists they were going to be hell or high water! Bandits or no bandits they were there to stay. And stay they did!"<sup>97</sup>

Settlement reports that filtered back to the homeland followed a standard pattern, starting with the initial troubles – bandit attacks, disease, desertion, natural disasters - and then moving on to brighter themes such as the arrival of wives, building homes, bringing in bumper crops, and the colonial baby boom.<sup>98</sup> One such article, *Chifuri, An Ideal Japanese Settlement*, follows the frontier settlement growing into a rural community, with wives<sup>99</sup> (*tairiku no hanayome*), private homes, a functioning postal service, large, prosperous fields of soy beans, rice, wheat, and kaoliang, and gainfully employed "Manchus" taking part in the peaceful prosperity of the village.<sup>100</sup> Even more staid reports in the Fifth and Sixth Report on Progress in Manchuria published by the South Manchuria Railway were careful to detail the growing size of the settlements and the diverse agricultural industries operated by the colonists, reinforcing the

---

<sup>96</sup> Young, p.383.

<sup>97</sup> T. O'Neill-Lane, "Pioneering in Manchuria," *Contemporary Manchuria*, Vol. I, April 1937 to November 1937, p.7. South Manchuria Railway Company.

<sup>98</sup> For example, "Finally, we must not fail to mention the fact that there are already two hundred babies born in the settlement, the second generation. All are in the best of health. Each year sees at least a hundred new arrivals, and if this rate is kept up, perhaps the day will come when all of north Manchuria will be settled and tilled by the second generation Japanese, born and raised on the soil." "Chifuri, Ideal Japanese Settlement in the Manchurian Wilds," *Contemporary Manchuria*, Vol., No.1, January 1938, p.12.

<sup>99</sup> Guelcher explains that Tomiya responded to the high incidences of rape cases involving Japanese settlers and Chinese women by recruiting wives for the settlers. P.57.

<sup>100</sup> "Chifuri, Ideal Japanese Settlement," pp.9-10, South Manchuria Railway Company. The main crops grown by the Japanese settlers were soybeans, paddy rice, wheat, barley, corn, and millet. See "Immigration of Japanese Farmers into Manchuria, Part II" *Contemporary Manchuria*, Vol. II, No.3, May 1938. South Manchuria Railway Company.

popular image of self-sustaining pioneers working to carve out a civilized home in the Manchurian plains.<sup>101</sup>

Ethnic relations narratives played into the creation of 'New Paradise' notions and the state building ideology by offering up images of Japanese-Manchurian concord and stressing the technological, economic, and hygienic advances brought to north Manchuria by the agricultural colonist vanguard. But the reports of racial harmony and communal bonding also played to the built-in cultural superiority reflex of both domestic and colonial Japanese, adding to perceptions of Chinese backwardness, cunning, and immorality. Early accounts of the colonial mission stress the amicable relations between the colonists and "good" Chinese, and the justice meted out to "bad" Chinese bandits, and are careful to show how the local people flocked to the new settlements for shelter and the modern benefits of Japanese culture. A 1936 article in the *Harbin Nichinichi* describes in glowing terms the work schedule, crop yield, and farm successes of the emigrants, noting that "The Japanese farmers enjoy luscious dishes of cucumbers and tomatoes, but the native farmers are still unable to enjoy these products."<sup>102</sup> Having established the superiority of Japanese farming methods, the article moves on to relations with the locals and the colonists' role in "pacifying the entire countryside" and bringing order to the region, with the result that natives "are pouring in fast to the outlying districts of the town, boosting the total to nearly 8,000 Manchus (up from 400)."<sup>103</sup> Proximity to the Japanese community is valuable, the writer asserts, because it brings the Manchus into contact with a higher civilization. "It is a natural phenomenon that backward peoples improve their living conditions through not only direct financial or social intercourse but also through pure imitation. Upon the Japanese settlements rest the development and prosperity of Manchuria's interior regions."<sup>104</sup> Government

<sup>101</sup> See *Fifth Report on Progress in Manchuria to 1936 and Sixth Report on Progress in Manchuria to 1939*, South Manchuria Railway.

<sup>102</sup> "Immigration of Japanese Farmers to Manchuria, Part II," *Contemporary Manchuria*, p.55.

<sup>103</sup> "Immigration, Part II," p.55.

<sup>104</sup> "Immigration, Part II," p.55.

pamphlets and emigration literature<sup>105</sup> consistently reinforced patronizing portrayals of interactions between the Japanese colonists and native people. Accounts of the colonial settlements also underscored Japan's benevolent imperialism and development of a tight social, cultural, and economic network tying Manchuria to Japan in a close, colonial contract.

Binding Manchuria into union with Japan was another theme in the *Manshū nōgyō imin* policy and propaganda. These messages evoked both a Confucian-oriented hierarchy of nations and also the superiority of Japanese vis-a-vis the Chinese population. Japan and Manchuria were linked in a colonial relationship that transcended financial and profit-based calculations, described with familial metaphors that stressed the inviolability of those bonds. "When emigration propaganda applied the biological language of kinship to the colonization of Manchukuo, the empire was brought into the racial embrace of the family-state. As one article explained, Manchukuo was not just a colony, but blood kin."<sup>106</sup> Agricultural colonists functioned to activate this relationship, bridging the social and cultural gaps between natives and Japanese by bringing modern farming techniques and equipment, medicine, and sanitary habits to the colony and making a model for the colonized locals to imitate.<sup>107</sup>

The institutionalized reduction of Chinese rights and autonomy, along with the farmers' martial training and army backing, however, preconditioned the settlers to disdain or dismiss the local inhabitants of Manchuria. In Mariko Asano Tamanoi's study of ethnic taxonomies in Manchuria she shows how pre-departure images colored settler expectations of life in Manchuria. "The song (a propaganda vehicle for the migration project) encourages the rural folk to migrate to

<sup>105</sup> For further examples, see Young, pp.362-373, Guelcher, pp.197-199. Guelcher writes that sometimes the cultural exchanges went the other way; he cites a case wherein the Japanese side instituted a program for teaching proper sanitary methods, while the Chinese taught the Japanese practical farming techniques. He writes, "Considering the relative merits of skills in question, however, the astute reader might well have concluded that the Japanese in Manchuria were benefiting most from these exchanges, gaining as they were invaluable survival tips." Guelcher, p.199.

<sup>106</sup> Young, p.366

<sup>107</sup> Young writes, "The position of the Yamato people was expressed variously as the "heart" (*kakushin*), "pivot" (*chūjiku*), and "axis" (*chūsū*), of the five races, "the position of leadership" (*shidōteki chii*), the "guiding role" (*shidōteki yakuwari*), the "leader of the Asian continent" (*Ajia tairiku no meishu*), the "head

Manchuria by offering an image of a land so vast that it has no boundaries. Furthermore the song minimizes, or even nullifies, any human presence in Manchuria.”<sup>108</sup> Upon arrival, however, the disjunction between ‘empty lands’ imagery and racial harmony rhetoric became apparent. Not only was Manchuria populated with Chinese, ethnic Manchurians, Koreans, and other races, but also imperial authority jarred with the official *minzoku kyōwa* ideology. From the government bureaucracy in urban areas to the outer edges of Manchuria in the emigrant settlements Japan possessed and exercised power; at least as projected and fashioned for Japanese consumption.

Organizational leaders and the Japanese colonists themselves generally disregarded ethnic relations when it came to expressing power and cultural dominion in the colonial realm. Both Tōmiya and Katō “early on publicly derided the official vision of ethnic relations in Manchukuo” and “baldly encouraged the their charges to fear the original inhabitants of Manchuria.”<sup>109</sup> This, of course, fed into popular Japanese conceptions of Chinese backwardness, and left *minzoku kyōwa* an empty, if official, ideology for the Japanese rulers. The agricultural emigration campaigns through propaganda and deed either marginalized the majority Chinese, created a ‘cultural dominion’ discourse of benign benevolence or broke down to rough frontier standards where power and authority meant loss and subjection for the colonized communities.

As the five-year trial emigration plan neared completion the Japanese government in 1936 increased the scale of the program, enacting an ambitious proposal to send 1,000,000 households to the colony over a twenty-year period.<sup>110</sup> Again, political events in the homeland, along with pressure from the Army in Manchuria, shaped colonial measures. In 1936 the Kwantung Army presented a plan for speeding up the pace of emigration, while another military plot, the February 26 Incident, precipitated expansion of emigration goals at home – the main Cabinet opponent of

---

of the five races” (*gozoku kyōwa no sentō*), the “driving force of racial harmony” (*gozoku kyōwa no suishinryoku*), or all of these at once.” p.370.

<sup>108</sup> Tamanoi, p.266.

<sup>109</sup> Guelcher, pp.199-200.

emigration, Finance Minister Takahashi, was assassinated during the coup attempt and the new Hirota Cabinet backed the mass migration plan as one of six major national measures (*roku dai kokusaku*).<sup>111</sup> The migration measure was implemented in August of the same year as the Twenty-year 1,000,000 Household Plan. In accordance with the increased scope of the *Manshū nōgyō imin* venture the Manchuria Colonial Development Company (*Manshū Takushoku Kabushiki Kaisha*) was organized to take “charge, not only of the already settled groups, but also of the new project and settlement of 1,000,000 households and 5,000,000 farmers already outlined.”<sup>112</sup>

In addition, the selection and formation of emigrant settlement was reworked into the “branch village” emigration (*bunson imin*) mechanism that, in land-poor regions of Japan, separated out marginal farmers from the main population to create new colonial communities for transfer to Manchuria. “Each village would consist of at least 200-300 households, with financial assistance provided for fares and for costs in Manchuria.”<sup>113</sup> Removing a certain percentage of the agricultural population, theorists argued, would break the population pressure impasse that blocked the revival of the rural economy. After surveying farming conditions throughout Japan, emigration leaders set out to engineer the construction of viable farming villages through Manchurian migration. “Confident in the powers of social science,” Young writes, “the organizers of the emigration movement proceeded with great certitude to plan the resettlement of rural Japan based on this simple calculation.”<sup>114</sup> At the same time the Manchurian colonial agencies were fashioning “open spaces” for the settlement sites and preparing for a similar shift in demographics in the northeast of China.<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> The plan called for 100,000 households in the first five-year phase, 200,000 in the next, followed by 300,000, finally 400,000 households in the final five-year period. *Sixth Report on Progress in Manchuria*, p.119.

<sup>111</sup> Araragi, p.48.

<sup>112</sup> *Sixth Report on Progress in Manchuria*, p.120.

<sup>113</sup> Wilson, p.275.

<sup>114</sup> Young, p.335. Also see Guelcher, pp.70-71.

<sup>115</sup> The Twenty Year 1,000,000 household plan was aiming at increasing the percentage of Japanese of the total Manchurian population to ten percent by 1956. Guelcher, p.67.

Table 2. Annual Agricultural Emigration<sup>116</sup>

1932	1,557
1933	1,715
1934	945
1935	3,539
1936	7,707
1937	7,788
1938	30,196
1939	40,023
1940	50,889
1941	35,744
1942	27,149
1943	25,129
1944	23,650
1945	13,545
<b>Total</b>	<b>270,006</b>

By transforming Japanese agriculture through emigration the Katō Group was attempting to build a class of “yeoman farmer” as the backbone of rural society. This meant removing some village households to the continent, at once opening up more land for the remaining population, and offering the settlers a rich, colonial opportunity. Manchurian emigration planners envisioned remaking villages rooted on “the four principles of settlement: owner-cultivism, mixed cultivation, self-sufficiency, and cooperativism.”<sup>117</sup> Early on, however, the settlers realized that Japanese-style agricultural methods were inappropriate on the large continental holdings. And, over time, the cardinal principles of the *nōgyō imin* movement broke down; the Japanese farmers hired Chinese labor, rented land to locals, relied on neighboring villages for supplies, and gradually began operating individually rather than as a cooperative. Lacking the manpower and machines necessary to farm in Manchuria the colonists shifted away from Katō’s principles and reshaped the villages, in the process integrating Chinese laborers and tenant farmers into the settlement economy and ascending to the top of the rural social scale.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> From Araragi, *Manshū Imin no Rekishi Shigaku*, p.47

<sup>117</sup> Young, p.345.

<sup>118</sup> See Young, pp.345-348, Guelcher, pp.154-163. Guelcher writes that even land-ownership rights were conditional, however, as settlers were given right to permanent tenancy rather than outright ownership. P.163.



Large-scale emigration, like trial emigration, put military matters first, by strategically settling colonists in areas of rampant guerilla activity and along the border with Russia. As a measure for suppressing resistance, Japanese authorities worked to divide ordinary citizens from guerilla fighters by forcibly rounding up Chinese natives and moving them to collective villages. Japanese agricultural colonists were then placed on the vacant land, shoring up weak points (e.g. places with high levels of bandit activity), and providing settlers with already cultivated fields. Also, Kwantung Army personnel evoked Tōmiya's vision of the role of Japanese farm settlements in the interior: "The Army expects that colonial emigrants along the frontier will be of great value. In war-time it is absolutely necessary to have Japanese villages and Japanese nationals on the border . . . Emigrants will defend military facilities, safeguard the border, and supply foodstuffs to the army."<sup>119</sup> Analyzing the placement of Japanese villages, Kobayashi shows that a high percentage of the Japanese colonists were located in sensitive areas, set up to fill places recently cleared of Chinese resistance, along transportation routes, and, of course, in the northern border regions.<sup>120</sup>

Just as the mass migration campaigns were getting under way, however, the clash at the Marco Polo Bridge in July 1937, sparked a general war with China. The call-up of troops and conscription of young men – targeting exactly the same age group as the emigration campaigns – and war casualties greatly lowered the number of emigrant candidates. And, also, as Japanese factories producing munitions and military supplies geared up for all-out war labor demands began to outpace labor supplies, so that taken together with conscription, the China War "undermined much of the original justification for the colonization program."<sup>121</sup> Young writes, "Already in 1938, over half of the men fighting in China were reserve soldiers in their thirties. By 1939 the labor shortage for wartime industry had necessitated the implementation of a labor

<sup>119</sup> Kobayashi, p.78. He also makes clear that the settlers, for the most part, did not know of the circumstances and underlying rationale surrounding the land selection process.

<sup>120</sup> Kobayashi, pp.78-79, also see Wilson, p.274.

<sup>121</sup> Guelcher, p.72.

draft.” This then resulted in a rural labor shortage and a food production crisis.<sup>122</sup> However, even as the rationale for rural emigration was ending and candidate enrollments were dropping, settlement organizers continued the push, merely adjusting their methods in the effort to fill sagging membership rolls.

To offset the China War demands on men and material the colonization program reached deeper into the countryside. With the “Millions to Manchuria”<sup>123</sup> program emigration planners created new agencies and mobilized the migration bureaucracy at every level towards meeting fixed quotas.<sup>124</sup> Araragi, describing the main characteristics of the colonization program states, “The *Manshu nogyo imin* enterprise relied on the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, the Manshu Immigration Council, the Manshu Colonial Council, prefectural governments, and local reserve associations. While emigration was, as a general rule, not compulsory, from the national government, to the prefecture, county, and village a certain quota of emigrants was allotted . . .”<sup>125</sup> The increased scope of the colonization drive necessarily entailed a commensurate expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus for first spurring enrollment and then training and supporting the colonists. And it meant building support at the local level, relying on community and village leaders to follow government directives, initiate discussion, and build consensus for joining the colonizing endeavor.<sup>126</sup> Over time, however, as the labor crisis deepened and the rural economy improved it became increasingly difficult for local leaders to meet the assigned quotas. To sustain the movement the Kwantung Army, Ministry of Colonial Affairs, and other colonial agencies redirected the system to tap into a ready reserve of prospective emigrants: boys aged 16 to 19.

The formation of the Patriotic Youth Brigades (*Manmō kaitaku seishōnen giyūgun*) was the last major emigration initiative, and again emerged first as a Kwantung Army plan and then

---

<sup>122</sup> Young, p.393.

<sup>123</sup> Louise Young’s phrasing of the Twenty-year 1,000,000 households plan

<sup>124</sup> For a discussion of the colonial bureaucracy see Young. pp. 354-362.

<sup>125</sup> Araragi, p.62.

<sup>126</sup> See especially Young on the influence of local leaders as decisive agents in the migration process. Pp.376-377.

moved through the domestic political system.<sup>127</sup> While the groups came into existence to make up for shortfalls in adult emigration, the program was infused with a spiritual veneer that joined Katō Kanji's Shintoism with the *minzoku kyōwa* mission, training the brigades as the central element of the settlement movement. The November 1938 White Paper laying out the details of the Volunteer Youth Brigade emphasized this, asserting that the program presented the most suitable/effective method "for making leaders for the Japanese nation," "bringing about *gozoku kyōwa* and *ōdōkokka*," and "creating a core group of Manchurian settlers."<sup>128</sup> Like the previous groups, however, the Patriotic Youth Brigades would function as guards along the border and transport lines while also, idealistically, "safeguard(ing) peace in the Orient."<sup>129</sup> And, again following earlier precedents, the racial harmony overlay, for the most part, fell away when the youth brigades reached the colonial mainland.

The Patriotic Youth Brigade plan proceeded quickly through the Diet. Initiating the recruiting drive, the movement's directors set out the main priorities of this new phase in Manchurian migration, reiterating and expanding on the objectives of the program set out in the White Paper proposal; to send Japanese youths to the continent in order to strengthen ties between Japan and Manchuria, foster the imperial and Japanese spirit, and shore up the agricultural settlements.<sup>130</sup> Training centers were set up in Japan the same year and recruiters aimed at attracting 5,000 members for the first wave of youth emigrants, and 30,000 in the first year of operation. In the initial burst of excitement, and amid a media blitz of positive publicity and strong official encouragement, applications for slots in the groups nearly doubled the target figure set by

<sup>127</sup> Kami, p.40. This was the second incarnation of a youth emigration program. In 1934 Tomiya organized the first group partly in response to what were seen as the failings of adult settlers. That is, desertions in the first and second group of trial emigrants were due to the weak will of the settlers. Tomiya outlined the qualifications for youth emigrants, recruited a small group of boys and installed them in northern Manchuria as the *Hokushinryō*. The favorable results of the experiment provided the basis for enlarging the program in 1938. However, while the first group was reportedly on good terms with the neighboring Chinese, Kami shows evidence to discount the official reports. Kami, pp.32-35.

<sup>128</sup> Kami, p.37.

<sup>129</sup> Sakuramoto, p.45.

<sup>130</sup> Sakuramoto, p.49. See also *Manshū Kaitakushi*, pp.233-234.

campaign organizers.<sup>131</sup> Candidates were sent to Ibaragi prefecture for two months of training at the main Youth Brigade Training Center, after which they crossed to Manchuria for three years of on-site training at camps scattered throughout north Manchuria, and then moved on to Youth Brigade agricultural settlements.<sup>132</sup>

Every level of government was mobilized in the effort to meet recruitment quotas. But the Patriotic Youth Brigade movement relied most heavily on community and village leaders and especially principals and teachers to convince boys to join.<sup>133</sup> School authorities encouraged students to volunteer for the program through classroom lectures, special meetings, and regular programs, invoking patriotism and Japan's special mission in Manchuria and Asia. National and local governments sponsored a variety of teacher training sessions and tours to Youth Brigade training centers designed to inform and indoctrinate educators with the *Manshū nōgyō imin* ethos.<sup>134</sup> Teachers then transmitted the message to the schools. Sakuramoto provides a telling episode underlining the vital role schools played in the Youth Brigade movement: a teacher leads a class of students through a question and answer session about Manchuria, testing responses, and concluding with the heroic image of "Japanese in Manchuria, with a gun in the right hand and a hoe in the left safeguarding Asian peace." At the end of the session all the boys in the class wanted to go to Manchuria.<sup>135</sup> Education at once encouraged participation in the emigration enterprise in Manchuria and built up a general consensus for the official line on Japanese imperialism – that is racial harmony and state-building in Manchuria and, later, the ideals of the "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere."

After 1940 special "rise-of-Asia" (*kōa*) courses were added to the school curriculum and a textbook extolling the Japanese mission in East Asia was published in 1941. Further, many

<sup>131</sup> Kami, p.48. 9,950 boys applied, of which 7,700 were selected, with 6,500 eventually entering the program. See *Sixth Report*, p. 124. Kami notes that after the first year enrollments dropped noticeably.

<sup>132</sup> The first groups arrived at the Manchurian training camps in December 1938.

<sup>133</sup> In a 1941 table listing Youth Brigade motivations for joining 46% gave "teacher's guidance" as the main reason (3,422 out of 7,299 responses). Sakuramoto, p.141.

<sup>134</sup> Young, p.381.

prefectures implemented programs designed to prepare boys for induction into the Patriotic Youth Brigades. Directed by the schools, the programs usually consisted of short-term sessions with a daily schedule of courses heavily weighted to indoctrinating students with “colonizing spirit” and “continental consciousness” while also providing hands-on agricultural and industrial training.<sup>136</sup> A Maebashi national high school program typifies the blending of emigration and education in the wartime school system. Representatives from second-grade boys were selected for a four-day training session that focused on military parades, physical exercise, and lectures all with the goal of infusing a “continental colonizing” ideal in the participants. On the last day the boys were required to announce whether they planned to enroll in the Youth Brigades, with non-applicants obliged to submit a written explanation outlining their reasons for not joining.<sup>137</sup>

Colonization training and ‘rise-of-Asia’ education also targeted females. A national symposium organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs in 1939 led to the establishment of eighteen women’s colonizing training centers in Japan. The main purpose of this network of training facilities was to prepare young women to go to Manchuria as *tairiku hanayome* (continental brides) for the Youth Brigade settlements. Indeed, each prefecture was expected to recruit a set number of women specifically for this role, necessitating the training programs. In this way, through national lectures, extra-curricular prefectural and municipal programs, local school boards, and individual teachers, agricultural emigration as well as imperialism seeped into public life, mobilizing support for the Patriotic Youth Brigades and bringing home the colonial mission in Asia for the metropolitan populace

---

<sup>135</sup> Sakuramoto, p.25.

<sup>136</sup> See Sakuramoto, pp.155-162.

<sup>137</sup> Sakuramoto, p.161.

Table 3. Youth Brigade Emigration<sup>138</sup>

1938	21,999
1939	8,887
1940	8,922
1941	12,622
1942	11,795
1943	10,658
1944	7,799
1945	3,848
<b>Total</b>	<b>86,530</b>

The participants who signed on to the Patriotic Youth Brigade project underwent an intensive two-month training program at the Ibaragi facility with education, activities, and even the “sun-shaped barracks” reflecting the Shinto, imperial, and colonizing orientation of the movement. The participants were organized along military lines and housed in circular-shaped barracks that came to symbolize the essence of the Youth Brigade enterprise in the media and propaganda messages. The mock Mongolian-Manchurian architecture seemed to suggest fluidity across colonial boundaries, with Japanese youths housed “Manchu-style” in rural Japan before proceeding to the imperial mission on the continent, moving easily out of Japan proper and into the wider imperial domain. “The movement led by Katō Kanji had assumed country-wide proportions. To these sun-shaped barracks came young men from all parts of the country to receive hard training for two months before they should set forth to conquer new fields, not with arms, but with ploughs and spades and shovels.”<sup>139</sup> In addition to the ‘exotica’ of the barracks “huge parade ground and the camp shrine were both named after the first of the trial settlements, Iyasaka.”<sup>140</sup> The training camp then took on special significance for both observers and the boys themselves – selling the heroic side of migration to the public and initiating the Youth Brigade members into the ‘sacred’ traditions of the emigration venture.

<sup>138</sup> Kami, p.75 (Based on domestic training camp enrollment lists).

<sup>139</sup> Tamotsu Iwado, “Sun-shaped Barracks,” *Contemporary Manchuria*, September 1941, pp.1198-1199. Modeled on a Kwantung Army facility that Katō saw in south Manchuria, the buildings were cheap and easy to build. Sakuramoto, p.70. Young writes that the barracks, while taken from a Japanese military building, for Japanese observers “represented the Manchurian folk tradition.” Young, p.391.

<sup>140</sup> Young, p.391.

Every aspect of the training was geared to instilling the proper colonial knowledge and attitude in the trainees. Education was divided between classroom instruction, physical exercise, and technical training. Lessons were given on the 'imperial spirit' of the nation (*kōkoku seishin*), topics related to Manchurian emigration (*Manshū shokumin mondai*), agricultural manufacturing and production, Japanese and 'Manshugo,' Japanese/Manchurian history, hygiene, and nutrition.<sup>141</sup> For physical/martial training the boys practiced kendo, judo, and sumo. Finally, the participants learned agricultural methods, architecture, and road construction. Of the three branches of education, Katō's curriculum gave most emphasis to ingraining an understanding of the imperial spirit. Through lectures, songs, and even physical training methods devised by Kato (*Yamato bataraki*) Manchurian colonization was intertwined with the Japanese emperor system and worship. This emphasis was clearly set out by Katō. "The purpose of establishing the Uchihara Training Center is to cultivate idealistic agricultural colonists. So that The Patriotic Youth Brigade members will firmly grasp the grand ideology of the Japanese race and will act as leaders for the advance of the Japanese race onto the continent."<sup>142</sup> Although racial harmony slogans in songs, training manuals, and lectures were a consistent theme in Youth Brigade indoctrination, the *minzoku kyōwa* ideology and 'respect for other races' teaching was mixed with the patriotic, emperor-centered message. After the groups were transferred to the continent, the ideological contradictions became apparent when idealism gave way to the realities of colonizing Manchuria.

From 1938 to 1945 86,530<sup>143</sup> members of the Patriotic Youth Brigades went to Manchuria, first for a three-year on-site training period, and then after that, to form agricultural settlements (beginning in 1941). Both the training and settlement process was marked by internal and external conflicts. Within the groups many boys, unprepared for the jarring difference - the harsh

<sup>141</sup> While at the training center meals often consisted of barley, soybeans, and sorghum so as to prepare the Youth Brigade members for life in Manchuria. Kami, p.55.

<sup>142</sup> Sakuramoto, p.123.

<sup>143</sup> Sakuramoto, p.147.

climate, open plains, strange smells and costumes of the natives – between Japan and Manchuria became homesick and depressed. Further, the “inhuman living conditions of the group settlements” had a psychological impact on the boys driving some into solitary despair and inciting others to violent hazing and beatings of their fellow brigade members.<sup>144</sup>

But, as with the adult emigrants, the Youth Brigades mainly targeted Chinese victims, belying the ‘racial harmony/respect other races’ aspects of the training program. As Suleski notes it was common for the boys to “despise the Chinese as second-class humans.”<sup>145</sup> Kami lists the various misdeeds of the Youth Brigades: stealing soybeans, sorghum, wheat, rice, chickens, dogs, and pigs, as well as fuel for heating and venturing into Chinese villages to assault girls.<sup>146</sup> Thefts were so common that local Chinese in some areas took to calling the group the “Volunteer Youth Thieving Brigades.”<sup>147</sup> Yet, while many of the youths disregarded *minzoku kyōwa* notions, in one case, at least, Patriotic Youth Brigade members gave “failure to live up to the principles of “ethnic harmony” as one of their primary grievances” against their superiors.<sup>148</sup> This suggests that racial harmony was for some of the colonists a credible ideology for managing Manchuria.<sup>149</sup> Ultimately, however, ethnic relations in Manchuria were defined by power and authority within a colonizer/colonized paradigm that set up the settlers/Japan as a higher civilization. Education, training, and experience created a cadre of youths imbued with a sense of imperial mission that, for the most part, clashed with notions of racial concord in the colonial setting.

In August 1945 the colonists, reduced by the military draft to the elderly, women, and children, were swept up in the Soviet invasion and left behind when the Kwantung Army moved south in defensive retreat. This final “tragic” (*higeki*) phase still resonates strongly in many of the

---

<sup>144</sup> Kami, p.86.

<sup>145</sup> Suleski, p.361, also Kami, p.90.

<sup>146</sup> Kami, pp.91-93.

<sup>147</sup> Kami, p.91.

<sup>148</sup> Guelcher, p.215.

<sup>149</sup> Guelcher cites also the example of an independent Japanese Christian settlement that co-existed peacefully with the Chinese, pp.216-217.



*nōgyō imin* memories and written accounts.<sup>150</sup> “It was these last hellish months that the settlers who lived to tell the tale would remember and record in the memoirs of their experiences in Manchuria. They cast themselves in the victims’ role – victims of the Chinese, the Russians and the Kwantung Army.”<sup>151</sup> Of the more than 200,000 settlers in Manchuria at the time of the Soviet invasion 78,500 died in violent attacks, suicide, and from disease, starvation, and cold. Additionally, many women and children were left behind in Manchuria to marry Chinese men or become part of a Chinese family. Somewhat ironically, racial harmony or, at least, friendly relations with the Chinese community was often the key factor deciding survival or death. In a personal interview with a former colonist, Tamanoi records “friendship with the Manchus was the key. If you were their friend, they let you go (when Japan was defeated) and even helped you to escape.”<sup>152</sup> But cases of amity and cooperation were rare. In the end the colonists were left mainly to their own devices to face the Soviets, Chinese retribution, and the Manchurian climate as the agricultural emigration project ended in disaster and death, marking the failure, also, of the racial harmony ideology as a mechanism for making an empire in Northeast China.

From the Russo-Japanese War to the end of World War Two Japanese leaders in Manchuria and the metropole grappled with the problem of setting up a colonial system in Northeast China. Hemmed in by geo-politics and Great Power relations, Japan first governed through the ‘informal imperial’ institutions of the South Manchuria Railway. Changed conditions in China, the northward advance of the Guomindang Army and the rising tide of nationalism, threatened to break down Japan’s colonial structure in Manchuria by eroding ‘special rights’ and by spurring Chinese authorities to build an alternate infrastructure in the region. Resident Japanese and the Kwantung Army responded with a new ideology aimed at forming a nation out of the major ethnic groups in Manchuria. After the Manchurian Incident the racial harmony ideal was put into action to mobilize colonial agencies and the homeland government behind the state building

<sup>150</sup> See Guelcher for a full account, pp.219-268 and Young, pp.399-411.

<sup>151</sup> Young, p.411.

enterprise. Rural emigration became a major vehicle for realizing Japan's imperial aims, bringing together colonial, military, and domestic groups behind the *nōgyō imin* program, and setting in motion a long-term migration plan directed at restructuring the rural social and economic system. As the emigration movement grew from small-scale trial emigration in 1932 to the mass migration project in 1937, economic objectives and ideological conceptions lost force, as imagery and idealism gave way to military functions and the uneven power balance shaped contact and conflict between the colonists and Chinese. In the process, the emigrants acted as an instrument of Japanese imperialism, suppressing the Chinese population and fortifying the Manchurian-Soviet border. The colonists, too, however, became victims of Japan's over-reaching imperial ambitions when the Kwantung Army retreated out of north Manchuria, abandoning the remaining settlers in the colony, forcing them to flee the advancing Russian Army and revengeful Chinese.

---

<sup>152</sup> Tamanai, p.267.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Araragi, Shinzo, *Manshū Imin no Rekishi Shakaigaku*. Kōronsha, 1994.

Bix, Herbert P. "Japanese Imperialism and Manchuria, 1890-1931." Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1972

— "Japanese Imperialism and the Manchurian Economy, 1900-1931." *China Quarterly*, 51 (July-September, 1972), pp.425-443.

Brooks, Barbara. "Peopling the Japanese Empire: The Koreans in Manchuria and the Rhetoric of Inclusion," in Vlastos, Minichellio, eds. *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues of Culture and Imperialism, 1900-1931*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998.

"Chifuri, Ideal Japanese Settlement in the Manchurian Wilds." *Contemporary Manchuria*. Vol. 2, No.1 South Manchuria Railway Company, 1938, pp.1-12.

Coox, Alvin D. "The Kwantung Army Dimension." In Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Egler, David George. "Japanese Mass Organizations in Manchuria, 1928-1945: The Ideology of Racial Harmony." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona, 1977

*Fifth Report on Progress in Manchuria to 1936*. Dairen: South Manchuria Railway Company, 1936.

Guelcher, Paul. "Dreams of Empire: The Japanese Agricultural Colonization of Manchuria (1931-1945) in History and Memory." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1999.

Havens, Thomas. *Farm and Nation in Modern Japan: Agrarian Nationalism, 1870-1940*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Hirano, Kenichiro. "The Japanese in Manchuria, 1906-1931: A study of the Historical Background of Manchuria." Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1983.

Iriye, Akira. *After Imperialism, The Search For a New Order in East Asia, 1921-1931*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965

Iwado, Tamotsu. "Sun-shaped Barracks." *Contemporary Manchuria*. South Manchuria Railway Company, 1941, pp.1188-1199.

Jones, F.C., *Manchuria Since 1931*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1949.

Kami, Shoichirō. *Manmō Kaitaku Seishōnengiyūgun*. Chuokoronshakan, 1973.

Kobayashi, Kōji. *Manshū Imin no Mura*. 1977.

Kuwajima, Setsurō. *Manshū Būsō Imin*. 1979.

Manshū Kaitakushi. Published by Manshū Kaitakushi Kankōkai, 1966.

Matsusaka Yoshihisa. *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Mitter, Rana. *The Manchurian Myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Myers, Ramon H. "Japanese Imperialism in Manchuria: The South Manchuria Railway Company, 1906-1933." In Pete Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Nish, Ian. *Japan's Struggle With Internationalism, Japan, China and the League of Nations, 1931-1933*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1993.

Ogata, Sadako. *Defiance in Manchuria*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964.

O'Neill-Lane, T. "Pioneering in Manchuria." *Contemporary Manchuria*, South Manchuria Railway Company, 1937, pp.1-15.

Peattie, Mark R. *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation With the West*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Rager, F.A. "Japan's Emigration and Japan's 'Population Pressure.'" *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 14, No.3 1941, pp.300-321.

Sakuramoto, Tomio. *Manmō Kaitaku Seishōnengiyūgun*. Aokishōten, 1987.

*Sixth Report on Progress to Manchuria, to 1939*. Dairen: South Manchuria Railway Company, 1939, pp.116-137.

Suleski, Ronald. "Northeast China Under Japanese Control." *Modern China*, Vol.7, No.3, July 1981.

Tamanai, Mariko. "Knowledge, Power, and Racial Classification: The 'Japanese' in 'Manchuria.'" *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 59, no.2, 2000.

"The Immigration of Japanese Farmers to Manchoukuo: Its Necessity and Chances of Success." *Contemporary Manchuria* Vol.1. South Manchuria Railway Company, 1937, pp.96-103.

"The Immigration of Japanese Farmers into Manchuria, Part II." *Contemporary Manchuria*. Vol.2, No.3. South Manchuria Railway Company, 1938, pp.41-56.

"The Immigration of Japanese Farmers to Manchuria, Part III." *Contemporary Manchuria*. Vol.2, No.4. South Manchuria Railway Company, 1938, pp.65-80.

Yoshihashi, Takehiko. *Conspiracy at Mukden, The Rise of the Japanese Military*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963.

Wilson, Sandra. "The 'New Paradise': Japanese Emigration to Manchuria in the 1930s and 1940s." *The International History Review*, Vol.17, No.2, 1995, pp.250-285.

Young, Louise. *Japan's Total Empire, Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.