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**Everyday life in the puppet state:
A study of ordinary people's experiences
in Manchukuo**

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of ordinary people living under Japanese occupation in Manchukuo from 1932 to 1945. By examining the harsh nature of colonial rule and the impact on the people, this dissertation shows the multiple ways in which the everyday life of ordinary people was influenced by the various upheavals and hardships. This research mainly uses newspapers, primary published materials, documents, compilations, dictations and other Chinese language sources.

This thesis thus establishes a detailed account of the sufferings that colonial subjects encountered in their daily lives and the coping methods that they employed to circumvent them. The experiences of the people were highlighted through the role of education, access to and rationing of goods, the sense of homelessness in the midst of ongoing housing crises, as well as sanitation and hygienic issues, which constituted altogether the core aspects of the everyday life of the people.

In essence, ordinary people of Manchukuo lived a life overwhelmed by shortages, misfortunes and difficulties. Focusing on both rural and urban areas, this thesis argues how the people of Manchukuo were passive in face of the various policies implemented by the regime, but yet active in face of the hardships that followed. This sense of passivity, or the general lack of initiative, demonstrates in fact how motives of self-protection and survival beneath the acts of superficial compliance directed the people's everyday life in Manchukuo. With the current literature's emphasis on the economic and social structures of the puppet state, this thesis seeks to fill the gap by recognizing the importance of the everyday experiences of the colonial subjects.

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Explanatory Note

For the usage of Chinese, this thesis uses the standardized Pinyin system to transliterate Chinese names and places in most cases, with the few exceptions of well-known terms such as Hsinking instead of Xinjing, Dairen instead of Dalian, Kwantung instead of Guandong, and Manchukuo instead of Manzhouguo. Japanese names and locations are transliterated through the standardized Hepburn system, for which diacritical marks on the spelling of words were omitted to facilitate reading.

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Chapter One – Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This thesis focuses on ordinary people's¹ experiences of life in Manchukuo, as well as the various tensions and impacts of state policies that affected their livelihoods and living standards in the years from 1931 to 1945. On the evening of 18 September 1931, a carefully staged bomb was detonated on the railroad tracks near Fengtian (also known as Mukden, nowadays Shenyang) by the Kwantung army in hopes of provoking conflict with the Chinese troops stationed nearby in Beidaying. In short, the act was used as the pretext for the full Japanese invasion of Manchuria that followed, and was known to the world as the Mukden Incident.² Roughly six months later, Manchukuo was formally established with Henry Puyi, the last emperor of China, as the ruler (later declared as the Kangde emperor in 1934) of the regime.³ Independent by appearance and a puppet state of Japan by nature, it is safe to say that the effortless occupation of Manchuria and the smooth founding of a new regime was not without the help of its residents and the local collaborators of the Japanese.

The scholarly literature on Manchukuo published in both English and Chinese after 1945 productively explored the top-down management of the puppet

¹ To avoid general confusion, this thesis refers to the people of Manchukuo to its politically correct term "Manchukuoans (*man zhou guo ren*)".

² Parks M. Coble, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931-1937* (Cambridge mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, 1991), p. 11.

³ This dissertation supports the idea of Manchukuo as a puppet state. However, since this thesis pertains to the discipline of social history and focuses on ordinary people, this thesis uses the term "puppet state", "regime", and "state" interchangeably to facilitate reading.

state. Drawing heavily on Chinese language sources, this research shifts the focus towards the detailed examination of the everyday life of Manchukuoans, exploring more specifically the aspects of education, economy, housing and healthcare, as recorded in Manchukuo era publications, official documents, newspapers, post-war narratives and personally-conducted interviews. More precisely, oral histories of education in the puppet state reveal how Manchukuoan students challenged their imposed national identities through everyday acts of resistance that were expressed in a sophisticated manner. Press coverage of the various difficulties associated with food supply and rationing decisions emphasises on how ordinary Manchukuoans managed to overcome the tremendous hardships by developing their own tactics for survival. On the other hand, official propaganda sources and the experiences of the people demonstrated how modernization efforts of the regime were achieved at the expense of its subjects, who more often than not were forced into appalling living conditions. Lastly, government documents and post-war narratives presented a sharp contrast between the puppet state's effort to establish a more advanced and modernized healthcare system that led to the decrease of indigenous treatment options, and the ordinary people's resistance in the process. Indeed, by looking at these core elements that constituted the everyday life of ordinary people, this thesis argues that instead of actively resisting against the various hardships and policies that were imposed upon them, ordinary people in Manchukuo managed to adopt a passive stance for survival, but also to deal with the various difficulties on a daily basis. By exploring the everyday life of Manchukuoans, this thesis uncovers how the Manchukuo government, as an authoritarian state that strived to be in total control, failed to control every aspects of its subjects' lives. This thesis therefore argues that when state oppression was at its highest, so were the Manchukuoans' expressions of dissatisfaction and resistance. Lastly, this thesis also shows how in the face of hardships, ordinary people developed their own tactics to overcome imposed rules, which sometimes carried a long-lasting impact that could eventually subvert state initiatives.

The clear starting point to study the everyday life of ordinary people in Manchukuo is to define the terms collaboration and collaborators. In essence, to ask and answer the question of the ordinary masses' position invites a deeper examination of the various roles played by the subjugated subjects and their respective relationship with the colonizers. To begin with, the stories of collaboration were well discussed and explored in the global context, with a rich literature focusing on German-occupied Europe during the Second World War. This kind of history has examined wartime collaboration in multiple layers, arguing the core of it being "the necessary adaptation of the entire society".⁴ In this process, historians have often perceived political collaborations in particular as ideological choices, whether it is motivated by desires to change or to preserve the existing structures or hierarchy of the occupied regions.

The topic of elite collaboration in Manchukuo is well examined by Rana Mitter in his innovative book *The Manchurian Myth* published in 2000.⁵ More precisely, Mitter considered one of the main reasons behind the willingness of local elites to collaborate with the Japanese was that the governmental structure of Manchukuo bears a close resemblance to traditional Chinese style governance.⁶ H. R. Kedward has identified this particular pattern of collaboration as "attentisme" through his study of Vichy France, fundamentally a "wait and see" attitude that

⁴ Henrik Dethlefsen, "Denmark and the German Occupation: Cooperation, Negotiation or Collaboration?", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 15 (1990), p. 198.

⁵ See Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). The topic of wartime collaboration in China proper with the Japanese are well discussed by a number of scholars. See for example Marjorie Dryburgh, "Rewriting Collaboration: China, Japan and the self in the diaries of Bai Jianwu", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (2009), pp. 683-714; David P. Barrett and Larry N. Shyu eds., *Chinese Collaboration with Japan, 1932-1945: The Limits of Accommodation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); John Hunter Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945: The Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972).

⁶ Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 19; Mitter's arguments is explored in greater detail in the literature review of this thesis.

could be defined as a defensive strategy for survival in face of a foreign occupying power.⁷ Most of the elite collaborators under Mitter's description fit well into this criteria, as they were able to secure the continuity of their socio-economic status in the new regime in return for their cooperation.

However, as crucial as how the local elites were motivated to collaborate with the Japanese for the regime to function properly might appear to be, the examples of political collaborators alone are not enough to explain the lives of the colonized people as a whole in the complicated context of foreign occupation. It is understandable for one that holds sufficient political power to endorse a new regime in exchange for something that is somewhat favourable to them, a "victory over disasters" at the very least. But for the remainder of the ordinary population that were not in this position to leverage with the occupying forces, their relationship and experiences with the occupying force and means to "collaborate" were very different. Upon the founding of the regime, the Japanese were tasked with only a handful of elite collaborators and a large submissive and unwilling population, British journalist H.G.W. Woodhead noted in his travels to Manchukuo that he had not met a single person, who favoured the new regime.⁸ The ordinary population's stance towards the Japanese presence brings out the interesting question of how did the people manage to conduct their daily lives under a suppressive regime, which has not yet been scrutinized by historical research.

Like many equivocal concepts, collaboration is a term that rejects precise definition, and is thus problematic to apply directly to examine the behaviours of the ordinary people who accommodated the occupiers' demands from a distance. Previous studies of collaboration have focused on understanding local collaboration

⁷ H.R. Kedward, *Occupied France: Collaboration and Resistance 1940-1944* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1985), p. 45.

⁸ H.G.W. Woodhead, *A Visit to Manchukuo* (Shanghai: The Mercury Press, 1932), p. 86.

as the continuous “exercise of power under the pressure produced by the presence of an occupying power.”⁹ This definition has enabled us to analyze and question the placement of the ordinary people within the power structures and hierarchies of Manchukuo in greater depth and detail. Can the Manchukuo peasants that worked in farmlands, or the urban shopkeepers and business owners who paid their taxes and benefited the growth of the Japanese empire be considered collaborators? Can the Manchukuo residents, who had no choice but to respond to the calls of economization to fuel Japan’s aggression in China proper after the mid-1930s, be considered *hanjian* (traitors) and guilty of moral failure?¹⁰ The answers to these questions lie within the ambiguity of intentions of the ordinary people to comply with the regime’s requirements. For the colonized subjects living under occupation in Manchuria, it was impossible for them to tell when the occupiers would leave, or if they were to leave at all. With nothing to leverage for, the Japanese demanded acquiescence from the ordinary people who they considered to be powerless, and the ordinary people responded with passivity, a subtle but yet significant force of power to highlight their dissatisfaction towards the regime that was forcefully imposed upon them. This sense of passivity does not carry the full weight of collaboration, nor does it carry the full weight of active or passive resistance. Instead, it allowed the ordinary people to survive and get by in the presence of an aggressor that showcased astonishing violence and was not shy in punishing dissidents.

⁹ Henrik Dethlefsen, “Denmark and the German Occupation: Cooperation, Negotiation or Collaboration?”, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 15 (1990), p. 198.

¹⁰ Similar to implications of “les collabos” in the French context, the term “*hanjian*” carries a derogatory meaning that not only suggested being a traitor, but also a subhuman that forfeited any remaining claims to be Chinese. See for example, Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 82; The concept of the term *hanjian* exceeded its boundaries of applying solely to Han ethnicity after the Opium War when China was challenged by foreign imperialist powers, thus now the definition of *hanjian* refers to traitor of the Chinese people (*Zhonghua minzu*), which includes all ethnicities in China.

Indeed, the choice to collaborate or not was never presented as an option to the ordinary masses. They could, however, choose the way with regards to how to engage with the regime. What might seem to be only a subtle difference would in fact allow us in retrospect to further explore what was beneath ordinary people's apparent non-resisting attitudes. Both the dependency towards the regime as a provider and the fear of punishments stimulated the people's will to comply with the state's agenda. At the same time, the type of passivity generated in this process, which the Manchukuo and Japanese authorities have often perceived as "backwardness", showcased how consciousness and dissatisfactions can emerge from the very fabric of the everyday lives of ordinary people beneath the grand narratives of collaboration and resistance that are often monolithic to the understandings of the lives of the people.

The history of everyday life under occupation by no means should be only considered as a history of defeat.¹¹ Paying attention to the experiences of ordinary

¹¹ Good examples of the history of everyday life under suppressive regimes that are relevant to this study could be found in the works on Soviet Russia. See for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism - Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance & Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Sheila Fitzpatrick and Alf Ludtke, "Energizing the Everyday: On the Breaking and Making of Social Bonds in Nazism and Stalinism," in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, eds., Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 266-301. A more general argument could be found in Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924* (London: Pimlico, 1997); For everyday life focusing on resistance in South Asia see Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash eds., *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); For everyday life in relation to wartime recollections see Norman Longmate, *How We Lived Then: A history of everyday life during the Second World War* (London: Hutchinson, 1941); For social history with the focus on Beijing see David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: City people and politics in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Marjorie Dryburgh, "Living on the edge: welfare and the urban poor in 1930s Beijing", *Social History*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2016), pp. 14-33; This thesis seeks to deploy the term everyday life to examine the daily conducts of the colonized people. For concepts of everyday life as a cultural theory that investigates the sphere of private life and

people illustrates the ways that people who were situated far down the power structure could express their antagonisms towards their colonial masters. By exploring passivity, this thesis intends to provide an original analysis of how the ordinary people within the political and social context of foreign occupation, managed to survive by developing certain strategies and behaviours through the practice of their everyday activities. In his examination of Chinese collaboration with the Japanese in wartime China, Timothy Brook called for historians to examine how historical events were fashioned and the conditions that caused individuals in difficult times to behave in certain ways. By what he called “detaching the moral map”, Brook argued that history should be studied objectively without making decisive judgments on the colonial subjects’ actions retrospectively.¹² This thesis follows Brook’s suggestions.

workplace behaviours, see Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002); Ben Highmore ed., *The Everyday Life Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002); Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).

¹² Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 5.

1.2. Chinese Literature

Republican-era Chinese literature has generally maintained the position of emphasizing the brutal nature of Japanese imperial aggressiveness as well as the economic exploitation of the South Manchuria Railway Company in the Northeast through a considerable number of essays and book-length investigations. The political standpoint that defined the establishment of Manchukuo as “bogus” remained unchanged long after the signing of the Tanggu truce between the Kuomintang and the Japanese government in May 1933 that temporarily halted Japanese military aggression and resulted in the de facto recognition of Manchukuo.¹³ After the founding of the People’s Republic, mainland Chinese scholars have continued this legacy that focused on exploring various war crimes conducted by the Japanese empire in the region.

Research on Manchuria has always been a sensitive topic to touch upon in Chinese academia. To be sure, strict political censorship is perceived to be the main obstacle that discouraged the production of new scholarship in the area. In line with the CCP guidelines that suggested that the primary role of academics should be to inform and educate the public, the majority of existing Chinese literature is

¹³ See for example, Liu Jian, *Riben de dalu zhengce* (Japan’s Continental Policy) (Zhejiang: Zhejiangsheng jingcha xunliansuo zhengxun chu, 1937); Xu Xingkai, *Riben diguozhuyi yu dongshansheng* (Japanese Imperialism and the three Northeastern Provinces) (Shanghai: Kunlun shudian, 1930); Chen Binhe, *Manzhou weiguo* (Bogus Manchukuo) (Shanghai: Shenghuo shudian, 1933); Song Feiru, *Riben tieti xia de dongbei* (The Northeast under the cruel oppression of Japan) (Shanghai: Zhanshi duwu bianyishe, 1938); Hou Zhenzhong, *Wangsheng hou de dongbei* (The Northeast under occupation) (Shanghai: Heibai shudian, 1936); Hu Yuzhi and Du Zhongyuan, *Lunxian qi shounian de dongbei* (The fall of the Northeast after seven years) (Shanghai: Shenghuo Shudian, 1938); Wang Yuping, *Riben dui dongbei de jinrong qinlue* (Japan’s economic aggression in the Northeast) (n.p.: Dongbei wenti yanjiushe, 1940); Wu Jingheng, Cai Yuanpei and Wang Yunwu, *Riben qinlue dongbei shi* (The history of Japanese invasion in the Northeast) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1934).

monolithic in its Marxist approach but rich and detailed in its historical narratives.¹⁴ The study of Manchukuo in the PRC was initiated in the early 1970s by prominent scholars including Jiang Niandong, Xie Xueshi, Lü Yuanming, Qi Hongshen and Zhang Fulin, who were all historians and Japan specialists by training. Subsequently, a comprehensive study that focused on Japanese exploitation and the false establishment of Manchukuo was published in 1980 in light of the counter-hegemony trends that occurred during that period.¹⁵ The publication served as a ground-breaking work in Chinese literature that also served its political purposes by emphasizing on the misconducts of the Japanese empire during the Second World War.

However, heavily influenced by the Communist Party's political standpoint, scholars during this particular era were more or less persistent in their limited Maoist approaches that would often be considered as biased or controversial in today's scholarship. Xie Xueshi for example, considered war, invasion, and enslavement to be the only aspects that constituted imperialism whilst defining the nature of the Japanese empire simply as a fascist regime.¹⁶ Xie defended his notion in the second revision of his co-authored book in 2008, dismissing the achievements of industrial developments in Manchukuo by the Japanese and

¹⁴ Isabella Jackson, "Managing Shanghai: the International Settlement administration and the development of the city, 1900-1943" (PhD diss, University of Bristol, 2012), p. 32; On Manchukuo, a good example that focused on wide readership could be found in a recently published study jointly conducted by Chinese and Japanese scholars. See Dongbei lunxian shisidian shi zongbian shi and Riben zhimindi wenhua yanjiu hui eds., *Wei manzhouguo de zhenxiang – Zhongri xuezhe gongtong yanjiu* (The truth of bogus Manchukuo – A joint study of Chinese and Japanese scholars) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010).

¹⁵ Jiang Niandong, Yi Wencheng, Xie Xueshi, Lü Yuanming and Zhang Fulin, *Wei manzhouguo shi* (The History of Bogus Manchukuo) (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1980).

¹⁶ The argument on fascism in Western scholarship can be found in Ivan Morris, *Japan 1931-1945: Militarism, Fascism, Japanism?* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1963); Robert O. Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (1998), pp. 1-23.

heavily criticizing the works of contemporary Japanese scholars (most noticeably Yamamuro Shin'ichi) as "violations of historical facts".¹⁷

On the other hand, the first generation of PRC scholars to systematically study Manchukuo provided praiseworthy contribution and experience from the ground up that shaped the field of study in Chinese scholarship to how it is today. To overcome the lack of sources, Xie and his colleagues have built up a sizeable collection of primary documents (mostly from the South Manchuria Railway Company) at the Jilin Academy of Social Sciences in Changchun during the time of their tenure. Following Xie's (semi) retirement, the subsequent generation of scholars at the Jilin Academy of Social Sciences continued to benefit from the academy's archives and made a noticeable contribution to the field of study.

Different from the first generation that prioritized writing for a wide readership and conservatively followed the Party's political guidelines, the new generation of scholars acknowledged the perspectives of foreign researchers and thus were more focused on providing scholarly analysis. Similar to the focus in mainstream western literature, the attention of Chinese scholars was largely devoted to examining Manchukuo from the top-down perspective. Jiao Runming provided a thorough investigation of the Chinese response to the Mukden Incident as well as the legitimacy issue of Manchukuo surrounding Sino-Japanese relations in the 1930s.¹⁸ Along these lines, the international politics and relations regarding

¹⁷ Xie Xueshi, *Wei manzhouguo shi xinbian* (New Edition of the History of Bogus Manchukuo) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008), p. 14.

¹⁸ See Jiao Runming, "Zhongguo jindai faxue jie bochi riben 'manzhou minzu zijue' miulun kaoyi (The Study of China's modern legal circle refuting Japan's fallacy of 'Manchuria nation self-determination')", *Riben yanjiu*, No. 3 (2015), pp. 44-51; Jiao Runming and Jiao Jie, "Lun 'jiuyiba' hou de kangzhan jiwei 'quanmin kangzhan' (Defining the resistance after the 'September 18th' Incident as the 'National Resistance')", *shehui kexue zhanxian*, No. 5 (2017), pp. 94-100; Jiao Runming and Jiao Jie, "Jiuyiba shibian hou zhongguo chaoye dui 'zhongri qinshan' yanlun de fanying (On the Reponse and Significance of the Chinese government and People to

Manchukuo are well covered by Duan Yongfu, who made detailed use of US archives in examining the impacts of Manchukuo's oil monopoly law in the making of the Stimson Doctrine.¹⁹ Additionally, the most notable scholars to examine the economic aspect of Manchukuo are Fu Liying and Yi Baozhong, who both published multiple articles on aspects of Japanese financial control of Manchukuo.²⁰ Li Shujuan on the other hand focused extensively on exploitation in rural Manchukuo as well as the Japanese mobilization efforts on agricultural production.²¹ Although by no means deviating from the CCP's mandatory guidelines, academic journal articles on the topic of Manchukuo were less subject to strict political censorship, and the scholars who published came from a variety of academic backgrounds and were not all necessarily historians by training.

'Sino-Japanese Rapprochement' after the September 18th Incident)", *Shixue yuekan*, No. 9 (2017), pp. 95-104.

¹⁹ Duan Yongfu, "Fulankelin Luosifu zongtong diyirenqi nei meiguo dui wei manzhouguo zhengce de yanbian (The evolution of the United States' policy towards bogus Manchukuo under the first term of Franklin Roosevelt)", *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu* (January 2012), pp. 14-23.

²⁰ See for instance Fu Liying, "Taipingyang zhanzheng baofa hou weiman de jinrong tongzhi (Financial Domination in bogus Manchukuo after the Outbreak of the Pacific War)", *Waiguowenti yanjiu*, No. 2 (2014), pp. 7-12; Sun Quanjie and Fu Liying, "Weiman xingye yinhang yu riwei dui dongbei de zijin kongzhi (Manchurian Industrial Bank and Japanese Capital Control in Northeast China)", *Waiguowenti yanjiu*, No. 2 (2015), pp. 80-85; Fu Liying, "Weimanzhouguo qiangzhi chuxu zhengce de jingji houguo (Economic Results of Manchukuo's Mandatory Saving Policy: Analysis based on two sections' National Income Determination Model)", *Waiguowenti yanjiu*, No. 4 (2010), pp. 16-22; Yi Baozhong, "Lun weiman shiqi de zhimindi quyue jingji yitihua (On Colonial Regional Economic Integration in the Period of Puppet Manchukuo)", *Jilindaxue shehui kexue xuebao*, No. 4 (July 2001), pp. 87-93; Yi Baozhong and Lin Sha, "Lun jindai dongbei diqu de gongyehua jincheng (The Industrialization process of Modern Northeast China)", *Dongbeiyu luntan*, No. 4 (November, 2011), pp. 54-64.

²¹ Li Shujuan, *Riben zhimin tongzhi yu dongbei nongmin shenghuo* (Japanese Colonialism and Peasant Life in the Northeast) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2014); See also Li Shujuan, "Riwei tongzhi xia de dongbei nongcun shulun, 1931-1945 nian (An overview study of the rural northeast under the bogus rule of the Japanese, 1931 to 1945)" (PhD diss, Nankai University, 2005).

The relatively relaxed censorship environment on journal articles allowed Chinese scholars to explore more sensitive issues that would be considered taboo topics if published in a book format. This is evident in Liu Xiaoli's research on the literary works of various ethnic groups in Manchukuo. With a Post-colonial approach, Liu provided a fresh perspective on how Manchukuo literature was essential to the anti-colonialism struggles and yet at the same time accommodating to the needs of the colonial authorities.²² On the topic regarding the development of a modern health system in the region, the issue of foreign-induced achievements and modernity was well debated among most notably Hu Cheng, Wang Yuqin, Li Na, Yu Xinzhong and Zhao Xiaohong.²³ It is clear that Chinese scholars in this area are

²² Liu Xiaoli, "Jiezhixing neizaiyu zhimindi wenxue (Lyo-colonization is inherent in Colonial Literature)", *Wenhua shiye*, No. 1 (2017), pp. 111-116; See also Liu Xiaoli, "Dongya zhiminzhuyi yu wenxue – Yi weimanzhouguo wentan wei zhongxin de kaocha (East Asian Colonialism and Literature – A Survey Based on the Puppet Regime Manchukuo Literary Circle)", *Xueshu yuekan*, No. 47 (October 2015), pp. 136-143; Liu Xiaoli, "Zhimin tizhi chayi yu zuojia de kuayu, kuayu he wenxue xiangxiang (The differences in Colonial systems and the writer's cross-region, cross-language and cross-literary imagination)", *Shehui kexue jikan*, No. 2 (2016), pp. 159-167.

²³ Although not his main area of research, Hu Cheng has published a number of articles focusing on the region of Manchuria. See for example Hu Cheng, "Zhongri duikang yu gonggong weisheng shiye lingdaoquan de jiaoliang – dui 'nan manzhou' tielu, gangkou zhongxin chengshi de guanचा 1901-1911 (The Sino-Japanese Confrontation and the Contest over Leadership in Public Health Services: Observations on Major Cities along the Railway and Coastline in South Manchuria, 1901-1911)", *Jindaishi yanjiu*, No. 1 (2011), pp.31-46; See also Hu Cheng, "Jindai jianyi guocheng zhong 'jinbu' yu 'luohou' de fansi – yi 1910 nian dongchun zhiji de dongsansheng feishuyi wei zhongxin ('Advancements' and 'backwardness' in modern times - Reflection on the outbreak of the Plague in 1910)", *Kaifang shidai*, No. 10 (2011), pp. 50-67; Wang Yuqin, "Ribei zhimin shiqi de dongbei yixue tongzhi – Yi mantie yiliao weisheng jigou wei zhongxin de yanjiu (The medical system in the northeast during Japanese colonial occupation – A study on SMR's medical and health institutions)", *Shehuikexue zhanxian*, No. 8 (2015), pp. 114-119; Li Na, "Houteng xingping yu dongbei zhimin weisheng tongzhi tixi (Goto Shinpei and the Northeastern colonial health system)", *Waiguowenti yanjiu*, No. 1 (2015), pp. 29-36; Yu Xinzhong, "Cong biyi dao fangyi: Wanqing yinying jibing guannian de yanbian (From evasion to prevention: The evolution of epidemic concepts in the late Qing period)", *Huazhong shifandaxue xuebao*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2008), pp. 51-60; Zhao Xiaohong, "Zongzhuguo yu zhimindi yixuejiaoyu de liandong yu chayi – Dui weiman shiqi yixue jiaoyu de kaocha (The connection and difference in medical education

generally interested in examining Japan's imperial domination of Manchuria as much as the impact on its colonial subjects. Compared to the works of the first generation of scholars, they no longer emphasised solely the victimization of the Chinese people, although traces of the Party's political stance can still be found in the rhetoric means in today's scholarship.

All in all, the body of literature on Manchukuo in the recent decades has been growing at a steady pace. This thesis acknowledges the Chinese scholarship's attention to both the positive and negative impacts of Manchukuo's policies on the people and seeks to examine it in greater detail through a series of case studies. Moreover, this thesis also intends to build upon the detailed narratives of the Chinese literature and to address a gap by exploring the impacts on ordinary people in the context of everyday life.

between the suzerain and the colony – A study on the medical education in bogus Manchukuo)", *Minguo dangan*, (January 2012), pp. 100-107.

1.3. English Literature

To begin with, the history of late nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century Manchuria was first recorded and written by those who were intrigued by the region following the decline of the Qing Dynasty. The political establishments, as well as local customs and practices, were first documented by Alexander Hosie in 1910, the British Consul-General to Tientsin who also possessed a confident command of written and spoken Chinese.²⁴ Additionally, one of the most prominent early English language works was subsequently published by British medical missionary Dugald Christie in 1914, who resided in Fengtian from 1883 to 1913. Founder of the Shengjing Clinic and Mukden Medical College²⁵, Christie made detailed observations and documented his impressions of foreign aggression, political upheavals, subsequent reforms and the outbreak of epidemics first-handedly.²⁶ Following the result of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, the ever-changing political climate in the region began to attract more attention from scholars to investigate the Japanese economic penetration of Manchuria.

During this period, a detailed survey of the economic conditions and development of the region was prepared by Baron Y. Sakatani and Grover Clark. Their manuscript included a comprehensive overview of the region as well as statistical data and figures gathered from Japanese reports.²⁷ A similar study with a

²⁴ Alexander Hosie, *Manchuria: Its People, Resources and Recent History* (London: J. B. Millet Company, 1910).

²⁵ Renamed as the 2nd Affiliated hospital of the China Medical University after the Chinese Civil War, and restored back to Shengjing Hospital following its 120th anniversary in 2003.

²⁶ Dugald Christie, *Thirty years in Mukdoen, 1883-1913: Being the Experiences and Recollections of Dugald Christie, C.M.G.* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1914).

²⁷ Baron Y. Sakatani, "Manchuria: A survey of Its Economic Development. [Revised by Grover Clark, prepared for the Division of Economics and History of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.] 1932," in *The Modern Chinese Economy, A Garland Series*, ed., Ramon H. Myers (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1980).

focus on the newly established South Manchuria Railway Company was carried out by Henry W. Kinney, in which the institution's industrial efforts and policies were elaborately examined and published in 1928.²⁸ The years following the Mukden Incident witnessed a peak of interest invested in the region. The controversial establishment of Manchukuo was debated in the English language literature, most noticeably by T'ang Leang-Li, editor of the "China To-day" Series, and Japanese apologist Kiyoshi Karl Kawakami.²⁹ A good deal of attention was also directed towards questioning the status quo and future of Manchukuo, with Henry L. Stimson, P.T. Etherton and H. Hessel Tiltman producing the most noteworthy examination of the diplomatic efforts and political structures surrounding the regime and Japan.³⁰ Additionally, a considerable amount of work was done by journalists, documenting their experiences and knowledge via their travels and interviews with political figures in the newly established government.³¹

After the collapse of Manchukuo and the Japanese empire in 1945, post-war historians have examined and studied Manchuria from the top-down, focused almost exclusively on the perspective of institutions and structures as well as debating the rationale behind Japan's military commitment and expansionism to incorporate the region into its sphere of influence. The key literature here lies within the pioneering works of Sadako Ogata, Yamamuro Shin'ichi, James Crowley, Jack Snyder, Takehiko Yoshihashi, Robert Butow, Alvin Coox, Mark Peattie, Emer

²⁸ Henry W. Kinney, *Modern Manchuria and The South Manchuria Railway Company* (Tokyo: The Japan Advertiser Press, 1928).

²⁹ See T'ang Leang-Li ed., *The Puppet State of "Manchukuo"* (Shanghai: China United Press, 1935) and Kiyoshi Karl Kawakami, *Manchoukuo: Child of Conflict* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933).

³⁰ See Colonel P.T. Etherton and H. Hessel Tiltman, *Manchuria: The Cockpit of Asia* (London: Jarrolds, 1932) and Henry L. Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis: Recollections and Observations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936).

³¹ See for example H.G.W. Woodhead, *A Visit to Manchukuo* (Shanghai: The Mercury Press, 1932); Ernst Cordes, *Das jüngste Kaiserreich. Schlafendes, wachendes Mandschukuo*, trans. Wang Yingxian (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chuban she, 2013); For travelogues to Manchuria before the Mukden Incident see Owen Lattimore, *Manchuria: Cradle of Conflict* (New York: Macmillan, 1932).

O'Dwyer along with a few others.³² Discussions over the making of Japan's Manchuria was continued over the course of the past few decades, interrogating the decisions made by both the Kwantung Army and the Japanese government. As the debate on whether the creation of Manchukuo was due to Ishiwara Kanji's obsession regarding the need to prepare for the inevitable final world war or a dubious decision for aggression made by the Tokyo government continued, scholars in general have established the Mukden Incident as a historical event marking the significant shift in imperial Japan's China policies from a moderate commercial expansionist stance to an aggressive territorial expansionist stance.

On the other hand, the economic and industrial aspects, as well as state policies and diplomatic efforts surrounding Manchuria, were explored by F.C. Jones, Michael Barnhart, W.G. Beasley, Kungtun Sun, Ramon Myers, Herbert Bix, Nakagane Katsuji, Takafusa Nakamura, Ian Nish and Florentino Rodao to name a few.³³ Much work was devoted towards the examination of the experimental

³² See Sadako Ogata, *Defiance in Manchuria: The Making of Japanese foreign Policy, 1931-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964); Yamamuro Shin'ichi, *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion*, trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 9-38; James B. Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy, 1930-1938* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991); Takehiko Yoshihashi, *Conspiracy at Mukden: The Rise of the Japanese Military* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Robert Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961); Alvin Coox, "The Kwantung Army Dimension," in *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937*, eds., Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 395-428; Mark R. Peattie, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Emer O'Dwyer, *Significant Soil: Settler Colonialism and Japan's Urban Empire in Manchuria* (Cambridge mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

³³ See F.C. Jones, *Manchuria since 1931* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1949); Michael Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941* (London: Cornell University Press, 1987); W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Kungtun Sun, *The Economic Development of Manchuria in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1969); Ramon H. Myers, *The*

nature of Manchuria's economy and private capital investments, in which the notion of a "modern enclave economy", or the "yen bloc", that integrated Manchuria, Northern China and Japan as a whole was established to analyze the mobilization of resources and ambitious programs of rapid industrialization. Some dated but still highly relevant to the research of Manchuria today, the aforementioned scholarship generated a substantial contribution to the shaping of the field and the placement of Manchuria in Japan's imperial empire.

Histories from the bottom-up looking at Manchuria from the Japanese perspective could also be found in literature from the past years.³⁴ Louise Young recognised that Manchuria was presented as Japan's "lifeline". She explored thoroughly the incentives for how a variety of social groups in Japan responded and how they were mobilised to the calls for the building of Japanese Manchuria after

Japanese Economic Development of Manchuria, 1932 to 1945 (New York: Garland, 1982); See also Nakagane Katsuji, "Manchukuo and Economic Development," in *The Japanese Informal Empire in China*, eds., Duus, Myers and Peattie, 133-58; Takafusa Nakamura, "The Yen Bloc, 1931-1941," in *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945*, eds., Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1996); Ian Nish, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism: Japan, China and the League of Nations, 1931-1933* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993); Florentino Rodao, "Japan and the Axis, 1937-8: Recognition of the Franco Regime and Manchukuo", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (2009), pp. 431-447; A considerable amount of journal articles was also published with the focus of economic development in the region over the past few decades. See Tim Wright, "The Manchurian Economy and the 1930s World Depression", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 5 (2007), pp. 1073-1112; A classic debate over the role of SMR with regards to the Kwantung Army can be found between Herbert Bix and Ramon H. Myers. See Herbert P. Bix, "Japanese Imperialism and the Manchurian Economy, 1900-1931", *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 51 (1972), pp. 425-443 and Ramon H. Myers, "Economic Development in Manchuria under Japanese Imperialism: A Dissenting View", *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 55 (1973), pp. 547-556;

³⁴ A focus on the colonial building environment has also attracted a good amount of scholarship, which in a way evolved into a sub-field of study. See Bill Sewell, "Beans to Banners: The Evolving Architecture of Prewar Changchun," in *Harbin To Hanoi: The Colonial Built Environment in Asia, 1840 to 1940*, eds., Laura Victoir and Victor Zatsopine (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013); David Tucker, "France, Brossard Mopin, and Manchukuo," in *Harbin To Hanoi: The Colonial Built Environment in Asia, 1840 to 1940*, eds., Laura Victoir and Victor Zatsopine (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).

the outburst of a “war fever” generated by the Mukden Incident. Additionally, through the examinations on how the Japanese perceived Manchuria as an imagined empire to fulfil their various goals, Young further suggested that Japanese Manchuria yielded two types of imperial systems for both the colonized and the colonizers, indicated by the term “total empire”.³⁵ Responding to Young’s focus on the Japanese home society’s relations with Manchuria, Sandra Wilson discussed the impacts of the Mukden Incident during the early stages of Manchukuo. In opposition to Young’s theory of the total war fever, Wilson illustrated that Japanese attention was diverted to more direct concerns instead of Manchuria by mid-1933 when a truce between China and Japan was achieved, such as the economic depression, which impacted the Japanese society more significantly.³⁶

The ordinary Japanese experience in Manchuria also received a good amount of scholarly attention. Ronald Suleski made detailed examinations of the daily life of members of the Manchurian Youth Corps. He investigated the ideologies behind the Youth Corps and the complicated reality of life in Manchukuo. Suleski recognised the forced nature of the conformity demanded by the Kwantung Army officers (the adults) and the rebellion against it by the Youth Corps (the youths).³⁷ Mariko Asano Tamanoi’s work on the experiences of Japanese emigrants to Manchukuo and the left-behind children after the war highlighted the victimization of the ordinary Japanese people and their offspring in the name of

³⁵ Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); See also Louise Young, “Imagined Empire: The Cultural Construction of Manchukuo,” in *The Japanese Wartime Empire*, eds., Duus, Myers and Peattie.

³⁶ Sandra Wilson, *The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society, 1931-33* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

³⁷ Ronald Suleski, “Reconstructing Life in the Youth Corps Camps of Manchuria, 1938-45: Resistance to Conformity”, *East Asian History*, Vol. 13, No. 30 (2005), pp. 67-91; also see Ronald Suleski, “Northeast China under Japanese Control: The Role of the Manchurian Youth Corps, 1934-1945”, *Modern China*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1981), pp. 351-377.

empire.³⁸ From an anthropological perspective, Tamanoi's arguments on Japanese rural immigrants acting both as colonial agents that exploited the local peasants' land and victims of Japanese mobilization provided an interesting alternative to Louise Young's investigation of the "people's war responsibility" and her concept of "total empire". Indeed, this thesis does consider Japanese immigrants in Manchukuo as both state actors and social agents that represented the interest of Japan at the foremost. The privilege and prestige of colonial actors could be reflected through the social hierarchy and everyday interactions with the subjugated peoples in Manchukuo, which this thesis seeks to demonstrate.

Compared to the overwhelming body of literature on the Japanese aspects of Manchuria, works on the Chinese aspects are far fewer in numbers. To begin with, the city of Harbin gradually began to emerge as a sub-area of research in recent years. Once an international settlement created by Russian imperialists and frequently described as the "Paris of the Far East" or "Oriental Moscow", the city bore some of the transnational elements of colonial Shanghai, although currently being studied at a much smaller scale.³⁹ The latest monograph that made a substantial contribution to this field of study was Kathryn Meyer in her work on the daily lives of ordinary people in the Garden of Grand Vision (*Da guan yuan*), a

³⁸ Mariko Asano Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009). See also Mariko Asano Tamanoi, "A Road to 'A Redeemed Mankind': The Politics of Memory among the Former Japanese Peasant Settlers in Manchuria," in *Harbin and Manchuria: Place, Space, and Identity*, ed., Thomas Lahusen (Durham: Duke University Press 2001); For more detailed focus on Japanese identity in Manchukuo see Mariko Asano Tamanoi, "Knowledge, Power, and Racial Classification: The "Japanese" in "Manchuria", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (2000), pp. 248-276.

³⁹ For works on the city of Harbin see Soren Clausen and Stig Thogersen, *The Making of a Chinese City: History and Historiography in Harbin* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc, 1995); Victor Zatsopine, "Russia, Railways, and Urban Development in Manchuria," in *Harbin To Hanoi: The Colonial Built Environment in Asia, 1840 to 1940*, eds., Laura Victoir and Victor Zatsopine (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), pp. 17-36; Thomas Lahusen ed., *Harbin and Manchuria: Place, Space, and Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); James H. Carter, *Creating a Chinese Harbin: Nationalism in an International City, 1916-1932* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

housing complex in Harbin during the Japanese occupation. Tracing the reports of police lieutenant Goto Reiji and his colleagues, Meyer made detailed examinations regarding the living conditions of the Manchukuoan residents within the garden, as well as their daily interactions with the police. She highlighted how Japanese police officers maintained their prejudiced opinions of viewing the residents as inferior subjects and refused to believe in any modernization efforts in a slum where drugs, prostitution, violence and gambling ran rampant.⁴⁰ Meyer's research provided an excellent understanding of everyday conflict and compromise within the framework of occupation, whilst providing new findings on the ways that subjugated people interacted with the colonial organization in which this thesis seeks to build.

On the other hand, Norman Smith placed great emphasis on the history of Chinese literary life during the Japanese occupation of Manchukuo. Smith took the case of the lives of women writers who lived in Manchukuo and illustrated how the female writers utilised their publications to criticise both the Manchukuo regime and the conservative Confucius ideology of good wives and wise mothers (*xian qi liang mu*).⁴¹ In addition to literary works in Manchukuo, Smith's recent research explored the transition of Manchuria's status quo from an undeveloped wilderness to a vital industrialised part of Japan's empire by looking at the historical alcohol and opium usage in Manchukuo. He explained how the Japanese promoted alcohol as a potent symbol to showcase the progress of modernity and the development of a "modern lifestyle", but subsequently degraded it to the status of an intoxicant that poisoned the population during the "holy war" period when the consumption no longer had a place to serve in Japan's wartime interests.⁴²

⁴⁰ Kathryn Meyer, *Life and Death in the Garden: Sex, Drugs, Cops, and Robbers in Wartime China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

⁴¹ Norman Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo: Chinese Women Writers and the Japanese Occupation* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2007).

⁴² Norman Smith, *Intoxicating Manchuria: Alcohol, Opium, and Culture in China's Northeast* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012); see also Norman Smith, "Writing and Remembering the Battle against Opiates in Manchukuo," in *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China*, eds., James Flath and Norman Smith (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Similar arguments could also be found in

Rana Mitter conducted a ground-breaking exploration of grassroots reactions to the founding of Manchukuo by coining the creation of modern Chinese nationalism and the resistance to Japan's occupation of Manchuria as a "resistancialist myth". To elaborate, he questioned the myth of resistance in the puppet state of Manchukuo by examining the various ways in which the Chinese reacted to the Japanese invasion and giving great focus on the issue of local elite collaboration from both the provincial and local level. Moreover, Mitter deconstructed Chinese nationalism during that time from acknowledging the major scale collaboration in Manchukuo and argued that nationalism primarily existed within the urban populace of China, especially among the literate urbanites who were constantly involved with journalism and new institutes such as the YMCA. In such a sense, Mitter demonstrated that the majority of the resistance groups were not motivated by nationalism in the way perceived by China proper activists such as the Northeast National Salvation Society (*Dong bei min zhong kang ri jiu guo hui*) assembled by northeastern exiles, whereas resistance in Manchukuo portrayed by narratives such as the heroic acts of Ma Zhanshan were more the result of careful political calculations rather than driven by nationalist ideas.⁴³ This notion of the "resistancialist myth" was further developed by Mitter in his 2005 book chapter examining the propaganda efforts of northeastern political activist Du Zhongyuan, who failed to generate a sympathetic response from the petty urbanites in China proper towards his cause.⁴⁴

Norman Smith, "Opiate addiction and the entanglements of Imperialism and Patriarchy in Manchukuo, 1932-45", *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, Vol. 20 (2005), pp. 66-104.

⁴³ Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*; See also Rana Mitter, "Evil Empire? Competing Constructions of Japanese Imperialism in Manchuria, 1928-1937," in *Imperial Japan and National Identities in Asia, 1895-1945*, eds., Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), pp. 146-168.

⁴⁴ Rana Mitter, "Manchuria in Mind: Press, Propaganda, and Northeast China in the Age of Empire, 1930-1937," in *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire*, ed., Mariko Asano Tamanoi (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), pp. 25-49.

In a sense, by debunking the myth of Chinese resistance against Manchukuo, Mitter's detailed research challenged the conception of "evil empire" as suggested by mainstream historiographies. With a careful illustration of how the Japanese successfully justified themselves as "natives" of the region and the bringers of modernity, Mitter arrived at the conclusion that the population of Manchuria was manipulated into believing that the Japanese presence was a better and more trustworthy option to safeguard their livelihoods and interests compared to the old warlord regime.⁴⁵

This thesis does agree with Mitter's arguments on the incentives behind widespread collaboration among local political elites. However, to extend this argument to the rest of the population would create the tendency to overlook the fundamental reason why Manchukuo was created by the Japanese in the first place. Both Smith's examination of Japanese modernity serving as a propaganda tool to showcase enlightenment and Mitter's argument of how the construction of modern facilities by the Japanese actually benefited the local population is all highly relevant to this thesis.⁴⁶ However, this thesis suggests that for the ordinary people of Manchukuo that were never in a position to exercise power nor had anything to offer to weight in the balance of bargaining power with the Japanese, the relationship between them and the colonial agents was simply exploitative by nature. As such, this thesis seeks to deploy and highlight imperialism and colonialism to examine the daily lives of the people under Japanese domination as well as filling the gap in the literature on the ordinary experiences of Manchukuo, which is currently under-researched.

⁴⁵ Mitter, "Evil Empire?" 164.

⁴⁶ Different arguments on the effects of foreign influenced modernity in the case of Shanghai can be found by Isabella Jackson and Hanchao Lu. See Isabella Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai: Colonialism in China's Global City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Lu Hanchao, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

1.4. Imperialism and Colonialism as a Dual Conceptual Framework

1.4.1. Background

In a narrow sense, the Marxist-Leninist approach suggests that the concepts of imperialism from the late nineteenth century stemmed from industrial capitalism's incessant desires for expansion. Lenin, in his own words, described the phenomenon as "a world system of colonial oppression and financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the people of the world by a handful of advanced countries", in which the powerful, rich in capital and lack in labour nations plundered the entire world.⁴⁷ Similarly, post-Marxian economist John Atkinson Hobson argued that the reason behind capitalism's obsessive search for new markets to exploit was, in fact, its own power of production exceeding home consumption growth.⁴⁸ The "tap-root" nature of imperialism, as Hobson have described, thereby refers to the inevitable outcome wherein imperialism, to secure incoming profits, ultimately results in the necessity for annexation or colonization. Therefore, as long as costs of labour, land, and raw materials are low in states regarded as "less advanced" compared to the home country, the pursuit of surplus capital will never stop.

Alternatively, non-Marxist theorists suggest that imperialism implies a relationship between advanced imperial countries on the one hand and colonized

⁴⁷ Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2010), preface; See also Tom Kemp, "The Marxist theory of imperialism," in *Studies in the theory of imperialism*, eds., Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 15-33. For a more comprehensive debate on theories surrounding western hegemony, See Patrick Wolfe, "History and Imperialism: A Century of Theory, from Marx to Postcolonialism", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2 (1997), pp. 388-420.

⁴⁸ John Atkinson Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 2011), pp. 76-100.

regions annexed into the empire's territory on the other hand.⁴⁹ Joseph A. Schumpeter described the process of empire building as "an objectless disposition on the part of a state to unlimited forcible expansion."⁵⁰ Based on Schumpeter's understanding of imperialist aggressiveness, imperialistic behaviour can be qualified as aggressive towards the appearance of opportunities instead of being determined by the attractiveness of potential profits. Hannah Arendt further described the imperialistic powers as "the never-ending, self-feeding motor of all political action."⁵¹ This concept is essential as it sheds light on the mobilizing nature of imperialism as the main driving force towards the building and preservation of the empire and its colonies.

With regard to terminology, imperialism and colonialism are frequently used interchangeably. Jurgen Osterhammel distinguished the terms by suggesting that imperialism is a more extensive concept involving international politics, while colonialism can be viewed as an expression of, or "one special manifestation of imperialism".⁵² In the case of colonization, Leninists argued that the "enormous superabundance of capital" generated by capitalist countries cannot be invested profitably in a labour-limited home country. Conversely, it was regarded as an ideal form of investment in the capital-limited, labour-abundant colonies.⁵³ Building upon this reasoning, Tom Bottomore argued that modern colonialism does not only seek to plunder wealth and commodities from the occupied regions but it also actively engages in the process of reconstructing the conquered economic

⁴⁹ Tom Kemp, "The Marxist theory of imperialism," in *Studies in the theory of imperialism*, eds., Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 15-33.

⁵⁰ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1951), p. 6.

⁵¹ Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 17-63.

⁵² Jurgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), p. 21; See also Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 3.

⁵³ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 5-9.

structures.⁵⁴ This process of “restructuring the economy” and “forming new communities” in the colonized land hence inevitably generated the “de-structuring” and “un-forming” of the already existing communities. Furthermore, Frederick Cooper suggested that the most prominent and preconditioned features in the core of colonialism include brutality, enslavement, forceful requisition of land, denigration of indigenous cultures, and finally, the coercion of religious conversion, which are not unique to any era or region.⁵⁵ To sum up, imperialism as a global system can function without formal colonies, but colonialism cannot.

1.4.2. An Overview of Imperialism and Colonialism in China

As for China, the concepts of imperialism and colonialism began taking root in complicated shapes through a variety of agencies from the nineteenth century onwards. Although Chinese historiographies often associated imperialism with narratives of a century-long national humiliation and subjugation, it is also important to consider imperialism as the presumption for competition between imperialistic powers to incorporate China into the global economy, or what Robert Bickers described as “the international scramble for China”.⁵⁶ James Peck further suggested that Qing China, as a self-sustaining and relatively isolated empire, was confronted by its own inadequacy in the face of the challenges of modernization and encounters with the western powers.⁵⁷ China’s inability to achieve fundamental changes to its society by itself led to a weighty sense of victimization among the Chinese people. To put it simply, according to Peck’s own words, “imperialism

⁵⁴ Tom Bottomore ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), pp. 80-85.

⁵⁵ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 28.

⁵⁶ Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire 1932-1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), p. 15.

⁵⁷ It is worth noting that, although in its decline, Qing China also pursued its own form of imperialism in Asia. See Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosen Korea, 1850-1910* (Cambridge, mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

existed in Chinese people's heads and it was not real."⁵⁸ On the other hand, Robert Dernberger considered China an ossified civilization that needed western powers to "reactivate" its history to move forward. Addressing this school of thought from an economic perspective, Dernberger, along with other scholars, thus maintained that "China's problem in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was not that it had too much imperialism but that it did not have enough".⁵⁹

The role of imperialism being a key stimulus for the development of the modern sector in China, regardless of it being a negative or positive argument, has triggered much debate among historians and theorists. Generally owing to the vagueness and equivocal nature of the term, exploring imperialism in China proved to be a cumbersome task given the distinct features of various imperialistic powers, which Paul Cohen criticised, calling it "the problem with the problem of imperialism".⁶⁰ To be sure, Cohen advocated for a "China-centred history", inviting a more interior approach to the "impact-response" framework (adopted notably by John King Fairbank) for the understanding of nineteenth and twentieth-century China. However, it is equally crucial not to dismiss scholarly assumptions and interpretations of the effects of foreign influence and encroachments in China, insofar as any history written without considering those aspects easily risks being overly simplified or one-sided.

Western imperialistic powers largely entrenched their interests eastward in the form of "semi-colonies", with Britain acquiring its first treaty-ports in China

⁵⁸ James Peck, "The Roots of Rhetoric: The Professional Ideology of America's China Watchers," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1969), pp. 59-69 quoted in Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 99.

⁵⁹ Robert F. Dernberger, "The Role of the Foreigner in China's Economic Development," in *China's Modern Economy in Historical Perspective*, ed., Dwight H. Perkins (California: Stanford University Press, 1975) quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

following the end of the Opium War in 1842. In general, semi-colonialism refers to the partial control of territories without the formal demand for sovereignty.⁶¹ However, Sun Yat-sen, the founder of Republican China, rejected the traditional Leninist approach of defining semi-colonialism as the in-between period to colonialism by categorizing China as a “hypo-colony”, arguing in his own words, that “China is not the colony of one nation but of all, and we are not the slaves of one country but of all.”⁶² Focusing on Shanghai, Isabella Jackson echoed this argument by applying the concept of Transnational Colonialism to examine the nature of western colonialism in China. In her study, Jackson provides a detailed analysis of the administrative role of the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC), uncovering the ways in which foreign influence was exerted in China, primarily via the participation of non-state actors (NSAs) in the shaping and developing of the city.⁶³ Along this line of argument, it becomes evident that the extent of control exercised by the foreign authorities not only suggested a comfortable amount of power endowed in the agencies, but also a clear claim for legitimacy beneath the indistinct nature of western colonialism in China. Finally, the method of indirect rule beneath the concept of transnational colonialism is also valuable to improve our understandings of the nature of Manchukuo and its mechanisms in a comparative context.

⁶¹ For a more comprehensive concept surrounding British style “Semi-Colonialism” and “Informal Empire” see John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade”, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1953), pp. 1-15; and Jackson, “Managing Shanghai”, 17-28.

⁶² Bryna Goodman and David Goodman eds., *Twentieth Century Colonialism and China: Localities, the Everyday, and the World* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 3; See also Sun Yat-Sen, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People*, ed., L. T. Chen, trans. Frank W. Price (Shanghai: Institute for Pacific Relations, 1927).

⁶³ Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai*, 12; See also Isabella Jackson, “Who ran the treaty ports? A study of the Shanghai Municipal Council,” in *Treaty Ports in Modern China: Law, land and power*, eds., Robert Bickers and Isabella Jackson (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 48-63.

1.4.3. The Unique Japanese Way

A closer look into the case of Japanese imperialism in East Asia reveals characteristics similar to its European counterparts in their earlier stages. James Huffman observed western traits in the Japanese imperial language, while in parallel, he noted a resemblance with the rhetoric of the “white man’s burden”, as part of the “civilizing mission” rationale.⁶⁴ Moreover, when referring to subjugated (or yet to be subjugated) peoples, degrading terms and phrases were frequently adopted, dismissing non-Japanese Asians into discriminatory categories such as “natives” or “subhuman”, which Kawamura Minato regarded as the Japanese version of Orientalism.⁶⁵ In view of those arguments, the sense of superiority, along with ethnic prejudice, can thus be understood as essential features in the processes by which Japan shaped and maintained a self-imaginary consciousness, wherein its duty, as a civilised nation, was to guide other Asian civilizations out of the quagmire created by western imperialists.

Nevertheless, the Japanese belief in their own responsibility to lead Asia was one of the few fundamental features distinguishing Japanese imperialism from other forms of western imperialism. Indeed, forcefully incorporated into the global capitalist system via gunboat diplomacy, Japan’s primary concern was not economic, but to ensure its own security, with the objective of becoming an imperialistic power strong enough to resist the “white” imperialistic powers.⁶⁶ The Treaty Port system that forced China into multiple capitulations triggered vigorous reactions in

⁶⁴ James Huffman, *Japan and Imperialism, 1853-1945* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, Inc, 2010), p. 3.

⁶⁵ Michele M. Mason and Helen J.S. Lee eds., *Reading Colonial Japan: Text, Context, and Critique* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 272; For concepts regarding Orientalism see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

⁶⁶ Mark R. Peattie, “Introduction,” in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, eds., Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 8; See also William Lockwood, *The Economic Development of Japan: Growth and Structural Change, 1868-1938* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

late Tokugawa Japan, which ultimately fostered political revolutions leading to the inauguration of Meiji Japan. With the colonization of Taiwan in 1895 and the annexation of Korea in 1910, it was clear that Japan's empire building process was strategically driven from a geographical standpoint. The acquisition of the Korean peninsula that pushed Japan deeper into the core continent was followed by a less blatant period of expansion into Manchuria.⁶⁷ It is not to say that the economical penetration of its acquired territories did not play a vital role. Indeed, if Meiji imperialism can be described as a chaotic period guided by neither the pursuit of capital expansion nor imperial conquest,⁶⁸ the subsequent decade of the great depression after 1929 clearly drove Japanese imperialists towards the priority of economic autarky. This consecutive stage, which James Huffman identified as the "multicausal" pattern of Japanese imperialism, was crucial in the formation of Manchukuo.

One of the most influential scholars to have instituted the notion of the authenticity of Manchukuo under the theme of Japanese imperialism is Prasenjit Duara. The end of the Great War saw the rise of "Anti-imperialist Nationalism", which inevitably became problematic for Japan to further its imperialist goals, in pursuit of capital and prestige on the global stage. As such, mainstream Chinese scholarship has long established that Manchukuo was created neither as an independent state nor as a formal colony, but as a puppet state of Japan, strongly emphasizing the illegitimacy of its status. However, whilst preserving this notion, Duara incorporated the concept of the nation-state to explain how Manchukuo, despite existing as a modern state form, could be "distinguished not only from

⁶⁷ For the making of Japanese Korea see Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

⁶⁸ Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea 1876-1945* (Cambridge mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 9; See also James Huffman, *Japan and Imperialism, 1853-1945* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, Inc, 2010), p. 4.

premodern states, but also from most nineteenth-century colonial states.”⁶⁹ Duara coined the term “East Asia Modern” to illustrate how the discourse of civilization could be mobilised towards the identity formation of Manchukuo in light of the global “anti-imperialism” trend. Although weak and unpopular amongst the people of Manchukuo, the realm of authenticity nonetheless came through by means of its subjects’ participation in political organizations, such as the Concordia Association (*xie he hui*) and in the active production of literature.⁷⁰ This thesis acknowledges the fact that Manchukuo was indeed a puppet state during its existence and also maintains the usefulness of Duara’s argument that Manchukuo was structured upon repressive instruments by the Japanese to exploit the people and the land of its resources to advance in its own imperialist agendas.

The exploitative nature of Japan’s disguised imperialism within the social structure of Manchukuo was further illustrated with Mark Driscoll’s conceptualization of necropolitics within the Japanese capitalist framework, through which he demonstrated how Japan’s imperial ambitions were perpetuated by its colonized subaltern workforce. Taking on a Marxist approach, Driscoll noted the “indispensably dispensable” nature of Chinese labourers in Manchuria and the tendencies of Japanese colonial capitalists to disregard them as “disposable consumables” but yet “indispensable” for mobilization and further exploitation.⁷¹ Driscoll’s critique of Japan’s colonial violence placed Japanese imperialism and its industrial capitalist advancements largely at the expense of its endless supply of “living-dead zombies” that were forcefully generated from coolie immigrants,

⁶⁹ Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 60.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 249; From a transnationalism perspective, Suk-Jung Han also challenged the notion of puppet state by interpreting that Manchukuo resisted direct commands from its metropole Tokyo and also obtained a degree of diplomatic recognitions, thus achieved a certain form of sovereignty. See Suk-Jung Han, “The Problem of Sovereignty: Manchukuo, 1932-1937”, *East Asia Cultures Critique*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2004), pp. 457-478.

⁷¹ Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan’s Imperialism, 1895-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 305.

opium addicts and the homeless wanderers, who, according to him, were “neither killed nor allowed to die”.⁷² Driscoll’s argument on the case of drug addicts in Manchukuo is illustrated further in this thesis with an examination of the consequences behind state opium monopolization in Chapter Five.

On the other hand, Hyun Ok Park explored the essence of the Japanese colonial process of Manchuria. Bearing resemblance with Isabella Jackson’s work with regard to the sub-imperialist role of the Sikh policemen in Shanghai to represent the influence of British presence, Park theorized that Korean migrants to Manchuria were the bearers of the Japanese empire, delocalizing and disseminating power.⁷³ Acting as colonial agents, Korean peasants within the “webs of empire”, or what Park described as the process of “territorial osmosis”, challenge the traditional suggestion of territorial boundaries as the container for colonial power, and defined Japan’s colonial strategy as a continuous outward flow of Japan’s sovereign power embodied in its series of vassal states.⁷⁴ In essence, the consistency in Japan’s imperialist imaginary construction of a unified Asian community under its leadership and its de-emphasis on physical boundaries

⁷² Ibid., p. 310.

⁷³ Hyun Ok Park, “Korean Manchuria: The Racial Politics of Territorial Osmosis”, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 99, No. 1 (2000), pp. 193-215; For a more comprehensive argument on Korean peasants in Manchuria see also Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korea Revolution in Manchuria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); For one concept of sub-imperialism in a Chinese context see Isabella Jackson, “The Raj on Nanjing Road: Sikh Policemen in Treaty-Port Shanghai”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (2012), pp. 1672-1704.

⁷⁴ Ibid; Another example illustrating the concept of “sub-imperialists” under the Japanese extraterritorial system in China can be found in Barbara Brooks’ essay on Koreans and sekimin (registered people) in Treaty Port China. See Barbara Brooks, “Japanese colonial citizenship in treaty port China: the location of Koreans and Taiwanese in the imperial order,” in *New frontiers: Imperialism’s new communities in East Asia, 1842-1953*, eds., Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 109-124. On the discussion of Japanese penetration in Korea, a similar argument could be found in Uchida’s notion of brokered colonialism and Japanese settlers in Korea. See Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea 1876-1945* (Cambridge mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

problematized the Eurocentric understandings of the relationship between the metropole and the colonized otherness.

It is critical to note that the Japanese empire, and its “empires within the empire”, was constructed upon the ideological belief of Pan-Asianism, which evolved into the political form of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in the late 1930s.⁷⁵ However, as a puppet state from the beginning and thus excluded from Japan’s formal empire, the subjugated peoples of Manchukuo were neither subjected to the full Japanization of Korea, which Mark Caprio considered to be a peripheral colony of Japan (which also resulted in ultimate failure), nor to the political assimilation and imperialization of the peoples in Taiwan (which achieved partial success).⁷⁶ Manchukuo was indeed based upon the fact that it was established as a puppet state, thus weak by nature in its claim for sovereignty and legitimacy, and had to resort to express Japan’s imperial Pan-Asianism framework in its traditional Confucian form. Whilst advocating fundamental concepts of racial harmony, the “Kingly Way” ideology justified the Japanese presence in Manchukuo by stressing the importance of Japan being the saviour of Manchuria, and the intimate relationship between the two as a cover for the exploitative nature of Japanese colonialism. This concept is especially evident in the examination of the education received by the Manchukuo youths in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Overall, this thesis adopts the perspectives of imperialism and colonialism in a broader context to examine the sufferings of the peoples in Manchukuo under Japanese domination. As noted by Louise Young, Manchuria was not only altered by the Japanese presence, but also was never in a position to reject any influence or

⁷⁵ For a comprehensive analysis on Japan’s Pan-Asianism, See Eri Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan’s War 1931-1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁷⁶ For an extensive argument on the case of Korea and Taiwan see Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009) and Leo Ching, *Becoming “Japanese”: Colonial Taiwan and the politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

interventions instilled by its “colonizers”.⁷⁷ Therefore, without overcomplicating the nature of Japanese imperialism and colonialism, this thesis establishes the concept of Manchukuo as a puppet state implemented by the Japanese, wherein the local population, despite being exploited and suppressed by the regime, managed to overcome hardships by adopting various strategies over the course of Manchukuo’s fourteen years of its existence.

⁷⁷ Young, *Japan’s Total Empire*, 11.

1.5. Sources

1.5.1. Primary datasets

A wide variety of sources, mainly in Chinese, have been gathered and used in this thesis to reconstruct ordinary people's experience of Manchukuo during the period of 1931 to 1945.

To begin with, this thesis draws heavily upon Manchukuo periodicals, namely reports and stories from *Shengjing Shibao* (Sheng Jing Times). These types of sources were primarily concerned with specific social issues within each particular time period that were frequently overlooked and neglected by government publications, therefore crucial to the detailed examination of the everyday life of ordinary people. Founded in 1906, the Japanese-owned daily newspaper *Shengjing Shibao* was one of the most influential Chinese language newspapers in Manchuria. Despite its pro-Japan political and editorial stance, the newspaper was also well-known for its sharp linguistic reporting styles of domestic social issues that were subjected to less, sometimes no political interference and censorship, a tradition inherited from its Qing Dynasty reporting days. Indeed, while the newspaper cannot be considered to be an objective reflection when examining political events, it provides a valuable indication of issues affecting the everyday lives of the people, and therefore can be seen as more illustrative of the public opinion and common areas of anxiety and concern at the time. It is also important to specify that during the data collection and analysis processes, no specific events or times were targeted, apart from the 1931-1945 timeframe. When collecting and analysing data, I looked for recurrences across daily reports to highlight some of the main social issues that affected ordinary people's everyday life and activities in Manchukuo. Themes began emerging and topics were grouped together, with stories and testimonies collected in news reports illustrating each theme. The use of newspapers allowed for continuity, and enabled looking at the development of

some social issues across time rather than looking at isolated events, and see how these issues unfolded as the days passed. In all, even though Manchukuo newspaper sources cannot be fully used uncritically as a reflection of all Manchukuoans, it does provide valuable insights through the snippets of the social issues that affect the entire society.

Major bodies of official publications consulted in this thesis include *Manchukuo government gazettes* (*Man zhou guo zheng fu gong bao*), *local gazettes* (*Di fang zheng fu gong bao*), and *Manchukuo Yearbooks* (*Man zhou nian jian*). Published each year from 1932 to 1945, these sources documented rules, laws, regulations and official edicts from both the central and the county administration level. This thesis also used a variety of Manchukuo published books collected during the course of fieldwork in China. These range from the topic of urban and rural industries, welfares, meeting memoirs, commerce to sanitation development and many more. In addition, this research has also drawn from republished primary materials, such as the *Bogus Manchukuo Historical Data Compilation* (*Wei man zhou guo shi liao*), *Bogus Manchukuo Statistical Data Compilation* (*Wei man zhou guo tong ji zi liao hui bian*), and *The Selection of Archival Materials of the Japanese Imperialist Invasion of China* (*Ri ben di guo zhu yi qin hua dang an zi liao xuan bian*) to name a few. Enormous in volume, these compilations contain a wide range of photocopied original documents including aspects of politics, economy, society, statistical data, local reports, education, inter-departmental correspondences, announcements, speeches, etc. Covering almost all aspects of the puppet state, this body of sources provided the necessary context for this thesis to examine and reconstruct the experiences of the people.

Major volumes of narratives and witness accounts used in this thesis include but are not limited to the *Bogus Manchukuo Historical Compilation* (*Wei man shi liao cong shu*) edited by Sun Bang, *China Oral History Compilation* (*Zhong hua kou*

shu li shi cong shu) and *Testimonies of Japanese Invasion and Colonization Compilation* (*Jian zheng ri ben qin hua zhi min jiao yu*) edited by Qi Hongshen and *Cultural and Historical Data* (*Wen shi zi liao*) compilation edited by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committees (*Zhong guo ren min zheng zhi xie shang hui yi wei yuan hui*) in various counties and cities in Northeast China. This body of sources provided a great deal of personal narratives, dictations, and recollections that reflected the essence of the experiences of the people during the Manchukuo era. Indeed, following the proposal of Zhou Enlai to record and save the memories and histories of the past in order to pass the knowledge down to younger generations, post war narratives were systematically collected by the Chinese government since 1959. This body of sources was inevitably subjected to political censorship that favoured the Party. Exemplary of the CCP's political stance in regard to past sufferings, the majority of these post war narratives were thus meant to fulfil the political agenda by evidencing the improvements brought about by the Party in contrast with the sufferings of the past.⁷⁸ It is equally important to note that this body of materials was also subjected to changing political imperatives as it was collected over the course of a few decades, which would suggest some inconsistencies in the degree of censorship, and that the materials were inevitably constrained in different ways at different times and to different extents. Nonetheless, the numerous and rich personal narratives, dictations, and recollections reflecting the essence of the experiences of the people were undeniable, and the use of this combination of sources allows for a more balanced assessment of Chinese experiences in Manchukuo.

1.5.2. Interviews

While the above sources consist of the core primary dataset I use for this thesis, 12 qualitative interviews were conducted to supplement those, and were triangulated accordingly for confirmation and validation. Concentrated in Liaoning

⁷⁸ For a discussion on the political imperatives regarding the construction of post-war narratives see Rana Mitter, "Writing War: Autobiography, Modernity, and Wartime Narrative in Nationalist China, 1937-1946", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 18 (2008), pp. 187-210.

Province, the information obtained from the interviews provided crucial first-hand knowledge of everyday life in Manchukuo, which is all pertinent to this thesis.

Identifying and recruiting interviewees

Participants were recruited via multiple methods. I started by contacting my personal and extended networks in north-eastern China (grandparents, their friends, and other acquaintances) to reach out to potential respondents, which turned out to be inconclusive. I thus identified places where senior citizens were likely to cluster, and found that retirement homes and exercise grounds in public areas were good options to investigate, insofar as these are public, yet quiet spaces that would allow enough privacy for potential interviews.

If my network did not generate interviews directly, it proved to be helpful later on, as I was granted access to a few retirement homes thanks to the contacts generated by members of my extended network. Indeed, in order to be allowed to speak and interview any elderly person residing in a retirement home, I had to obtain the authorisation of the administrator in charge of the institution. While some administrators were understanding of my purpose and allowed me through, a few others refused me access to the residents, even after I told them that I was a doctoral student researching Manchukuo (I made it short) and that the interview was going to be conducted ethically without bothering anyone or the resident. It was only after contacts established through prior networking introduced me to the administrators that I was allowed through. Here, retirement home administrators were what the literature refers to as gatekeepers, and were key in obtaining access to potential interviewees.⁷⁹ The administrators and the nurses' contributions and help were essential insofar as they were able to judge whether potential interviewees were in good enough health or not, or whether they would have the capability to answer my questions.

⁷⁹ For issues regarding gatekeepers in fieldwork see Carla L. Reeves, "A difficult negotiation: fieldwork relations with gatekeepers", *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2010), pp. 315-331.

Some of the retirement homes I visited housed a few dozen elderly residents, but not all fitted in my interview criteria (see below). Moreover, administrators implicitly (sometimes very explicitly) expressed that I should not bother the residents too much by overstaying or enquiring each of them one by one. In order to filter them more efficiently, I asked nurses to help me identify beforehand residents that I could potentially interview – residents who were above 80 years of age, who they knew have lived in the region since they were young. Indeed, in order to be eligible for an interview, participants had to fulfil a few basic, yet essential criteria. Each interviewee thus must have lived in Dongbei (a more familiar term to Northeastern Chinese residents) during the time of the occupation at least as a child or teenager. Individuals born during the later years of Manchukuo were therefore not eligible insofar as they would not be able to recollect memories since they were too young.

All 12 interviews were thus conducted at a time and place chosen by the participant, and ultimately, most of the interviews took place in the retirement homes I visited in Liaoning, in the comfort of the interviewee's room, except for Interviewees 10 and 11, respectively recruited at an exercise ground and at a library, who both invited me (separately) to visit their own homes.

Interview process and structure

Before proceeding to the actual interview with the respondents, I made sure one last time that they corresponded to my pre-set criteria. I then reminded them of the purpose of the interview, which was simply to learn about their daily experiences and activities of whatever they could remember of the time during Manchukuo, in order to better understand Chinese people's experience of the

regime. I presented them with the information sheet and consent form to sign. Since both forms were in English, I translated each form directly to the interviewees and confirmed that they were happy to proceed on that basis. When going through the information sheet that I live-translated for them, I told the interviewees they could speak at ease without restriction, giving them the freedom to speak about anything they remembered and were willing to share. Respondents were also reminded that they could withdraw their participation at any time, without giving any reason, with no consequence for them at all. All respondents were asked if they were comfortable with the discussion being voice-recorded, and all agreed without hesitation when I told them I would transcribe our exchanges and eventually delete the recording.

The interview structure was very loose. The first few questions enquired the participant's basic demographic details (name, if they were willing to disclose it, current age, and place(s) of residence in Manchukuo). The second part mostly revolved around anything that the respondents could remember living under the colonial rule.

As the researcher interviewing the participants, the process was a reactive one for the most part. Since they were told to share anything they could remember that was related to their everyday activities, it was difficult to partition topics and themes cleanly. The interview flow was directed by the memories of the participants who often switched from one topic to another based on what they could recall, and I reacted and followed up accordingly, enquiring more details about whichever event, or instance was just mentioned. For example, if the interviewee said they used to live in a big city, I would enquire more specific questions about how living in the city was like on a daily basis, if during the entire time of the occupation they remained sedentary or had to relocate at any point, and for what reasons. This would later on, provide me with more details to better

understand some of the living differences between cities and rural regions. If the interviewee suddenly recalled a specific favourite childhood dish they often ate, I would enquire where they used to eat it, if it was home cooked, in their kitchen or in a shared space, if the cooking ingredients were expensive or difficult to obtain, where they acquired them, and as many details that mark one's everyday life. Occasionally, interviewees would make references to the presence of Japanese in their lives by mentioning very casually "there were a lot of Japanese"⁸⁰ for instance. I would then pick up on that comment, let them finish their story, and try to further enquire about this later in the interview. All throughout the interview, I punctuated my sentences with "If you are okay with this, can you tell me more about it?"⁸¹ to enquire more details, and with "It is okay if you don't remember the details clearly."⁸² to remind the interviewee they should not feel pressured to tell me anything.

When there were moments of silence because the interviewee seemed to have run out of stories to share by themselves, I would then enquire specific themes by asking broader questions that were related to everyday life and activities, for example: "Do you remember anything about your school days?", "Was it easy to shop for groceries?", "When you were sick, did you go see the doctor?", "Did you own a home or did you have to rent one?", "How was your home like?".⁸³

⁸⁰ "yu dao guo hen duo ri ben ren" in Chinese.

⁸¹ "Ru guo ke yi de hua, neng bu neng geng jia xiang xi de shuo yi xia?" in Chinese

⁸² "Ji bu de de hua ye mei guan xi" in Chinese.

⁸³ "Ni ji de shang xue shi hou de shi qing ma?", "Shang jie mai dong xi fang bian ma?", "Sheng bing qu kan guo yi sheng ma?", "Ni shi zu fang zi zhu hai shi you zi ji de fang zi?", and "Dang shi jia li tiao jian shi shen me yang?" respectively in Chinese.

Profiles of the participants

Appendix 1 lists the profiles of each of the 12 interviewees, and indicates their name if provided, date of the interview, place of residence in Manchukuo, gender, age, and where in the thesis their testimonies appeared. Two interviewees chose to remain anonymous (Interviewees 1 and 2), and three chose to give their surnames only (Interviewees 5, 8 and 9), replying [surname] plus grandpa/grandma⁸⁴ when asked. All the other interviewees disclosed their full names without hesitating, and when asked if they wanted to be pseudonymised or anonymised to protect their identity, told me that it was not necessary.

Ethical concerns

As explained above, I followed the most appropriate ethical practices in obtaining the respondents' consent, as approved by the University's ethics committee. It should be noted that I made sure with the nurses working in the retirement homes that participants had the competence to give consent. Interviewees 10 and 11 were also competent in that regard as well. As I had ensured it to the participants, interviews were transcribed, and recordings were deleted later on.

However, even though interviewees were informed about the content and purpose of the interview beforehand, questions related to participants' vulnerability could be raised given their (old) age, but also because of potential sensitive issues related to colonial discrimination or lack of equality, or simply, negative experiences and memories of suffering during atrocious episodes. Such

⁸⁴ For instance, He *ye ye* (grandpa He) and Liu *nai nai* (grandma Liu).

situations could potentially be difficult to deal with, which is why as soon as I detected any form of discomfort, I would immediately tell them not to feel obligated to share anything they did not want to talk about and switch topics before ending the interview. I encountered this particular case on one occasion while interviewing a participant who invited me for afternoon tea at his home for us to conduct the interview. However, within a few minutes, the man began weeping, most likely due to remembering painful memories. Following ethical best judgement, I chose not to question any further about his time during Manchukuo in order not to trigger any more discomfort for him, and we began speaking about his hobbies instead. Insofar as no information or valuable content could be extracted from this interview (since it was stopped within a few minutes), the interview was left out of the research sample.

Further considerations that needed to be taken into account across the entire process (from planning interviews, to conducting them, until I analysed the transcripts) regarded the truthfulness and accuracy of the stories and memories shared during the interview due to the respondents' older age, but also due to the characteristic nature of qualitative interviews. In order to offset any shortcoming this qualitative data could have, I triangulated the information collected during the interviews with the other primary sources collected during fieldwork, as well as with the broader discourses in the literature that frame Manchukuo.

1.6. Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of an introduction, four substantive chapters, and a conclusion chapter. Chapter One of the thesis introduces the theme as well as the background of this research. This chapter also contains a literature review and introduces the theoretical bases to this study.

Chapter Two is the first of four chapters devoted to research findings. This chapter focuses primarily on the daily lives and roles of the youths in Manchukuo. The assessment of the education that they received as well as their behaviour in classrooms reveals the Japanese authorities' endeavours in creating a new generation of active collaborators, an effort that ultimately failed. In addition, this chapter also acknowledges the conflicted identities of the youths, one that is associated with the newfound national consciousness of being a modern Manchukuo "citizen" but also retained a strong sense of Chinese values that the Japanese sought to extirpate. The general appearance of an appreciation of Japan's "superior culture" among the youths led to an outward obedience, but also generated profound resentment towards the harsh requirements of the Japanese, which was expressed in a rather discreet manner in their everyday activities.

Chapter Three details the various hardships that occurred in rural and urban Manchukuo. More precisely, this chapter establishes how the people's living standards were impacted by shortages of food staples and commodities as well as the social turbulence that followed. In this process, this chapter identifies how behaviours were shaped, as well as how the people negotiated their own terms for survival. Following the introduction of the monopolised distribution and rationing system after 1937, this chapter reveals how the process of obtaining and having access to goods under the context of scarcities heavily depended upon the

establishment of personal connections and favours, which took the edge off of the everyday hardships for some, but weigh down the lives of many.

Chapter Four examines the sense of “homelessness” among Manchukuo residents. In other words, this chapter takes the modernization and development efforts of the regime into consideration and highlights the consequences and impacts of the transformation of living environments of ordinary people. In essence, this chapter discovers how the authorities forcefully relocated parts of its rural population into defensive collective villages in the name of combating banditry and improving their lives, where in reality the rural residents often had to resort to living in primordial huts and sheds that lacked the most basic amenities. The nation-building mission in urban areas led to significant overhauls of major cities, in which public parks and boulevards gradually replaced the old and disordered alleyways and neighbourhoods. Consequently, countless residents and tenants were forced to relocate to small and cramped living spaces while being charged unreasonable prices by their landlords due to the limited supply.

Chapter Five considers the impacts of the various health and sanitation measures implemented by the Manchukuo authorities to the ordinary people. This chapter uncovers how the ordinary people were frequently subjected to mandatory sanitation duties and forceful vaccinations in the name of disease control, but which resulted in little improvements in their general health. The establishment of a modern health system came at the cost of traditional Chinese medicine and its practitioners, which were the main medical treatment means for the people prior to the founding of Manchukuo. This chapter showcases how traditional medicine was used as the scapegoat for modernization and how the increase of quality in terms of westernized medical care was accompanied by a decrease in the quantity of traditional practitioners, which placed severe constraints on the treatment opportunities for the ordinary people. Through the examination of opium, this

chapter details the widespread drug abuse among ordinary people under the semi-legalization laws implemented by the Manchukuo authorities, who forcefully transformed a large number of opium addicts into physical labourers to satisfy the demands for its Five-Year Plan after 1937.

The conclusion chapter draws upon the various elements discussed in the substantive chapters and summarises the findings as a whole. This chapter explores the implications of the thesis and also identifies its limitations as well as suggestions for future research. Although the ordinary people's stories of everyday encounters are neither dramatic nor unique, they remain important to the study of Manchukuo and they address a significant gap in the literature.

Chapter Two – Suffering Youths

2.1. Introduction

The formation of a new national identity was crucial in the Manchukuo authorities' attempt to cultivate the new generation of Manchukuoan youths to aid in the cause of the Japanese empire. However, whilst the *kominka* movement sustained a long-standing impact on the social practices of Koreans and inspired discourses for Taiwanese independence from China, few traces of this substantial effort of Japan to create active and willing collaborators can still be found among the people in post-war Northeast China.¹ This chapter intends to address the reasons for the ultimate failure in the Japanese efforts to create a new identity in Manchukuo by examining the people that made up the new generation of the regime through their behaviour and responses to the education that was given to them.

Although Manchukuo was presented as a sovereign state, it was independent in name only, which was enough for the Japanese authorities to introduce dramatic changes and interfere with the education system in the regime over the years. Residues of the warlord administration were quickly scrapped and replaced with educational policies that favoured the new rulers. Shortly following the establishment of the puppet state, Japanese personnel were assigned to more than half of all influential positions within the new government's education sector.²

¹ See Chou Wan-yao, "The Kominka movement in Taiwan and Korea: Comparisons and interpretations," in *The Japanese Wartime Empire*, eds., Duus, Myers and Peattie, 40-68; See also Ching, *Becoming "Japanese"*, 15-32.

² "Dui qinzhan dongbei diqu de jiaoyu qinlue (Educational aggression and invasion of the Northeast)," in *Riben dui hua jiaoyu qinlue: Dui riben qinhua jiaoyu de yanjiu*

Equipped with substantial power over general academic affairs, the Japanese administrators reformed the existing primary education system in attempt to reverse the damages caused by the occupation. Consequently, parents of eligible pupils were threatened with financial penalties unless they placed their children in mixed schools that were supposedly Chinese, but were in fact headed by a Japanese Vice-Principal who retained decisional authority.³

However, even though the Japanese made education available to all people regardless of their social classes, it did not imply that the well-being of their subjects was an utmost priority for the authorities in the regime. The compulsory approach towards education was key in bringing the attendance rate across the regime back to an acceptable level, where 9,128 out of the 14,330 primary schools reopened by July 1933, and 173 out of the 194 secondary schools became operational by 1937.⁴ With time, secondary schools were divided into boys' schools and girls' schools in late 1937 to cater to the practical needs of the regime.⁵ Accommodating the New Academic Structure implemented the same year, girls' schools emphasized on the cultivation of "wifely virtues (*fu de*)" whilst boys' schools heavily focused on the development of labouring habits, which will be explored in greater detail further in this chapter.

yu pipan (Chinese education under the Japanese Invasion: A critique of education under the Japanese invasion), *Riben dui zhongguo de wenhua qinlue yanjiu congshu*, ed., Qi Hongshen (Beijing: kunlun chuban she, 2005), p. 46.

³ Song Enrong and Yu Zixia eds., *Riben qinhua jiaoyu quanshi* (The complete history of education under Japanese invasion) (Beijing: Renminjiaoyu chuban she, 2005), vol. 1, p. 124; See also Manzhou guo wenjiaobu xuewu si, *Quanguo xuexiao tongji: Kangde yuannian shier yue mo xianzai* (Statistics of schools in the country: From 1935 until now) (Hsinking: Kangde tushu yinshua suo, 1935).

⁴ Song and Yu eds., *Riben qinhua jiaoyu quanshi* (The complete history of education under Japanese invasion), p. 81-82, 84.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

The key point to comprehend the behaviour showcased in the daily activities of young people is to examine the constructed identities that were imposed upon them. In its initial phase, the authorities placed strong emphasis on the creation of a new identity that centred itself around traditional Confucian ideologies which advocated racial harmony. In line with the efforts to present the newly created Manchukuo as an independent entity to the international audience, the authorities encouraged students to perceive the regime as a nation in Northeast Asia with its own long and established history that was, to a certain degree, distinguishable from both China and Japan.⁶ Following Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933, Manchukuo authorities began to gradually downplay the influence of traditional Chinese ideologies, which was achieved by replacing the role of such conceptions with the significance of Japan as the leader to guide Manchukuo into prosperity. After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the national identity was reinforced with a stronger association with Japan, emphasizing the need for youths to adapt to the "superior" elements of Japanese culture and customs. This trend was further intensified after the beginning of the Pacific War in 1942, whereas the self-sacrificing spirit of Bushido became the dominant element and was instilled in youths via mandatory participation in military training and labouring activities.⁷

This chapter defines the new generation of Manchukuo as Manchukuoan students who started their education after the establishment of the regime. Indeed, to study the people who were not subjected to any influence from the previous

⁶ Lou Zhe, *Geke changshi wenda (Questions and answers of common subjects)* (Hsinking: Qizhi shudian, 1943), p. 48; See also "Manri shuangfang diyue de jichu an (yuanwen ji xiuzheng wen) (Agreements between Manchukuo and Japan (Original and revised text)," in *Puyi sicang weiman midang (Puyi's Possession of Bogus Manchukuo confidential files)*, ed., Liaoning sheng dang'an guan (Beijing: Dang'an chuban she, 1990), p. 36.

⁷ Naoki Saito, *Manzhouguozheng zhidao zonglan (Comprehensive political guidance of Manchukuo)* (Hsinking: Manzhou chanye diaochahui, 1944), p. 257; See also Andrew Hall, "Constructing a 'Manchurian' Identity: Japanese Education in Manchukuo, 1931-1945" (PhD diss, University of Pittsburgh, 2003), pp. 311-313.

warlord administration grants for a more equitable analysis of the reasons behind their behaviours and actions as “Manchukuoans”. By doing so, it also allows the case of Manchukuo, a regime with a relatively short history, to be more comparable objectively to Korea and Taiwan, which were both subjected to a much longer duration of Japanese rule that made assimilation of its younger generations possible (35 years and 50 years of colonial rule respectively). Furthermore, this chapter also focuses mainly on senior year elementary and secondary level school students, as they were the most amenable to ideological and political indoctrination by the Manchukuo authorities while also having the capability to make rational choices and decisions compared with younger age groups. In such a way, this allows us to limit the scope to the period after the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, in which the majority of Manchukuoan students within the focus of this chapter were either on their way to becoming or already high school attendees.

In his innovative research, Duara highlighted Japan’s desire to formulate a competent Manchukuo identity to strengthen domestic control but yet at the same time weak in its territorial sense to maintain Japan’s interest and superiority over the region. As he argues, Manchukuo’s national identity in the international context was ultimately expressed as a “spatial representation of a frontier nation” that upheld Japan’s claims and severely sabotaged Chinese sovereignty.⁸ With the primary focus on Manchukuoan students in Manchukuo, this chapter thus begins by examining the emergence of public and private selves among youths, and shows how despite their outward obedience to imposed ways of being, students were in fact challenging the regime’s national ideologies in a private manner. This enables us to better understand the arduous processes by which the Manchukuoan youths, whom the school authorities strived to mold into the future generation of loyal subjects, challenged their constructed identities through minor acts of everyday resistance. The chapter then moves onto discussing how such a fragile balance

⁸ Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 248.

shifted and took a turn because of new educational policies endorsing a discriminatory, militaristic and slave-like curriculum. This reveals how the authorities failed in the construction of a new Manchukuoan identity. Through the detailed examination of youths' everyday life, this chapter sheds new light on the realities of education in Manchukuo, and how its structural changes affected youths' daily experiences and responses. With the examination of Japanese cultural aggressiveness under the disguise of Pan-Asianism, this chapter demonstrates more particularly how students' hidden acts of resistance contrast with the dominant literature that tends to focus on the macro-features of education under the colonial rule.

2.2. Long “lived” the Empire of Japan

“... The imperial army fights in the frontline every day in order to defend the Greater East Asia Sphere and to secure our country’s safety. We all feel sad to witness such noble sacrifices and we feel ashamed to be safe and sound and not contributing to the war. Therefore, we should work hard [to contribute to Japan]. A little more sweat is nothing, we just need to tighten our belts and we can handle it...”⁹

The making of Manchukuo’s national consciousness for the new generations of Manchukuo was largely evident in the mandatory ceremonial rituals and school curriculums. To be sure, the Japanese influence was prevalent in practically every aspect of youth’s lives. The Manchukuo government in place implemented a series of strict disciplinary rules and pro-Japan activities into the daily routines of the youths, in school and in their wider lives. As such, students in Manchukuo were required to attend ceremonies at the beginning of each month, which were usually performed in nearby monuments and landmarks that were erected in remembrance of Nogi Maresuke and the Japanese soldiers lost since the Russo-Japanese War. Manchukuoan students were required to pay respects to the martyred servicemen by prostrating to the east and listen to their principal’s lectures regarding the importance of Pan-Asianism, as well as how to devote themselves to the Japanese emperor and goodwill between Manchukuo and Japan.¹⁰ Although Manchukuo was established as a sovereign state, these types of ceremonies conveyed the messages of Manchukuo’s dependent status to Japan and

⁹ “Wang Ziheng jianju Zhang Jinghui de cailiao (Wang Ziheng’s report on Zhang Jinghui)” in *Weimanzhouguo de tongzhi yu neimu - Weiman guanyuan gongshu* (The inside Rule of Manchukuo - Officials Confession), ed., Zhongyang dang’an guan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), p. 48.

¹⁰ “Weiman wenjiaobu xunling guanyu jianguo jingshen puji chedi zhi jian (bogus Manchukuo Ministry of Culture and Education instructions on the complete popularization of the founding nation spirit)”, in *Liaoningjiaoyu shizhi ziliao* (Liaoning Educational Historical Documents Compilation), ed., Liaoning sheng jiaoyu zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chuban she, 1990), p. 92.

how the Manchukuoan students should maintain their loyalty to both states for the greater good of Asia.

This particular sense of Pan-Asianism and the justification of Japan's right to be the caretaker of Manchukuo was expressed in the form of anti-western propaganda. Indeed, anti-Western activities were ubiquitous, organized in schools throughout Manchukuo. Posters that contained the words "ying (British)" and "mei (American)" had an additional Chinese component character "彡 (*quan zi pang*)"¹¹ attached to the character to indicate the brutality of Western imperialism and the damage it inflicted upon the colonized peoples. As Japan further entrenched its position in Asia, war correspondents were frequently invited to give lectures in Manchukuo classrooms to propagate the "bloodshed and sacrifices" of the Japanese army to liberate and remove Western imperialism out of the "small and weak" Southeast Asian countries. One Manchukuoan high school student, Yan Jiaren, who studied at Lüshun National School, recalled attending one such presentation that detailed the struggles that the Japanese army faced in the tropical rainforests of Malaysia and Myanmar, where they suffered from deadly mosquito bites and encountered harsh weather conditions. The graphical images of Japan's militaristic hardships to relieve the Asian peoples, in Yan's own words aroused much hatred among the students against the "savage and barbaric" Western imperialists.¹²

This well-orchestrated display of prestige granted the Japanese their superior status in the schools of Manchukuo, which was also reflected in the series

¹¹ '彡' is a Chinese component of a character which does not have any specific meanings but was often used as components of Chinese letters to write animals such as "狗" (*gou/dog*), "狼" (*lang/wolf*), "猕" (*mi/monkey*) and "狮" (*shi/lion*) etc.

¹² Yan Jiaren, "guandongzhou jiaoyu qinliji (Personal experience of education in the Kwantung leased territory)," in *Mosha bule de zuizheng: riben qinhua jiaoyu koushu shi* (Undeniable Evidence: Oral history of education under Japanese invasion), ed., Qi Hongshen (Beijing: Renmin jiaoyu chuban she, 2005), p. 52.

of instructional documents given to school teachers on how to further convey these types of messages to their students. One issued by the Minister of Civil Affairs Lü Ronghuan in 1940 placed great emphasis on the teaching of Japan being the only nation in East Asia that has the ability to represent and administrate the claims of all peoples within the region. Therefore, it said all peoples of East Asia should unite and follow after Japan's footsteps to pursue the ultimate goal of establishing the paradise and ideal nation.¹³ Indeed, this sense of Japanese prestige and authority was not only evident in school lectures, but also expressed outside schools as well. "Yao sha gei sha (give whatever they want) [to the Japanese]" was the catch phrase of Manchukuo's Prime Minister Zhang Jinghui, which later became his nickname as Zhang stated that "all will be done in the spirit of one moral and one heart between Manchukuo and Japan" and to "support the Imperial Army's Holy War",¹⁴ by giving instructions to the teenagers that they should be obedient to their Japanese superiors, and promising that the more obedient they were, "the more promising their future will be".¹⁵

To a certain extent, the conceptions of ethnic strife against the demonised west and a united Asian community were constructed in a way for the Manchukuo students to recognise and respect Japan as the leader of Asia both subconsciously and in a direct manner. In this sense, the national consciousness of being Manchukuoan was always associated with the help of Japan. During his school life in Fengtian No. 5 National School, Gao Changwu along with his schoolmates did not mind too much about the patriarchal authority of the Japanese on their school campus. He wrote:

¹³ Lü Ronghuan, "Gao quanguo jiaoshi zhujun (Instructions to the National teachers)", *Jianguo Jiaoyu*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (1940) pp. 8-9.

¹⁴ Zhang Fulin, *Hanjian miwen lu* (Confidential Hanjian Records), Wei man shi congshu (Jilin: Jilin jiaoyu chuban she, 1990), pp. 1-15.

¹⁵ Liu Diqian, "wo suo liaojie de weiman jianguo daxue (My understandings of the Jianguo university)," in *Weiman wenhua* (Bogus Manchukuo Culture), Weiman Shiliao Congshu, ed., Sun Bang (Changchun: Jilin renmin chuban she, 1993), p. 602.

“... The Japanese told us that the Mukden Incident and the Second World War was because that the British and Americans all wanted to have a piece of us. But Japan had the sense of righteousness, so they did not allow the westerners to do so. At the time, I was thinking if the western invaders came to Manchuria, it would not necessarily be good for us. The Japanese won the war, and we do not need to live under Western colonization and occupation.”¹⁶

Being sympathetic to Japan’s cause of liberating and protecting the Asian peoples, it was not uncommon for ordinary schoolboys like Guo to come to the conclusion that no matter what the Japanese did, they were still better compared to the western imperialists because they were “Asians after all”. The importance of “being Asians after all” justified the Japanese leadership in East Asia. Folk ballads of racial unity against white imperialism and the Holy War of East Asia were prevalent in schoolyards and taught tirelessly in textbooks, which were sung passionately by the Manchukuoan students.¹⁷ Among them was the Asian Youth song (*Ya zhou qing nian ge*):

Huang zhong ying xiang huang hai quan (The Yellow peoples should enjoy the rights of the Yellow sea)
Ya ren ying zhong ya zhou tian (The Asians should farm the Asian lands)
Qing nian! Qing nian! (Youths! Youths!)
Qie mo tong zhong zi xiang can (Please do not fight each other)
Zuo jiao ou mei zhuo xian bian (And wait for the West to thrash)
Bu pa si, bu ai qian (Do not be afraid to die, do not yearn for money)
Zhang fu jue bu shou ren lian (A real man will not take pity from others)
Hong shui zong tao tian (Even if the disasters are monstrous)
Zhi shou wan kuang lan (We can single-handedly turn the tide)
Fang bu fu shi bi tie guan (We will not disappoint our disciplines)
Hou zhe xian xian (And our sages and ancestors)¹⁸

¹⁶ No. 0341 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen (Shenyang: Liaohai chuban she, 2005), p. 273.

¹⁷ No. 0776 in *ibid.*, p. 660.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Ostensibly, the Asian Youth song served its purpose to demonstrate to the Manchukuoan students how much the Japanese authorities were willing to contribute to the cause of racial unity in Asia and the fight against the imperialistic West. In a constructed manner, the passionate lyrics of the carefully crafted patriotic songs reinforced and directed the Manchukuoan students' attentions westwards, towards a powerful enemy that proved its militaristic capabilities in the eyes of the Japanese empire, but a largely vague and obscure concept that only projected its harm and evilness in lectures and textbooks in the eyes of the Manchukuoan students.

Without a doubt, the symbolic significance behind anti-western propaganda was intended for more than just fortifying the image of Japan's unquestionable role of leadership of Asian peoples. The efforts to maintain Japan's "superiority" and the power of awe over the Manchukuo students without carrying the full force of Japanization like in Korea or Taiwan placed the Japanese authorities in a precarious position, which often required the bending of a few truths here and there to serve the purpose of propaganda. More precisely, the Asian Youth song, introduced to the Manchukuo students in 1937, came with an ironic twist, as it was originally named "the Yellow People's song (*Huang zhong ge*)" and created by CCP' co-founder Li Dazhao to alert Chinese citizens against the consequences of following the Twenty-One Demands (*Taika Nijuikkajo Yokyu*) proposed by Japan in 1915.¹⁹

Even more so, not only was the original author and his implications concealed by the authorities, the topic of China itself was often considered to be taboo and was taught with caution by teachers. Indeed, despite the majority of the youth was of Han Chinese descent –and therefore not ethnically Manchurian (*Man zu/Manchu*), the Japanese authorities had them use new appellations to address

¹⁹ Li Shuling, "Li dazhao huangzhongge bei hanjianhua zhenxiang (The truth behind Li Dazhao's huangzhong ge)", *Wenshi Jinghua*, Vol. 6 (2013), pp. 66-67.

one another, or to refer to themselves. Consequently, “*man xi*” or “*man ren*” (Manchukuoan/Manchurian)²⁰ could habitually be heard across the schoolyards and classrooms of Manchukuo. This artificial appellation was introduced by the Japanese authorities as a way to instil a distance between the youths and their Chinese roots and cultural heritage, backbones of their once Chinese identities. Another way for the authorities to have the youths move further away from their heritage, was to control the amount of knowledge passed onto them in classes. For example, teachers were instructed to deliver filtered lectures. Lessons on Chinese history represented a minor part of the history module, and were taught along with the histories of Korea, Mongolia, and to a certain extent, India, all of which were re-categorised under “Oriental history (*Dong yang shi*)”.²¹ On the other hand, modern Republican China was portrayed as a nation deep in social turmoil, whilst the Kuomintang government was associated with its anti-Japanese agendas and the various upheavals and disturbances that it brought to its people.²²

However, as the Second Sino-Japanese War dragged on, teachings on China, or “*Shina (Zhi na)*”, the preferred term popularised by the Japanese authorities, witnessed a steady amount of attention paid to current affairs.²³ Japanese aggression was thus reinterpreted as the holy war for liberation, a necessary but selfless act taken by the Japanese empire, which the people of China embraced with open arms. This was illustrated through the successive and frequent news of military victories that often became central topics of discussion in the schools of

²⁰ The correct term to address the people of Manchukuo is Manchukuoan (*Man zhou guo ren*). However, in the Chinese context, the term “*Man zhou guo ren*” could be abbreviated as “*Man ren*”, which could also refer to ethnic Manchurians (*Man zu ren*). Due to the ambiguous nature, both terms were used interchangeably to address the people of Manchukuo in a variety of primary documents and accounts.

²¹ Lou Zhe, *Geke changshi wenda (Questions and answers of common subjects)* (Hsinking: Qizhi shudian, 1943), pp. 68-82.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

²³ For a comprehensive analysis on the usage of the term “*Shina*” See Joshua A. Fogel, “New Thoughts on an Old Controversy: *Shina* as a Toponym for China,” *Sino-Platonic Papers*, Vol. 229, (August 2012), pp. 1-25.

Manchukuo.²⁴ Indeed, despite being far beyond their understandings, repeated news of triumph by the Japanese military often produced a sense of pride among the Manchukuo students, who developed a new form of belonging, rallying themselves to a greater cause that strived to bring equality to the Asian peoples. Wang Chengjiang, a student in Longjiang county, remembered such moments:

“... One day in Japanese class, our Japanese teacher pinned a battlefield schematic report map onto the blackboard to show how victorious the Japanese imperial army was. Our teacher told us the imperial army has now occupied approximately twenty cities from China including Tsingtao, Shanghai, and Nanking, and is currently advancing towards the south of the Yangtze River. Later that day in the afternoon, all of our school’s teachers and students joined together in a parade, in which we were singing Japanese military songs while holding both the Manchukuo and Japanese flag and marched down the streets.... We also shouted slogans of “long live the unity between Manchukuo and Japan!” and “long live the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere!” as we were all filled with joy.”²⁵

However, as they delivered the good news to their parents, Wang and his classmates’ excitement and new-found passion were met with anger and disappointment. Indeed, insofar as in the midst of the “holy war”, alienating oneself from the “enemy” was part and parcel of the process of building a new national consciousness among the youths, those who had not taken part in the making of the new imposed identity could not help but oppose strongly this forced process. “My father told me not to shout *banzai*, and said that those are all our cities”; “My mother does not allow me to say good things about Japan”; “My dad got angry, and he does not want me to say that the imperial army was victorious”; those were the post-parade conversations that Wang and his classmates Huang Shide, Bai Zhongyu,

²⁴ Lou Zhe, *Geke changshi wenda (Questions and answers of common subjects)* (Hsinking: Qizhi shudian, 1943), p. 47.

²⁵ No. 0977 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu (Witness Japanese Colonial Education)*, ed., Qi Hongshen, 585.

Bo Xianchen, Wu Wansheng and Wang Junshan had after being scolded by their parents.²⁶ Certainly, parents who had lived days before Manchukuo often stigmatised the Japanese authorities, and generally had more than just dissenting views of Japan's war efforts. Their negative perceptions thus seeded doubts in the youths who questioned their roots, mostly with regards to their ethnic origins and nationality.

In addition to the confusion raised during casual conversations between the Manchukuoan students and/or with their parents, the constructed sense of national consciousness was challenged in obscure ways, sometimes during the most trivial acts occurring in the youths' everyday activities. Jiang Shaofu, a student at Fengtian Xiaodong National School, expressed his doubts one day regarding the textbooks that were handed to him by his teacher in Japanese class. "One of the things that made me feel weird was that the Japanese textbooks had 'national language (*Guo yu*)' printed on its cover". However, Jiang also pointed out that, "Our Manchukuoan (Chinese) language textbooks also had 'national language' printed on its cover. I often heard my family mumbling [about China], so I thought to myself, how did the Japanese language become our national language when we already had our own?"²⁷ A similar type of suspicion was raised by Li Hongze, an elementary school student in Xingcheng, during one of his after-class discussions with his senior schoolmates about the foundation of Manchukuo. However, when Li uttered his confusions about the lecture he had received about the Japanese driving the warlords out of Manchuria, he only heard more rumours and speculations in return, as his friends were equally puzzled.²⁸

Nonetheless, in most cases, the youths' confusion and questions were met with vague, standardised answers. The school authorities and parents alike thus

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ No. 0974 in *ibid.*, p. 722.

²⁸ No.0239 in *ibid.*, p. 764.

incessantly retorted “Never you mind”, and similar other non-answers to dispel the youths’ uncertainties. This near-conditioned response was justified by the fact that having “ideological problems” was fundamentally not tolerated by the authorities. Moreover, various surveillance and intimidation methods were implemented to enforce the making of the youths’ national consciousness in a consistent manner. To be sure, surveillance meant that the behaviours and actions of the students were closely monitored, and at all times. Intimidation meant that those who failed to properly associate themselves with the constructed ideologies were subjected to harsh disciplinary punishments, which often resulted in physical violence. However, not all students placed under surveillance were necessarily under intimidation. Those who moved on from those doubts, content with the above-mentioned standardised answers, enjoyed a school life relatively free from such organised terrors. On the other hand, unfortunate students who did not accept those answers, and kept doubting their Manchukuoan identity, told a completely different story.

“... Our family was woken up by the sound of our dog barking and the banging on the door. My mom hastily hid me and my little sister into the firewood piles while my father rushed to open the door without even having the time to put his shoes on. Two Japanese police officers violently hit my dad in the face for not opening the door sooner. My sister and I were very scared and started to shake as we saw that the corner of our dad’s mouth was full of blood.”²⁹

Such was the encounter of Liu Guizhi with the police officers in their attempt to arrest potential “ideological criminals (*si xiang fan*)” on an ordinary evening. As a student from Lishu county, Liu recalled a similar situation wherein the Japanese police had previously caused a ruckus at her school, creating chaos among startled students as the police rounded up suspects in the schoolyard.³⁰ Constant suspicion was characteristic of the Japanese authorities’ mentality, which only increased over time, affecting more and more spheres of the youths’ lives. For instance,

²⁹ No. 0701 in *ibid.*, p. 758.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

publications and magazines dating from the warlord era were discarded, and dictionaries that contained the word “China” or reference books with information regarding the Sino-Japanese treaties were either blanked out with black ink or prohibited altogether.³¹

In a way, as randomly as the students started discovering hints about their concealed Chinese identities while carrying on their ordinary activities, the Japanese authorities were also trying to find signs of “ideological failure” in parallel, in the most arbitrary ways. A post-war Confession made in 1954 by Imazeki Kitaro, the squad leader of the War Affairs Ideology Countermeasures Division (*Zhan wu ke si xiang dui ce ban*) in Fengtian under the command of Kobayashi Hitori, revealed how the gendarmerie would actively plant spies and informants to monitor potential “ideological criminals” among the students. During this process, portraits of Sun Yat-sen, as well as posters and leaflets that advocated the Three Principles of the People (*San min zhu yi*) and the Mukden Incident as a national humiliation were regularly used to trick out any “illegal” behaviours from the suspects.³² He Xilin, a student of Wenhua High School in Fengtian, recalled being lured into one of those carefully orchestrated traps implemented in a movie theatre by the Japanese gendarmerie in 1937.

³¹ Song Guangbi, “Benxi ‘sixiang fan’ an qinli ji (My experiences during the Benxi ideological crime case),” in *Weiman wenhua* (Bogus Manchukuo Culture), ed., Sun Bang, 509; See also Xia Deyuan, “Zai weimanzhouguo dang jiaoshi (Being a teacher in Bogus Manchukuo),” in *Mosha bule de zuizheng* (Undeniable Evidence), ed., Qi Hongshen, 144.

³² “Imazeki Kitaro’s report on the crimes of Kobayashi Hitori,” in *Weiman xianjing tongzhi* (The Japanese Gendarmerie in Manchukuo), Riben diguo zhuyi qinhua dang’an ziliao xuanbian, eds., Zhongyang dang’an guan, Zhongguo di’er lishi dang’an guan, Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), p. 246.

“... the Guanglu movie theatre in Zhong Street advertised a film regarding the 29th Army’s³³ military drills on one of the big billboards in front of the theatre. The advertisement of the film had stirred up some excitements among my schoolmates. We were all shocked that it could be released [for a film of this type] ... I remembered that I rushed to purchase a ticket and sat in the centre-right of the theatre.”³⁴

However, shortly after the film started, the lights in the theatre suddenly turned on as the nightmare began. Fully-armed Japanese officers and gendarmes erupted from all corners of the theatre and marched onto the stage. An announcement was made to the audience to remind and warn them of the consequences should they not remain quietly seated while the soldiers conducted their searches. “We only realised after the facts happened that the whole idea of the film was just a hoax to test and inspect our ideologies and thoughts”, stated Zhang as he recalled several people being arrested and taken away by the Japanese.³⁵ Not unexpectedly, the scheduled film was not shown to the audience.

In parallel, school authorities were also actively hunting for hidden dissidents. School librarians would frequently scour through student dormitories during random inspections, and anything suspected to be out of the ordinary was systematically reported back to the Japanese gendarmerie for them to carry out further investigations.³⁶ Yang Fuyi, who attended Dehui County National School, recalled his classmate being accused of an “ideological crime” by their Japanese

³³ Formerly named as the Northwest Army (*xi bei jun*), the Chinese 29th Army was well known for its participation in active resistance against the Japanese after the Mukden Incident under the leadership of Song Zheyuan. See Marjorie Dryburgh, *North China and Japanese Expansion 1933-1937: Regional Power and the National Interest* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).

³⁴ No. 0944 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 136.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Bai Yingping, “Zhongrishi sheng he zhongri tongxuejian de guanxi (Relationships between Chinese and Japanese Students),” in *Mosha bule de zuizheng* (Undeniable Evidence), ed., Qi Hongshen, 334.

school principle, merely after his classmate had made a “*Tengu* ate the sun (*Tian gou chi ri*)” remark while witnessing an eclipse.³⁷ Even though “*Tengu* (literally, heavenly dog) ate the sun” had no political meaning attached to it, and was simply a rhetorical way of describing the astronomical phenomenon, the Japanese authorities still considered the remark to be a violation and taboo term. The sole fact that “sun (*ri* in Chinese)” could refer to Japan (*Ri ben*), made the phrase “the heavenly dog ate Japan” unacceptable to the authorities.

Superstitious or not, the main message behind such drastic measures was simple and clear. The Japanese authorities considered any Manchukuoan student who dared to voice the slightest of their doubts out loud as hidden enemies, even if it was unintentional. This distrustful mindset gained momentum and became most evident in the outline of ideology services and countermeasures (*Si xiang duice fuwu yao gang*) issued by the Japanese Gendarmerie Headquarters in May 1940. Based on the long list of potential targets identified by the document, the gendarmerie emphasised the need for “information gathering” and corresponding “preventive measures” to ensure the most important priority of “the suppression and prevention of ideologies that would potentially harm the interests of Manchukuo and Japan”³⁸

In the schools of Manchukuo, this mostly translated into numerous accusations targeted at students accused of having “anti-Manchukuo and Japan (*Fan man kang ri*)” thoughts and activities. The authorities considered these to be serious allegations, which therefore resulted in an interrogation, followed by a severe beating. In some instances, suspected students were sent to Correctional Counseling

³⁷ No. 1034 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 728.

³⁸ “Sixiang duice fuwu yao gang (the outline of ideology services and countermeasures),” in *Weiman xianjing tongzhi* (The Japanese Gendarmerie in Manchukuo), eds., Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan and Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan, 216.

Facilities (*Jiao zheng fu dao yuan*) under the orders of the Security Corrections Act in order to conduct further “crime preventions” and “behavioural corrections”.³⁹ However, although the correctional facilities were supposed to have a corrective counselling function, they were, in fact, barely distinguishable from prisons and labour camps. Detainees were subjected to long periods of labouring activities stretching up to more than twelve hours a day, and were given pitiable amounts of rations that would often make the detainees sick. A testimony from Zhang Yufeng detailed the horrific and inhumane correctional methods he had to use when he served in the counselling staff at the Quegang Correctional Counselling facility:

“... There was an escaping incident during my first ten days working at the facility. We captured around 20 escapees and three of them were beaten to death on the spot... our chief Shigematsu would hang the detainees from the ceiling beam and beat them with cowhides made out of rubber tubes to interrogate and correct them. Whenever the detainees passed out from the beating, Shigematsu would wake them up with cold water and beat them until they passed out again...”⁴⁰

Without a doubt, stories like these occurring in correctional facilities rapidly became rumours that made their way back to the schoolyards, with fear spreading like wildfire among the students which the Japanese school authorities did not fail to exploit to further warn students. Threats such as “I know four words to take your life (*Fan man kang ri*)” were used by the senior school directors to intimidate the students into behaving according to their ways.⁴¹ In a way, these types of threats

³⁹ “Bao’an jiaozheng fa zhaiyao (A summary of the Security Corrections Act),” in *Dongbei jingji lueduo* (Predatory of the Economy of the Northeast), Riben diguo zhuyi qinhua dang’an ziliao xuanbian, eds., Zhongyang dang’an guan and Zhongguo di’er lishi dang’an guan and Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), p. 917.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 924.

⁴¹ Su Chen, “benxi dushuhui dui wo de yingxiang (The Influence of the Benxi Reading Group),” in *Hei’an xia de xinghuo – wei manzhouguo wenxue qingnian ji riben dangshi ren koushu* (Spark under the dark – Dictations of literary youths and

were efficient insofar as intimidations often turned into actual accusations, even though they seem unjustified, ambiguous, or unreasonable. Perhaps one of the most widespread rumours among school students in Manchukuo was the infamous “Gao Baicang Incident” that occurred in April 1941. In the eyes of the school authorities, Gao Baicang was a merit student of Jilin Shidao University, selected as one of the very lucky few to attend a graduation trip to Japan and report his impressions and experiences in front of his class. Yao Zhixue, who was Gao’s schoolmate, attended the presentation and recalled:

“... In the beginning, Gao Baicang was giving his speech in Japanese as he was using a prepared and vetted script approved by the school in advance. However, halfway through his speech, he suddenly stopped and told us that he felt awkward to speak to us in Japanese, and continued his presentation in Chinese.”⁴²

The bold act was echoed with applause from the Manchukuoan students while the Japanese students who attended the meeting were in such shock that some of them protested against this act by leaving the room.⁴³ Shortly after, a statement was passed down from the school authorities, accusing Gao of moral failure and deemed him an “anti-Manchukuo and Japan” criminal. Soon enough, Gao was “removed” from the campus. With his whereabouts unknown, a wave of investigative actions was initiated by the school to search for dissidents. More Manchukuoan students “disappeared” in a ritual like manner, as most of them were taken away by the Japanese authorities late in the evening. With the unrelenting terror spreading across the campus, rumours continued to be passed around, some of which speculated that Gao had received a severe beating and was expelled from

the Japanese in Bogus Manchukuo), *Zhonghua koushu lishi cong shu*, ed., Qi Hongshen (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chuban she, 2011), p. 138.

⁴² No. 0161 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 147.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

school. Other rumours, however, insisted that the young man had been imprisoned in a correctional facility somewhere far away.⁴⁴

What was known to the students as the “Gao Baicang Incident” officially ended a year later, with the protagonist returning back to school with a deaf ear. Like many convicted “anti-Manchukuo and Japan” criminals at the time, Gao was detained in a closely monitored environment whilst being subjected to frequent beatings by his dormitory supervisors Yuzuki and Shikuda, as well as humiliations and tortures by the Japanese students who had the chance to lay their hands on him. “[At first] many of my friends advised me to flee and some tried to help by giving me money, but it was too late already”, Gao recalled. “My philosophy teacher Fujiwara even passed down a note to me telling me that I should commit suicide [to save myself from the humiliation]”.⁴⁵ Gao’s first reaction when he was brought into interrogation was to try to explain his innocence:

“[From my trip] I focused on the cultural aspects of Japan and gave a presentation on the importance of the Latinization of Chinese characters... During my report, I remembered witnessing how Japanese pupils can write words such as chicken (チキン/*chikin*) as soon as they learned *Gojuon*, while it took so much longer for Manchukuoan (Chinese) pupils to learn to write chicken (雞/*ji*) due to the complexity of the word. So, I thought Chinese characters must Latinized as well.⁴⁶ As I got more and more excited in my

⁴⁴ No. 0150 in *ibid.*, p. 128.

⁴⁵ Gao Baicang, “Gaobaicang shijian qianqian houhou (The Cause of the Gao Baicang Incident),” in *Liuwang – kangzhan shiqi dongbei liuwang xuesheng koushu* (In exile – Dictations of northeastern students in exile during the anti-Japanese war), Zhonghua koushu lishi cong shu, ed., Qi Hongshen (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chuban she, 2008), p. 36.

⁴⁶ According to the implications of the narrative, “Latinized” should refer to “Romanized”. However, as the term ‘Latinized’ was used by Gao himself, this dissertation hereby adopts the term “Latinized” and “Latinization” as per the original narrative.

speech, I unthinkingly started to continue my speech in my native tongue.”⁴⁷

Claiming the incident to be an honest mistake was unfortunately not a good enough explanation for Gao to be exempted from the charges. A series of meetings ensued to discuss Gao’s case, wherein the majority of the faculty members recommended expelling the student and handing him over to the gendarmerie. Luckily for Gao, his former biology teacher Abe opposed this decision, arguing that no actual evidence of “ideological failure” was found in Gao’s scripted speech nor possessions. Concerned about the potential damages a convicted political criminal could do to the school’s reputation and honour, Gao ended up being suspended, and subjected to receive “ideological corrections” under the guidance of academic dean Sugo in his home.⁴⁸

The deliberation of Gao’s case supports the idea that students who drifted away from the state’s ideology could still be reclaimed and saved, which consisted an essential part of Manchukuo’s national consciousness. Surely, the authorities commonly believed “ideological failures” to be the symptomatic remnants of the “backwardness” generated from the past environment, as though it was a type of social disease that could be eradicated if students followed the instructed guidelines. For more than three months, Gao thus led a simple yet repetitive life to gain his own redemption by studying ideological books and manuscripts in the mornings, labouring in the afternoons, and reporting his learning experience in the evenings. Eventually, in April 1942, after Gao finished studied the essence of the Japanese spirit, completing his daily routine, Sugo asked about his reading experience: “Should I tell you the truth?”, “Yes, speak your mind”, “I have understood that the essence of the Japanese spirit is ‘absolute’. The Japanese emperor is ‘absolute’”,

⁴⁷ Gao Baicang, “Gaobaicang shijian qianqian houhou (The Cause of the Gao Baicang Incident),” in *Liuwang* (In exile), ed., Qi Hongshen, 36.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

“Good, your understandings are close enough. I think it is time for you to resume your studies. I will vouch for you on my livelihood, so do not cause any trouble again.”⁴⁹ Soon after, on 2 May 1942, Gao was officially re-admitted as a third-year university student. His re-introduction back to the university was preceded by a brief public speech, given by proctor Motegi in the school cafeteria, during which he announced how Gao had finally come to the realization of his own mistakes and misbehaviour, and how he had been redeemed by re-education. To some extent, Gao’s life returned back to normalcy. However, whenever he was asked about his understandings of Manchukuo and the associated national identity, Gao would simply respond with the textbook answer: “Manchukuo is a multi-ethnic nation, but the Yamato race has the rights to enjoy a special status.”⁵⁰

Overall, the example of Gao, accused of being an “anti-Manchukuo and Japan” criminal and his respective (mis-)fortunate experiences, show the contrast between speculative rumours spread among horrified students, and the reality for those personally affected by it. Moreover, the “Gao Baicang Incident” further sheds light on how it became a normalised necessity for ordinary Manchukuoan students to conceal their true thoughts during everyday school activities. This particular form of vigilance developed rapidly among the students as accusations of committing “ideological crimes” multiplied and gained in severity over time. “No one will think that you are dumb and sell you out if you talk less” was the type of friendly reminders exchanged between Manchukuoan students whenever they sensed a whiff of danger in the air.⁵¹ This also means that the students were most often living a double life of sorts –a life which involved the making of a public self, sycophantic to the Japanese authorities as well as towards the constructed ideologies; as opposed to an authentic private self, expressed in a careful and discreet manner beneath the radar of the school authorities.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Dong Qi, “Zai Huachuan guogao changshou de nuhua jiaoyu (My experiences of the enslaving education in Huachuan National High School,” in *Weiman wenhua* (Bogus Manchukuo culture), ed., Sun Bang, 438.

Insomuch as the youths' everyday behaviours were masked with outward obedience, it is therefore necessary to uncover their inward disobedience. For the most part, the spirits of resistance were articulated by clever inventions of roguish double entendre and rhyming jingles targeted against the state ideologies – a practice that became popular in the schoolyards of Manchukuo:

“... After we finished singing *Kimigayo* (the Japanese anthem), our school principle would lead us to shout slogans such as ‘Long live (*wan sui*) the Empire of Japan!’, ‘Long live the Japanese Emperor!’ below we would shout ‘Long ‘lived’ (*wan shi’er* in Chinese) the Empire of Japan!’, ‘Move the thief! (*banzai/ban zei* in Chinese)’⁵² instead to show our dissatisfactions. The Japanese never noticed it but have often blamed us for not shouting clearly.”⁵³

The above expressions shared by Sui Yongshu, a student in Dairen, were one of the many examples illustrative of the methods he and his schoolmates used to show their devotions and respects during assemblies and ceremonies. Dramatic in its own way, the clever play on words was a widespread phenomenon across schools state-wide, emerging in a variety of forms that included changing the propaganda terms “*you bang* (friendly ally)” and “*wu di* (invincible)” to “*you bang’er* (literally “have sides”)” and “*wu di’er* (literally “endless”)", pronouncing “Showa” as “*zhao huo* (attracting disaster)” and reading “*ri man* (Manchukuo and Japan)” as “*ri zi man le* (the day is full)” or “*man bu zai hu* ([one that] does not care about)”.⁵⁴ In the schoolyards, knowing how to the speak the lingo was a necessity, and in many

⁵² The Japanese pronunciation of *banzai*, is similar to the Chinese pronunciation of *banzei*, which literally means move the thief. The Chinese pronunciation of *wansui*, is hard to differentiate from *wan shi’er* (long lived), especially when spoken in a northeastern Chinese dialect and ambiguously.

⁵³ No. 1215 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 195.

⁵⁴ Xia Deyuan, “Zai weimanzhouguo dang jiaoshi (Being a teacher in Bogus Manchukuo),” in *Mosha bule de zuizheng* (Undeniable Evidence), ed., Qi Hongshen, 143.

circumstances, proficiency in this language was encouraged and required by fellow students. This was especially evident in Lüshun Public High School. In correspondence to the degradative term “*xiao bi zi* (small nose)” that was commonly used to refer to the Japanese, Manchukuoan students would mockingly address each other as “*da guo ren* (peoples of the great country)”, an esoteric joke systemically passed down as a tradition by final year students during the annual welcome meeting for new arrivals.⁵⁵

However, in most instances, the ironic homonyms and jingles used rarely went past their allegorical connotations. What seems to be an endless stream of creativity on the Manchukuoan students’ part was, in fact, a means for them to highlight their dissatisfactions accumulated in their everyday lives. The linguistic difference between Chinese and Japanese was used as a buffer zone, a safety net that cushioned such passive acts of resistance from escalating to open confrontations between the students and the Japanese school authorities. This also sheds light on the elasticity of the constructed national consciousness, with the school authorities knowing how and when to look beyond the Manchukuoan students’ ostentatious behaviours and gestures. Most of the time, this effectively gave the Japanese a sense of control, a less drastic way for the authorities to maintain the construction of Manchukuo’s identity without inviting too much unnecessary hostility and aggression.

In its administrative form, this sense of control was executed via the role of the Japanese language module in the students’ curriculums. For instance, from the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War onward, the importance given to the ability to speak and behave like the Japanese began to be apparent in school

⁵⁵ No. 0743 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 156.

textbooks, as early as during the first year of elementary education.⁵⁶ Moreover, in order to cultivate and stimulate the students towards the appreciation of the state ideologies, the Japanese authorities allowed kept greater leeway to allocate hours to their preferred courses. As a result, the Japanese language module was delivered seven to eight times per week in elementary schools and no less than six times per week in high schools, whereas, by comparison, Chinese language modules were only given three times per week.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, it is worth noting the Japanese's pragmatic efforts through, for example, the implementation of the Language Level Subsidy System (*Yu yan deng ji jin tie zhi du*) in 1936. In essence, the system introduced a series of Japanese language tests that rewarded monthly subsidies ranging from five to 20 yuan to Manchukuoan students after they found a job based on their test results.⁵⁸ This means that Manchukuoan students who passed the test and obtained a specified level of proficiency were eligible to employment privileges, implying that they would receive better salaries, and be given priorities with future job opportunities, regardless of their overall academic performances at school.⁵⁹ Additionally, schools attempted to encourage students to use Japanese by giving extra marks on their exams. This specific method was frequently used in modules taught in the Chinese language. Students who wrote down answers in Japanese instead of Chinese during the final tests would receive a perfect score as long as their mistakes remained

⁵⁶ Hall, "Constructing a 'Manchurian' Identity", 311-313; See also Men Weidong, "jiuyiba hou de Gaiping (Gaiping after the Mukden Incident)," in *Hei'an xia de xinghuo* (Spark under the dark), ed., Qi Hongshen, 9.

⁵⁷ Zhao Fu, "qianshuo riwei tongzhi shiqi de nuhua jiaoyu (Enslaving Education during the Japanese Occupation)," in *Meihekou wenshi ziliao* (Meihekou Historical Data), Kangri shiqi bufen shiliao, ed., Meihekou shi zhengxie wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui (Meihekou: Internal Release, 1987), p. 48.

⁵⁸ Wu Qiang ed., *Dongbei lunxian shisi nian jiaoyu shiliao* (Historical data of the Northeast during the fourteen years of occupation) (Jilin: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993), vol. 1, p. 29.

⁵⁹ Shan Dabo, *Woshi rijun fanyiguan: Weiman jiangshangjun qinliji* (I was a Japanese translator in Manchukuo's Imperial Navy) (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 2000), p. 15.

under five points.⁶⁰ Most of those who had the slightest ambition of getting a good employment and succeeding in life after graduation saw these incentives as opportunities difficult to ignore. Often, traces of these exaggerated devotions could be found during the competitions organised by the schools, wherein participating students were to dictate ideological edicts and manuscripts. Competing for a generous number of prizes, students who took part in these events were required to recite a range of articles verbatim as fast as possible.⁶¹ Overlooking the recited contents, which was mostly regarded with disdain, the students competed fiercely, to a point where school authorities had to resort to giving retests at random moments to maintain the practical value of the competitions.⁶² This example shows how for the youths, the lines were often blurred between their imagined public and private selves. In a way, students preoccupied with material comfort in their projected future were occasionally motivated to become the public self that they normally alleged to be.

Surely, the authorities' practical implementations and rewards were alluring, and to some extent, represented enough of a promise of a better future for the Manchukuoan students to bear and comply with the harsh realities and terrors of the present. At its core, the delicate balance between the Manchukuoan students' everyday lives and the school authorities was a compromise made by both sides, with the school providing enough pragmatic motivations for the youths to maintain their outward obedience. In such spirits of convenience, dissatisfactions were inevitably expressed on both sides. One way or another, the growing suspicion of the school authorities fomented the common acts of passive resistance in the schoolyards. Students who broke the character of their "public selves" were often, if not always, met with criminal accusations and violent punishments from their schools. Without a doubt, such deterrence was a necessity for the authorities to

⁶⁰ No. 0134 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 615.

⁶¹ *Wenjiao Yuebao* (Culture and Education Monthly), No. 10 (1936), p. 25.

⁶² *Ibid.*

enforce the successful indoctrination of a national consciousness deemed as crucial to the survival and longevity of Manchukuo. But for the Manchukuoan students, it was more of a practical matter of day to day survival, both inside and outside the classroom.

2.3. Acclimatizing the Bushido spirit

There was something about violence that was genuinely appealing to the school authorities as well as to the students when it comes to problems that needed solving. To begin with, the school authorities rationalised the use of violence during teaching as necessary methods for discipline. Ultimately aiming for the students to “bear the responsibility for their society and their country”,⁶³ this was officially justified by arguing that absolute obedience was crucial for the students’ physical and mental development which they should cultivate and strive for to enhance their instincts to follow commands and adherence to orders.

In classrooms, teachers also employed disciplinary methods to punish the students. Perhaps the most infamous one among students was the “harmony slapping (*da xie he zui ba*)”. Often regarded by teachers as a convenient collective punishment, the so-called “harmony slapping” required the entire class to be divided into two groups. Students had to form two rows, face one another at arm’s length, and slap one another repeatedly in the face until the teacher instructed otherwise.⁶⁴ Although physical punishments in the schools of Manchukuo were not so different from acts of torture as perceived by today’s society, ironically, the authorities used to dub this practice as “wielding the fists of friendship”. In addition to the usual slapping and smacking with rulers, students were regularly subjected to more extreme measures such as having their head pinned against walls and blunt objects, being forced to kneel or crawl between the teacher’s legs, or even being on the receiving end of harsh thrashings.⁶⁵ All in all, there was little room for debate vis-à-vis the justification of the use of violence in classroom, regardless of whether

⁶³ *Dongbei Qianfeng* (Vanguards of the Northeast), Vol. 2, No. 1 (1943), p. 1.

⁶⁴ No. 0094 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 456.

⁶⁵ No. 0056 in *ibid.*, p. 786; Cheng Maolin, “Tusha, laogong, qiuxue (Slaughter, Labour and Education),” in *Mosha bule de zuizheng* (Undeniable Evidence), ed., Qi Hongshen, 274.

these types of punishments really were effective or not to contribute to the cultivation of the students' sense of responsibility towards the society, or whether they were in any way beneficial to their own mental and physical development. If physical punishments did not carry the effects of judicial penalties, they nonetheless had the same demand for obedience and submissiveness.

On the other hand, it was popular among Manchukuoan students to engage in fights and brawls as a pastime outside their daily lessons and homework. Conflicts occurred in various forms, with acts of bullying being fairly common in the schools of Manchukuo. One of the reasons for such behaviour was related to the students' perception of violence as a way to obtain respect and recognition from other students, especially from younger ones. This often translated into new students having to learn the ropes of survival in the schoolyards the hard way. Dong Qi, a new arrival at Huachuan National High School, recalled his bizarre encounters after he went back to his dormitory from strolling on the streets:

“... as I was about to enter my room [to the dormitory], a student from the above grade stopped me and slapped me two times on the face. At first, I was shocked, as I did not understand why he was beating me senseless. After he finished, he started yelling at me: “You! Why didn’t you salute me in the streets? Why are you crying? Do you feel aggrieved? In that case, I will beat you some more!”⁶⁶

Although the reasons behind the assault were simple, Dong received a series of aggravated beatings that was only put to an end when a senior student from his hometown came to his rescue. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 required Manchukuo to be more closely associated with the national symbols of Japan that had shaped the regime's national identity towards becoming a military

⁶⁶ Dong Qi, “zai Huachuan guogao changshou de nuhua jiaoyu (My experiences of the enslaving education in Huachuan National High School),” in *Weiman wenhua* (Bogus Manchukuo culture), ed., Sun Bang, 438.

fascist state.⁶⁷ On a micro-level, this was further reflected in the design of school uniforms in the state. In general, high school students throughout Manchukuo could be easily identified by their combat caps, green military uniforms, and leggings. Bearing such strong resemblance to national soldiers, the school uniforms were designed for the Manchukuoan students to associate with their schools proudly and to inculcate responsibilities. This was shown for example in the school uniforms which had tags that indicated their names and classes as well as Roman numerals from one to four that classified their grades assigned to their left and right collars.⁶⁸

In the eyes of the students, the military-style uniforms were not only a representation of honour, but also an important indicator of their position within the social hierarchy in the schoolyard. Comparable to the ways in which teachers carried out punishments in response to misbehaviour and disobedience in classrooms, students had come up with an unwritten code of conduct, which stipulated absolute obedience from lower grade students. In a way, this can be understood as a smaller scale replica of the pattern they were made to become familiar with, which was supported and advocated by the school authorities. Dong's above-mentioned encounter with his senior schoolmate was one of the many examples showcasing the consequences for younger students who did not follow these unspoken rules. If not for the intervention of his friend, Dong's fate on that day would have been very different.

⁶⁷ Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 253.

⁶⁸ Chen Zunsan, "Wo jingli de nuhua jiaoyu (My Experience of the Enslaving Education)," in *Riben dui hua jiaoyu qinlue: Dui riben qinhua jiaoyu de yanjiu yu pipan* (Chinese education under the Japanese Invasion: A critique of education under the Japanese invasion), Riben dui zhongguo de wenhua qinlue yanjiu congshu, ed., Qi Hongshen (Beijing: kunlun chuban she, 2005), p. 204.

The mechanism behind these rules was plain and simple. In the schoolyard, senior students were given unconditional priorities, and younger students considered them to be like members of the “mafia” who in fact, operated like one most of the time. To enforce their “seniority” privileged status, brutal disciplinary methods were carried out, which frequently involved the use of metal objects such as bicycle chains or boiling water.⁶⁹ Outside school, high school students could be found during the weekends, strolling boastfully on the streets in full uniform. However, the students’ attitudes were most often received negatively by whispering local residents and passersby who would mumble “*er gui zi* (secondary Japanese devils)” at the sight of the ignorant youths.⁷⁰

At the same time, along with the sense of pride associated with school emblems visible on their uniforms, the constant demand for respect often bred disputes among students from different areas, which ultimately degenerated into hostility and rivalry between schools. One of the most known feuds in Fengtian that lasted until the collapse of the regime was between South Manchurian High School and Fengtian No. 5 National High School. The feud originally started as a minor quarrel during a friendly ball game, but escalated rapidly as an established rivalry between the two schools as the conflict became an open secret to all. Being students in of the most prestigious institutions of the city (if not of the entire state), South Manchurian High School students often scornfully addressed their counterparts as “C-level donkeys (*bing ji lü*)”, an insult considered to be so offensive that students from No. 5 National High School actively sought after fights that worsened their conflictual relations despite the far geographical distance between

⁶⁹ Wang Yousheng, “kongbu de jiyi wuxing de youlü (Horrible Memories and Invisible Worries),” in *Mosha bule de zuizheng* (Undeniable Evidence), ed., Qi Hongshen, 79.

⁷⁰ No. 0714 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 358.

the two schools.⁷¹ As the clashes escalated, the annual citywide sports event became a crucial opportunity for the students from both sides to settle their grudges. Chen Shi, who attended South Manchurian High School in 1939, recalled participating in the event:

“... both of the schools’ students were always ready for the fight, some prepared short iron bars, some hid daggers and knives in their waists, and some loosened their bicycle handlebars, so that they could quickly pull them out and use them as weapons... the games were fierce and brutal, and many students were injured every year.”⁷²

Based on the above examples, the education system in Manchukuo can be said to be one that advocated violence as the main disciplinary method, and which placed the safety of the school children at risk on a daily basis. The students’ almost lynch-mob-like mindsets and behaviour were the products of a constructed environment generated by the system in which the connivance of the school authorities and the various codes of honour demonstrate the preponderance of the use of violent means to achieve obedience and respect from others. Similar to the *kominka* process in Taiwan that embodied the concept of the “battlefield” into the “bodily practice of everyday life” of its colonial subjects, Manchukuoan students in Manchukuo were educated in ways resembling those of warriors.⁷³ Praises and compliments from school authorities were given to students who were victorious in defending the “dignity and reputation” of their schools in fights. In contrast, those who lost against their opponents or failed to display their “Bushido spirits” were punished.

⁷¹ Zhang Weiqian, “woshi riyu jianding shuangliao yideng (I Was the First in Japanese Verification Exam),” in *Mosha bule de zuizheng* (Undeniable Evidence), ed., Qi Hongshen, 339.

⁷² No. 0985 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 260.

⁷³ Ching, *Becoming “Japanese”*, 90.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the violent disciplinary methods adopted by the schools were not newly introduced by the Japanese authorities, but had already existed for centuries, as corporal punishments were systematically used in China as a main disciplinary method. In a way, the Manchukuo educators' systemic emphasis on cruelty can be seen as a crude and twisted parody of genuine traditional Chinese beliefs such as "*yan shi chu gao tu* (outstanding students come from strict teachers)", the rough English equivalent of "spare the rod, spoil the child", that also advocated that teachers should set themselves as good examples for their students to follow. Similarly, the occurrence of conflicts and bullying between students existed long before the establishment of the puppet state, but the normalization of a culture of violence in schoolyards was undeniably a feature of Japanese rule.

This trend was further accentuated in 1940 with the official introduction of State Shintoism to replace the former traditional "kingly way" ideology with religious beliefs about the Japanese emperor.⁷⁴ To some extent, this can be understood as an attempt to have Manchukuoan students assimilate Japanese militaristic values, an effort parallel to the implementation of *Soshi-kaimei* in Korea between 1939 and 1940. In schools, this change of direction in state ideology resulted in an increased emphasis on physical training, which school authorities considered to be vital to "the formation of a national consciousness" and to the "revitalization of the national spirit".⁷⁵ With the official introduction of military training modules into the curriculum, the school playground activities, usually consisting of various sports activities, soon shifted drastically to foot drills, bayonet training and military workouts.

⁷⁴ Hall, "Constructing a 'Manchurian' Identity", 94.

⁷⁵ Wu ed., *Dongbei lunxian shisi nian jiaoyu shiliao* (Historical data of the Northeast during the fourteen years of occupation), 140.

Most military training module instructors dispatched to the schools of Manchukuo were also members of the Empire Countryside Veterans Association (*Teikoku Zaigo Gunjinkai*), a long-standing organization founded in Tokyo in November 1910 by retired military personnel of the Japanese Army. Moreover, members of the Manchuria branch generally consisted of aggressive military personnel who had advocated for expansionism in China and were responsible for multiple incidents prior to the Mukden Incident.⁷⁶ Violent approaches to discipline were hence further strengthened by the drill instructors, with students expectedly being on the receiving end of harsh beatings and punishments past their physical limits during the performance of certain exercises.

As the majority of these army veterans had experienced combat in China proper before they were discharged to Manchukuo, war stories were often disturbingly voiced out to the students during the training sessions. For example, during his time in Jilin Shidao University in 1943, Oyama, a military drill instructor, would begin every class with a dreadful opening statement, “I have killed more than three thousand Chinese when I was fighting in China [proper], if you (students) do not behave well, I will kill you like I killed them”.⁷⁷ In another instance, Zhu Guangrong, a student in Lüshun Public High School, recalled asking his military instructor Captain Matsuyama for advice for his practice, but only received in return an anecdote of a time when he lined up captive soldiers as “practice targets”, and shot them with a type 38 rifle to “become better”.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Kiyoshi Inoue, *Riben diguo zhuyi de xingcheng* (The Formation of Japanese Imperialism), trans. Sun Lianbi (Beijing: Renmin chuban she, 1984), p. 53.

⁷⁷ Zhang Guozhen, “Weiman Jilin shidao daxue de pianduan huiyi (Pieces of memories of Jilin shidao university during Bogus Manchukuo),” in *Weiman wenhua* (Bogus Manchukuo culture), ed., Sun Bang, 653.

⁷⁸ No. 0425 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 86.

Although the method is debatable, these types of anecdotes were used as motivational stories, in one hope of educating students about war and prompting them into becoming real warriors through militaristic training. Speculatively, drill instructors retold their experiences in great detail because Manchukuoan students often reacted with fear and kept silent –responses often mistaken as submissiveness and obedience. However, not all stories were disclosed with the intention to teach how to cultivate the spirit of Bushido. In many instances, the stories shared harboured a twisted humoristic undertone, accompanied with expressions of self-accomplishment that instructors misinterpreted as bragging rights. Looking back at his military training classes, Zhu remembered moments during which his instructor would occasionally show him and his classmates pictures of himself with two frightened and dishevelled Chinese women, boasting about how the two ladies had been “friendly” to him.⁷⁹ Bai Jiaqi, a student who attended Liaoyang No. 2 National High School, also recounted episodes during which their instructor, Captain Mitsuharu, used to brag to them about his being “above the law” by showing them the medal he had earned during the war, boasting about it being an “immunity trophy” he could use if he ever were to commit a crime against a civilian.⁸⁰

The military instructors’ carelessness with regards to political differences between “Manchukuoans (*man ren*)” and “Chinese” often reminded the Manchukuoan students of their status as the “little peoples” in the presence of the Japanese. The youths’ daily interactions with the Japanese only brought further awareness of the fact that the creation of a national consciousness that emphasised the making of “superior” foreign elements was inevitably accompanied by the making of “inferior” domestic elements. Zhang Wenhan, a fourth-grade Tieling National High School student in 1942, remembered once finding himself in a difficult situation:

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ No. 1198 in *ibid.*, p. 558.

“... One day our school organised us on a trip to go pay homage in the shrine... when we were marching in a line, my classmate Jia Hongxiu went out [of the line] to tie his shoelaces and interrupted the formation. While Jia was getting back in line I overheard a Japanese student named Kumano Mido from the grade below cursed ‘*baka*’ at him. At that moment, I was outraged as Kumano was only a lower grade student, so I slapped him on his face for disrespecting a senior student.”⁸¹

However, what Zhang considered to be a normal act of discipline towards an irreverent junior was met with a formal warning from his teacher Otsuka Toshihide. The reason was simple. From the Japanese authorities’ point of view, a Manchukuoan reproaching anything to a member of the Yamato race –an ethnic group that was de facto the leading race of the regime, was tantamount to “anti-Manchukuo and Japan” criminal activities.⁸² Inside the schoolyards, this form of discrimination often manifested itself in clear and explicit ways. For instance, during lunchtime at the school canteen, rice, as the main food staple, was served to the Japanese students while Manchukuoan students had to settle for watered-down porridge or sorghum. Moreover, Manchukuoan students were not allowed to sit on the same side of the table as their Japanese counterparts. Jokingly rebranded as the “founding-nation porridge (*jian guo zhou*)” by the students, food provided by the schools in Manchukuo were known to be lacking in flavour and quality. It was therefore common for Manchukuoan students looking back on the daily meals they were given to make open complaints against the obvious inequalities. “I always felt like I was being fed in a pig trough, the portion was far from being sufficient and I was always hungry”, “We only dare to drink but not to chew the food due to the

⁸¹ Zhang Wenhan, “Wo ganshou dao de xuexiao qifen (My Feelings of the School’s Atmosphere),” in *Mosha bule de zuizheng* (Undeniable Evidence), ed., Qi Hongshen, 284.

⁸² Ibid.

amount of sand at the bottom of our porridge”, “We always had to pick the shells out of the musty-smelling sorghum rice before we could even eat it”.⁸³

In addition, the quality (or the lack of it) of accommodations attributed to Manchukuoan students was another major source of complaints, most certainly because high school dormitories in Manchukuo were usually designed following a pattern similar to prison holding cells –sparsely furnished, solely equipped with narrow bunk beds made out of plywood. Dorm residents hence voiced repeated concerns about these lamentable conditions. “Our rooms nested so many fleas, bed bugs and ticks because the floor and our bunk beds were very moist all the time”, raised a student from Dudanjiang Provincial High School. “The bugs would often breed in the beddings, and in the cracks and gaps in the walls, and would sometimes crawl all over our trousers.”⁸⁴ However, whenever the students reported these issues to the school authorities, their complaints were usually quickly dismissed. In the case of Li Xiaoze, a student in Qiqihar No. 3 High School, the answer given was even more straightforward, “You Manchukuoans (Chinese) are not the same race as us (Japanese), and that is why there is a difference in life quality”.⁸⁵

Even though cases varied from one another, the Japanese in the schools of Manchukuo generally considered themselves to be entitled to establish and maintain a firm distance between themselves and the Manchukuoan students. In other words, this was an expression of the tense relationship existing between the colonizer and the colonized. This became more conspicuous as the growing war expenses started to weigh down on the society of Manchukuo, which in return,

⁸³ See No. 0232 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 565; No. 0305 in *ibid.*, p. 527.

⁸⁴ Zhou Jinghuan, “Huiyi zhong zhiyou ji’e he hanleng (Memories of Cold and Hunger),” in *Mosha bule de zuizheng* (Undeniable Evidence), ed., Qi Hongshen, 428.

⁸⁵ No. 0108 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 598.

demanding from the regime to be even more reliant on the militaristic identities of Japan.⁸⁶ Embedded in the everyday activities all the way into the schoolyards, Manchukuoan students therefore experienced various forms of discrimination from the Japanese who evinced the intrinsic nature of colonial superiority. On the other hand, the experience of the students further points to the contradiction of Pan-Asianism that advocated equality and harmony for all, as well as to the harsh race-based everyday inequalities. Such “abnormalities” within the normality of daily life suggested that Manchukuo essentially functioned as a highly stratified society, evidencing the exploitative nature of Japanese imperialism on the people in the region.

Moreover, during the entire fourteen years of Manchukuo, the education level of the students under the regime never improved enough to meet a reasonable academic standard, which is why Francis Clifford Jones unceremoniously criticized the schools in Manchukuo, adding that they could only be called “schools” out of politeness.⁸⁷ Indeed, according to the Academic Structure Compendia (*Xue zhi yao gang*) implemented in 1933, school curriculums were compelled to put more emphasis on practical education to cultivate the students’ hardworking spirit to compensate for the various “drawbacks” of classroom education.⁸⁸ In other words, the authorities considered the development of the students’ “labouring skills” as one of the fundamental requirements to become “loyal and honest nationals,” whereas the teaching of “common and general knowledge” was only regarded as a second priority.⁸⁹ This shift of emphasis vis-à-vis the essence of education gained momentum after the implementation of the New Academic Structure (*Xin xue zhi*) in 11 October 1937, which formally specified the purpose of labour and practical education in the school curriculums.⁹⁰ Besides, allegedly for the

⁸⁶ Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 253.

⁸⁷ Jones, *Manchuria since 1931*, 47.

⁸⁸ Wu ed., *Dongbei lunxian shisi nian jiaoyu shiliao* (Historical data of the Northeast during the fourteen years of occupation), 451.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 460.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 674.

sake of cultivating the students' spirit of diligence and to further consolidate the national spirit, the duration of secondary education was shortened from a total of six years to a new four-year system that integrated junior and senior high school classes as a whole.⁹¹

With the objective to eliminate unemployment upon graduation, high schools operated with a system similar to vocational schools, and began focusing on different workforce skills. Bounded by each specific type of skilled trades, academic lectures were only concentrated in the first two years of high school whereas the latter two years focused extensively on the development of technical labour skills.⁹² With a total of five years less compared to the education system in Japan, the shortened education system in Manchukuo was a reflection of the regime's perceived wartime needs, and that was to generate usable labourers with a smattering of knowledge to aid in Japan's cause.

Along with the pressures of war came acute shortages, and this signified that only a limited amount could be allocated to the schools from whatever resources that were still available to the regime.⁹³ Consequently, authorities were often forced to make less than ideal decisions in the day-to-day operations of the schools. The most direct impact was on the availability of textbooks for the Manchukuoan students. "[Because of the war] we were only able to purchase less than half of the total amount of paper that we needed to print textbooks", noted by Zhang Yaoxian, an editorial official in the Ministry of Education, "[with no other choice] by the orders of minister Lü Yuanshan, most of the papers were prioritised

⁹¹ Xie, *Wei manzhouguo shi xinbian* (New Edition of the History of Bogus Manchukuo), 600.

⁹² Song Enrong and Yu Zixia eds., *Riben qinhua jiaoyu quanshi* (The complete history of education under Japanese invasion) (Beijing: Renminjiaoyu chubanshe, 2005), vol. 1, p. 247.

⁹³ For the detail examination of shortages in the everyday life of the people see Chapter Three.

to print Japanese language textbooks, whereas the number of other textbooks printed failed to even meet one third of the total demand.”⁹⁴

In classrooms, the insufficient number of textbooks meant that the students often had to share, and in some cases, were only able to receive one semester’s textbook during the following semester. Curriculums were pushed around to accommodate the change, in which the redistribution of more teaching hours into military training and labouring exercises gradually became the norm.⁹⁵ Xu Deyuan, a Jilin No. 2 National High School student in 1940 stated:

“... our school never really cared about how the teachers gave the lectures or how well did the students understand the lectures... our physics module and chemistry module were all very superficial as our teacher would only cover one section out of the many parts in total. There was also a laboratory in our school but never once during my entire studies have we been allowed to go inside to do experiments except when we had to clean the room. Similarly, the level of our mathematics module was limited to basic algebra, geometry and trigonometric functions which we had already learned most of it in the past.”⁹⁶

In many ways, the implementation of the new academic structure that tightened control over education since 1937 and the enforcement of State Shintoism in 1940 could be seen as the definitive move away from the ideas of colonial gradualists such as Goto Shinpei, who advocated how the making of educational policies should be based upon comprehensive enquires on the

⁹⁴ Zhang Yaoxian, “Weiman zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu de bianfa (The edit and release of middle and elementary school textbooks),” in *Weiman wenhua* (Bogus Manchukuo culture), ed., Sun Bang, 424.

⁹⁵ Wu ed., *Dongbei lunxian shisi nian jiaoyu shiliao* (Historical data of the Northeast during the fourteen years of occupation), 493.

⁹⁶ Xu Deyuan, “wo jingli de nu hua jiaoyu (My experience of the enslaving education),” in *Riben dui hua jiaoyu qinlue* (Chinese education under the Japanese Invasion), ed., Qi Hongshen, 127.

circumstances of the local society and the avoidance of swift changes.⁹⁷ Instead of being presented as a centre showpiece of Japanese modernity like in the case of Taiwan, the Japanese viewed the role of education in Manchukuo with caution, as they were more concerned with the potential harm that a generation of well-educated subjects might do to the legitimacy of the Japanese presence as well as their superior status.

Indeed, apart from the great emphasis on the teachings of moral and ideological values, the policymakers' reluctant attitude towards the creation of an attractive education model for the new generation of Manchukuo was apparent. Without a doubt, the quality of education that was given to the Manchukuoan students was bad. Teachers would often hand out the answers prior to the exams, and the students would resort to rote memorization to deal with the questions and assessments.⁹⁸ With an average university enrolment rate of less than two percent across the entire regime in 1940, pursuing tertiary education was not something that the high school students commonly had in the back of their minds.⁹⁹ Looking back from a distance of a few decades, many Manchukuo high school students highlighted the constraints they experienced during their times. "If we wanted to study for university, the only feasible solution was to seek private tutoring", "I could get good grades in school but I felt like I learned nothing at all", "[After graduation] we could only become store clerks, primary school teachers or go back home to farming".¹⁰⁰ One further doubted the nature of his right to education: "I felt like I was being fooled the entire time, I enrolled in a full-time school but it could hardly

⁹⁷ Susan C. Townsend, *Yanaihara Tadao and Japanese Colonial Policy: Redeeming Empire* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 117

⁹⁸ No. 0512 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 560.

⁹⁹ Minzhengbu jiaoyu si, *Manzhou diguo xueshi yao lan* (Summary of education in the Manchukuo empire) (Hsinking: Minzhengbu jiaoyu si, 1941), p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ See Xu Deyuan, "wo jingli de nu hua jiaoyu (My experience of the enslaving education)," in *Riben dui hua jiaoyu qinlue* (Chinese education under the Japanese Invasion), ed., Qi Hongshen, 127; No. 1200 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 194; No.0512 in *ibid.*, p. 560.

pass as a part-time school. All we did was to work on the one hundred and fifty acres of the school's farmland for each and every semester."¹⁰¹

As a matter of fact, the elementary attendance rates in Manchukuo never exceeded 40 percent whereas the drop-out rates were as high as 50 percent. High school students, on the other hand, were considered to be among the very lucky few that were able to receive secondary education.¹⁰² During a confession at Fushun war criminals' management centre in July 1954, Ruan Zhenduo, the Minister of Education of Manchukuo wrote:

"In 1936 the total number of elementary school pupils in Manchukuo merely recovered to 60 percent of the total number of pupils before the Mukden incident, which was approximately 800,000. The amount of high school students in Manchukuo was around 50,000, whereas college and university students were less than 10,000. It was due to the lack of schools and facilities throughout Manchukuo that have caused a large number of school-age Manchukuoans to be deprived of education."¹⁰³

For the Manchukuoan students, life in high school took a turn for the worse with the further introduction of the Dedication and Diligence Decree (*Qin lao feng gong*) by the Ministry of Civil Affairs under Issue No. 277 in 1942. Implemented to the schools by 1943, the decree demanded the participation of all students in a higher degree of national construction and defence "to achieve the true purpose of

¹⁰¹ No.0601 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 327.

¹⁰² Xie, *Wei manzhouguo shi xinbian* (New Edition of the History of Bogus Manchukuo), 599.

¹⁰³ "Ruan Zhenduo bi gong (Written confession of Ruan Zhenduo)," in *Weimanzhouguo de tongzhi yu neimu* (The inside Rule of Manchukuo), ed., Zhongyang dang'an guan, 139.

education”.¹⁰⁴ Listed as a formal part of the curriculum, students were assigned to their corresponding “dedication teams (*feng gong dui*)” for at least 30 days per semester, whereas failure to attend or complete the course would result in expulsion.¹⁰⁵ The main thrust behind the promulgation of the Dedication and Diligence Decree was no other than economic. The school students’ mandatory participation in the regime’s national construction was a reflection of the declining availability of labour power from China proper, which numbers plummeting from 1.3 million in 1940 to under 900,000 in 1941 following the social turbulence generated by the war. The deficiency in the workforce led to the introduction of the Labour Strategy Outline (*Lao dong dui ce gang ling*) and the New Labour System Outline (*Lao wu xin ti zhi yao gang*) in January and September 1941 respectively, which placed great emphasis on the utilization and exploitation of local manpower in order to reduce the regime’s reliance on North China.¹⁰⁶

What this meant for the Manchukuoan students was to become actual labourers themselves, whereas more often than not, they also had to live and work under the daunting labouring conditions of Manchukuo. Zhang Lianxue, a student from Wangyemiao recalled the details of his labouring service in the forests of Xie’erhan in the Xing’an mountains in June 1945:

“... There were no signs of human habitation here [in Xie’erhan], wild bears, tigers, and wolves would frequently visit the area. Snakes were very common as well; sometimes they would even crawl into our beds [that were made out of tree trunks and barks] during the nights. Not to mention the prevalent mosquitos and insects as we had to wave our hands constantly while labouring for

¹⁰⁴ “Xuesheng qinlao fenggong ling (The Dedication and Diligence Decree to students),” in *Dongbei jingji lueduo* (Predatory of the Economy of the Northeast), eds., Zhongyang dang’an guan, Zhongguo di’er lishi dang’an guan and Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan, 906.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 907.

¹⁰⁶ Xie, *Wei manzhouguo shi xinbian* (New Edition of the History of Bogus Manchukuo), 743.

them to not fly into our mouths... The labour was onerous, our teacher Moriyama required us to harvest one hundred pounds of birch bark per person per day.”¹⁰⁷

For a sixteen year old child, stripping barks off tall and firm birches was not an easy task to complete. On top of having to work overtime, physical punishments were often given to those who failed to meet their quotas. “Every day was extremely exhausting and I always thought I would either die from the intense labour or get eaten by the wolves”, noted Zhang. “Sometimes I would think about running away, but then again, I had nowhere to run in such a desolated and uninhabited area, so I had no choice but to endure the sufferings.”¹⁰⁸

Since the school authorities would only assume the role of supervisors and inspectors during labouring activities, the various workplace safety hazards were considered to be the students’ business and something that they should deal with themselves. But then again it was the Manchukuoan students who complained over and over about the lack of protection of their own safety, but to no avail. “A fourth-grade student Kang Zhuang was electrocuted to death because the man-made fiber factory [that we were labouring in] refused to cut off the power when we were wiping the dust off the adapters in the substation”, recalled Jiang Kuichun from Andong No. 2 National High School in 1944. “My classmate Li Shichun’s finger was sliced off by one of the machines and my other classmate Huo Yudong had his toe shattered”.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Zhang Lianxue, “huiyi wo shaonian shiqi de yiduan kunan jingli (Recalling my experience of sufferings during my teenager years),” in *Kunan de sui Yue: Kezuo zhongqi weiman shiqi shiliao* (Times of miseries: Historical data of Kezuo zhongqi during Bogus Manchukuo period), Kezuo zhongqi wenshi ziliao, ed., Zhengxie Kezuo zhongqi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao bianweihui (Kezuo zhongqi: Internal Release, 1991), p. 69.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁰⁹ No. 0665 in *Jianzheng riben qinhua zhimin jiaoyu* (Witness Japanese Colonial Education), ed., Qi Hongshen, 457.

Nonetheless, the weight to fulfil daily quotas as well as the government's instruction to exploit the available manpower was on the side of the school authorities. Instead of addressing the potential dangers and the increasing number of work-related incidents, further measures to enforce the success of the Dedication and Diligence Decree were put into effect. Precisely to avoid the hideous labouring assignments, the most common solution for the Manchukuoan students was to withdraw from their schools altogether. By 1945, this has become a crime, in which drop-outs would be reported directly to the Japanese gendarmerie for punishment. To prevent escapes, students were escorted to their workplace in the mornings and escorted back to their temporary dormitories fenced with barbed wire and metal gates during the evenings seven days a week. "I felt like I was a prisoner who paid school fees to become a labourer."¹¹⁰

In many ways, the implementation of the Dedication and Diligence Decree in 1943 and the resolute determination of the Japanese to make compromises served as the breaking point in the delicate balance between the Manchukuoan students and the school authorities. What used to be pragmatic incentives to maintain the outward obedience of the students were replaced with up to eleven hours long labouring schedules with little to no rest breaks in-between. The elastic elements that characterised the making of the youths' national consciousness, on the other hand, were substituted by the inculcation of labouring habits as well as the various consequences if one failed to meet such demands. Indeed, from the regime's standpoint, responding to the call of duty in its time of need was the only way for the youths to display their virtues as the new generation of Manchukuo that the Japanese tried so hard to cultivate. But for the Manchukuoan students, the breaking of the balance also meant the breaking of their submissive "public selves".

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

In the same spirit as the creation of rhyming jingles in the schoolyard, the Manchukuoan students were equally diligent in exploring ways for resistance during their labouring tasks, but this time, in a much more straightforward manner. During his labour in the 261st Japanese Logistics Unit, Zhou Jinghuan, a student from Dudanjiang revealed:

“...When we were repairing their shoes, we would cut corners deliberately and use the leather pieces to cobble our own ‘water socks (*shui wa zi*)’¹¹¹, some of my classmates would also pick out large pieces of leather to make belts or shoe pads for themselves... later when we were required to pack and strap boxes in the warehouse, we would only work when Japanese are around and stop working immediately after they leave... my classmate Lin Fuben was the most scheming. He would replace the anti-icing fluid in the gas masks with urine and cut many small holes on the protective clothing for horses. Zhao Hui also came up with the idea to tear up the military bed sheets in half before packing it and put all left shoes in one box and all right shoes in another so that the Japanese would never get what they wanted.¹¹²

Such common acts of sabotaging were expressions of the pent-up anger and dissatisfactions accumulated from the harsh treatments given to the youths. However, undermining the mandatory labour was certainly not a risk-free gamble. In the workplace, the Japanese continually kept the youths under close watch. However, this was most often reciprocated by the students, who took turns monitoring the Japanese discretely. In a way, it can be said that the Manchukuoan students were practising their own surveillance activities on the school authorities, reflecting their attachment for the play on words:

¹¹¹ Manchuria slang for a type of Japanese-style canvas rubber shoe which separates the big toe and the other toes when wearing.

¹¹² Zhou Jinghuan, “huiyi zhong zhiyou ji’e he hanleng (Memories of Cold and Hunger),” in *Mosha bule de zuizheng* (Undeniable Evidence), ed., Qi Hongshen, 444.

“Every time one of us would work near the gate to serve as a lookout. Whenever the Japanese come, that person would pass down the cypher ‘two, six’ to the rest of us so everybody could start pretending to labour.”¹¹³

The cypher “two, six” came from “re” and “la” in sheet music, which was also homophonic for “*lai la* (coming)” in Chinese. For the school authorities, this meant that they were kept on their toes and constantly on the hunt for signs of resistance expressed between the students, as well as trying to catch the small changes in the same type of schoolyard lingo that they made no effort to comprehend in the first place. Indeed, the breaking of the students’ obedient “public selves” was not isolated outbursts of anger, but a result of the dissatisfaction and tensions built up over time in their everyday lives. The various acts of sabotage were the ways for the Manchukuoan students to voice their dissatisfaction.

¹¹³ Ibid.

2.4. Conclusion

Mirrored by the progress of the war, the Japanese ultimately failed in their attempt to cultivate an entire new generation of Manchukuoan students to further the goals of the Japanese empire. Perhaps in the same spirit, the strong emphasis on militaristic training, ideological values, labouring habits and the neglect of academic studies all resembled Nazi Germany's making of the Hitler Youth, but without its success.¹¹⁴ As much as the Japanese wanted the Manchukuoan students to see themselves as an essential part of an important struggle that called for the racial unity of Asia to strife against the imperial west, they also made little effort to adapt to the Pan-Asianism framework that they had created themselves. For the most part, the Manchukuoan students, as well as the remaining population of Manchukuo, were viewed as second-class subjects living in their own "country". The construction of the youths' national consciousness greatly emphasised the need for one to devote oneself and contribute to the state building project and the militaristic symbols of the emperor, but seldom about the civic rights and freedom that a modern Manchukuo citizen should be allowed to enjoy.

Although the national identity of Manchukuo was expressed as an independent modern state but weak in its territorial sense, the educational policies implemented after 1943 had all went towards the direction of Japanisation. However, unlike the cases of Taiwan and Korea, the new generation of Manchukuo was not considered to be imperial subjects, but a large submissive workforce with its own identity that the Japanese could manipulate to its own will. This also supports the idea that even though Japan recognised that Manchukuo was

¹¹⁴ For the attractive use of methods such as sports and films in the making of youth organizations in Nazi Germany see Sheila Fitzpatrick and Alf Ludtke, "Energizing the Everyday: On the Breaking and Making of Social Bonds in Nazism and Stalinism" in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, eds., Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 266-301.

nominally independent, the Japanese undeniably retained strong, yet inconspicuous imperialistic claims over the region. This is particularly evident at the examination of Manchukuo's educational structure that grew similar to the case of Korea and Taiwan, especially in the later years, as it shows that Manchukuo was indeed ran like a formal colony within the empire, left with little if any authority to resist the exploitative policies imposed by the Japanese.

These were the reasons why the school authorities failed to cultivate the sense of loyalty and dedication to Manchukuo and the empire of Japan to the youths. Instead, what the Manchukuo students fought for was an abstract sense of equality. It was abstract in a way that real equality was something that they had never experienced before, but had only learned about in school lectures and the indoctrinations of Pan-Asianism. When looking back, many former Manchukuo residents preferred the term "enslaving education" to summarise their experiences as a student in the short-lived puppet state, and this was what they remembered Manchukuo for.

Chapter Three – The Fulfilment of Basic Needs

3.1. Introduction

In Manchukuo, ordinary people's everyday life was characterised by the constant struggle to find the means of sustenance necessary for their daily survival. The multiplication of lengthy crises spared no one in the regime, and affected every social layer, from the poorest villagers in the countryside, to the wealthiest urbanites. The Manchukuoans' daily routines were thus guided by the anxiety of having to find a solution to meet the day's most basic needs in order to survive until the morrow. Even though exploring the ways in which ordinary people had to fend for themselves to obtain goods and foodstuffs might not be considered as extraordinary historical events, their stories nonetheless reveal how complex it was for them simply to live in Manchukuo through the 1930s and 1940s. For many, the sole process of obtaining goods was a challenging task, since shortages and inflation repeatedly plagued the society throughout the different stages of the regime. In retrospect, it is now possible to conclude that the root cause behind the instances of shortages in Manchukuo was the result of the imbalance between supply and demand, where the latter largely exceeded the former. However, none such information or explanation was relevant or of interest to the Manchukuoans living in such times. When shortages occurred, the people were primarily driven by uncertainty and fear, whether they be triggered by social disturbances, financial turmoil, imminent threats of war, or simply by the overwhelming pressure that goods were too short in supply and could run out at any time.

This chapter aims to examine the lives of ordinary people living in Manchukuo by focusing on the various forms of hardships they experienced, and the ways in which Manchukuoans responded to such difficulties. In essence, this chapter reveals how the repeated waves of scarcities impacted people's everyday life, and how shortages and economic crises led them to develop different strategies for survival.

Building on Rana Mitter's research on how the Japanese managed to ensure the stability of the new regime through a number of macro-scale efforts including reforms or the preservation of local social structures, this chapter sheds light instead on the micro-level impacts of such operations, and begins with an overview of the various circumstances from which further social instabilities and financial turmoil emerged in both rural and urban regions of Manchukuo during the early days of the regime.¹ The chapter then relays the many events that occurred in the year 1937, particularly significant with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, which caused a severe disruption to the regime's already frail balance and failed attempts to fully enforce its first Five-Year Industrial Development Plan. This inevitably resulted in further dramatic changes in the everyday routines of the Manchukuo people, whose only constant was the vital learning to adapt to sudden changes.

Following the successive implementation of distribution and rationing policies by the Manchukuo government, the chapter then focuses more particularly on how "friendships", or the establishment of personal connections, gained in importance for people to gain access to goods that were in small quantities due to the ongoing shortages, and how such practices bore consequences for the hierarchical structure of Manchukuo society. This was especially evident in the case study of the failed holiday rationings of 1940 that led the government of

¹ Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 101-129.

Manchukuo to take more radical measures to deal with a worsening shortage situation. Finally, the focus reverts to the countryside, and provides details on the various outcomes of Manchukuo's grain procurement policies and how the lives of the peasants were affected by those. By assessing the impacts of shortages on the lives of ordinary Manchukuoans, this chapter aims at enhancing our understanding of the circumstances under which the people were forced to adopt new survival strategies to fulfil their most basic needs in a framework of superficial compliance with the regime's agenda. By looking at the trials and errors of the Japanese's economic management efforts, this chapter hence captures the essence of the human responses of ordinary people, adding to our understanding of the nature of everyday life under colonial rule.

3.2. Times of Hardship

“If you think life is hard in the city, then I bet you never experienced the life of hardship in the countryside.”²

It all started with grain. Shortly after the Mukden incident, rumours of Manchuria becoming “the second Korea” began to circulate among the people. Panic began to spread like wildfire across the regime, and interminable queues of famished faces started to appear to obtain their share of food as a result of the shortages.³ Indeed, the shortage of grain was mainly a side effect of the Japanese military actions in Manchuria, which caused the emergence of severe disturbances to the local social order as bandits multiplied, beginning to grow rampant all over the countryside.⁴ Regardless of whether these acts of banditry were executed as a form of political dissidence or not, large-scale banditry was nonetheless perceived as a scourge by the self-proclaimed new-born regime. Sabotaging the routines of the Manchukuoans, banditry thus caused inevitable impacts on their daily lives. For the greater portion of the rural population, life revolved around the continuous struggle for basic means to survive in the early years of Manchukuo.

Because banditry had become such a common phenomenon, living standards in the rural areas dropped sharply while robberies and relentless harassment from local bandits became part of the peasants’ new normal. In the earlier days of 1932, bandits were known to have set up camp in remote areas in the mountains. They would regularly come down from their hiding spots and pay “a courtesy visit” to the nearby villages to demand monies and all sorts of supplies, ranging from grain to cotton-padded clothing from local peasants. Even though

² *Shengjing Shibao* (hereinafter “SJSB”), 3 April 1937.

³ Zhongguo guojia tushuguan (ed.), *Zheng Xiaoxu Riji* (Diary of Zheng Xiaoxu), Zhongguo jindai renwu riji congshu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), p. 2728.

⁴ Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 102.

bandits called for “donations” from the villagers, these were unquestionably extortions.⁵ A complex “taxation” system that could rival the formal governmental puncture scheme thus emerged in the process, and stipulated that every month, based on the size of the land that they owned, villagers were to pay a specific sum of money per acre to the bandits.⁶ However, surrendering to the bandits’ pressures and “donating items” or paying “taxes” were not enough to appease their continuous harassment, which largely contributed to the local peasant’s days being filled with terror. No matter how much the villagers struggled to meet their increasing demands, bandits incessantly visited their victims to extort money and goods. Resorting to blackmailing was usually the step that followed for them to ensure that peasants would do their best to meet their demands.

Ransomed kidnappings were another source of distress among peasants established in the Manchurian countryside, as these were all too common a practice carried out by bandits aiming to get rich easily. The most profitable targets were members of families who owned carriages and livestock, or who farmed their own land rather than renting a plot of land. Low profile scouts, or “string pullers (*la xian ren*)” and “chatterboxes (*hua she zi*)” – as the bandits used to call them – were usually sent to the villages to gather information prior to each extortion. Threatening letters, commonly known as “*fei hai ye zi* (literally “flying the sea page”), were subsequently delivered by these middlemen to the wealthiest households, indicating deadlines to hand over a designated amount of goods and money in exchange for safety. In such times of desperation, the psychological strain alone was often enough for the targeted villagers to turn over the demanded goods without attempting to resist, or even to abandon their farms and flee altogether if they did not have enough to meet their requirements.⁷

⁵ *SJSB*, 25 October 1935.

⁶ *SJSB*, 26 August 1932

⁷ Chen Huanbiao, “Jiyi zhongde Liaonan Hufei (My memories of bandits in southern Liaoning),” in *Liaoyang Wenshi Ziliao* (Liaoyang Historical Data), ed., Liaoyang shi zhengxie wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuan hui (Liaoyang: Internal Release, 2002), p. 209.

Like a chronic illness slowly eating the countryside away, the bandits' repeated blackmailing, extortions, and violent harassment against peasants created a fearsome environment that inevitably degenerated and began impacting areas far beyond the Manchukuo countryside. Most of the wealthier families in rural Manchukuo were landowners, and fleeing from their villages to avoid banditry also meant that they had to abandon the countless acres of farmland they owned, which directly resulted in severe disturbances to grain supplies throughout the state.⁸ On 19 January, 1932, it was reported around the areas where bandits were the most rampant near Shenyang County, that over 50,000 peasants had abandoned their native farmlands to take refuge in neighbouring towns and cities, which they considered to be safer places to go on with their lives.⁹

Only perceived as a temporary concern, the Manchukuo authorities remained blindly confident that banditry in the countryside was only a passing issue when in truth, bandits in Manchuria was a long-lasting problem that had been crippling the region long before Manchukuo was even founded. Due to the fact that bandits often had military backgrounds, the authorities hastened to make a statement at the beginning of 1932 with regards to the impending improvements the new regime was to bring to this chaos. "[Unlike the old warlord regime], Manchoukuo is paying its defence forces, and soldiers will have no reason to become bandits [anymore]."¹⁰ Without the approval from Hsinking, local authorities attempted to uphold the supply of grain by subletting left-behind farmlands that they considered to be "deserted". Local agricultural branch offices thus took over, and demanded new occupiers to pay a total of 30 percent of their

⁸ *SJSB*, 25 December 1932.

⁹ *SJSB*, 29 January 1932; The issue of banditry impacted the daily lives of the ordinary rural population in many ways. As this chapter focuses on shortages, other impacts will be examined in Chapter Four.

¹⁰ "Residents' View of the new Manchukuo," in *The History of Manchuria 1840-1948: A Sino-Russo-Japanese Triangle*, by Ian Nish (Kent: Renaissance Books, 2016), vol. 2 select primary sources, p. 114.

next harvest as land rent.¹¹ Local vigilantes were also mobilized to quell the disturbed areas and to restore social order at the villagers' expense, with the compulsory contribution of up to five yuan per month for each household, depending on whether the villagers were owners of the occupied lands and properties.¹² Unlike most people living in the rural areas of Manchukuo, the local officials were appeased by the implementation of these temporary solutions which they thought were suitable to problems they also regarded as temporary, since they were still blinded by the belief that banditry in the countryside was going to solve itself over time.

However, it is important to note that on such improvised methods were the products of local initiatives, and were not representative of the decisions made by the central government, the consequences of which manifested in multiple ways. The majority of the abandoned farmlands were redistributed to idle loafers and inexperienced peasants who did not possess the skills required to farm efficiently. And if by chance, they had the knowledge required to cultivate the lands, they did not have any of the seeds needed to plant the crops.¹³ On the other hand, experienced landowners who had previously taken refuge in the cities were not allowed to return to their own farms until the year-long sublease contract came to an end. What the local magistrates thought to be the most direct and efficient method to combat the supply problem caused by peasants fleeing en masse, in fact, rapidly turned into a crisis that paralyzed the economy of the rural society. Living conditions had deteriorated to a point that even the wealthier households were affected, despite owning abundant land and being known for having "deep pockets".

¹¹ *SJSB*, 31 May 1932.

¹² *SJSB*, 31 March 1932.

¹³ *SJSB*, 31 March 1932.

As soon as the spring plowing season arrived in 1932, increasing numbers of uprisings and riots were reported as more and more landowners and farmers across the regime were no longer able to afford the seeds indispensable to cultivate the farmlands.¹⁴ Despite the local officials' efforts to mediate with the peasants, the repeated failures to find a fitting agreement between the two parties led to the number of famished peasants to multiply exponentially, too numerous for the provincial governments to ignore. By March, it was reported that all over the countryside, mobs of starving peasants gathered to rob food and grain from the local wealthy families. In the village of Wazigou near Haicheng County, more than two hundred destitute peasants stormed into the home of local figure Zhang Wanju, grabbing and fighting over anything they could lay their hands on. By the time the mob left, Zhang's home was completely ransacked, with nothing left behind the empty disaster, not even firewood nor straws.¹⁵ Such trends were quick to spread to the neighbouring villages. A few weeks later, another much larger mob was formed with over two thousand famished peasants reported to be found going door to door, looting for grain and food along the eastern ridge of Shitouzhai.¹⁶ In the nearby province of Jilin, more cases of desperate peasants foraging for foods around the Hamitang area were reported, which left the village head no choice but to temporarily borrow grain from the Tonghua County magistrate to ease the problem.¹⁷

Insofar as the authorities responded to the problem with such short-sighted improvisations, it was not surprising that their handling of the crisis eventually backfired. At a time of social instability, the officials' plan was implemented without carefully considering longer-term consequences, also causing the malfunction of the regime's shortages to escalate. However, the local officials were quick to find scapegoats. With no other choice than to request financial support from the central

¹⁴ *SJSB*, 14 May 1932.

¹⁵ *SJSB*, 22 March 1932.

¹⁶ *SJSB*, 27 April 1932.

¹⁷ *SJSB*, 27 April 1932.

government, supply and logistic issues were often exaggerated by the local officials; while on the other hand, they justified the central government's assistance by concealing their own lack of discernment behind fabricated lies. Indeed, downplaying their own responsibility and misjudgement, the official reason for seeking the central government's help was that a large number of peasants had effectively "strayed into the paths of banditry", instigating various acts of uprisings caused by hunger.¹⁸

Thus convinced that this would be the only solution to bail out its local governments, Hsinking decided that financial aid in the forms of relief stamps and interest-free plowing loans were to be assigned to each region.¹⁹ For instance, in the province of Fengtian, the Ministry of Civil Affairs distributed a total sum of 600,000 yuan to local counties. Depending on the extent of the damage caused by the bandits in each village, landowners and their tenants could apply for up to one yuan or fifteen kilograms of grain per acre. Moreover, they were offered the possibility to repay their dues at the end of the year of 1932.²⁰ In Jilin province, a total amount of 300,000 yuan was granted by Governor Hsi-Hsia, of which 200,000 yuan was loaned out, interest-free for the farmers in need of funds on the security of real estate. The remaining 100,000 yuan was given away to the indigent, based on the losses sustained.²¹ Furthermore, in regions that were reportedly more devastated, such as Songshan County and Xi'an County, previous arrears of land taxes were exempted, and new land taxes were cut in half.²²

¹⁸ South Manchuria Railway Company, *Answering Questions on Manchuria* (Tokyo: Hibiya Park, 1936), p. 60; See also Toa-Keizai Chosakyoku, *The Manchuoukuo Year Book* (Tokyo: Kyoku, 1934), p. 114.

¹⁹ *SJSB*, 30 June 1932; See also *SJSB*, 18 February 1932; In the Manchukuo currency system, ten fen equals to one jiao and ten jiao equals to one yuan.

²⁰ Zhongguo guojia tushuguan ed., *Zheng Xiaoxu Riji* (Diary of Zheng Xiaoxu), 2736; See also *SJSB*, 23 March 1932.

²¹ *The Manchuria Daily News (Monthly Supplement)*, 1 April 1932.

²² *SJSB*, 17 April 1932; See also *SJSB*, 3 September 1932.

In addition, based on the reports from local governments, dispossessed peasants who were living in abject poverty were considered as the newest threat to the stability of the regime. As a result, local officials decided that as precaution against future potential “uprisings”, several preventive measures had to be implemented. In an effort to control the situation, the authorities announced the prohibition to cultivate tall crops such as sorghums or corns within the respective ranges of 200 and 500 meters of roads and railways. The ban was put into effect in April 1933 to prevent “collusion with bandits”. Tall crops were thought to facilitate bandits’ criminal activities since they could easily hide between the crops while waiting to ambush potential victims, from passers-by to merchants refuelling supplies. Subsequently, cultivated crops within the designated areas were ordered to be removed immediately by the military.²³ Being the most important foodstuffs for the large majority of the rural population, the banning order not only exacerbated the already grave food shortages, but also provoked a sharp decrease in the peasants’ income and food supply. In spite of the thousands of petitions filed by the peasants requesting more moderate solutions, few actually received a response from the local authorities. As for the ones who did get a reply, the answer would be all the more antipathetic, as they were told that “a few small sacrifices” were inevitable, and that they should comply therewith without any complaint.²⁴

Since in reality, the exacerbated shortages were rooted in the local officials’ own failures, the financial support provided by the central government did little to put an end to the problems of grain distribution. Even though the sums allocated to each region were significant, the core of the issue remained unsolved. Surely, for the officials to shield themselves from reprimands for their mistakes, local peasants inevitably had to take the brunt. However, this does not necessarily imply that the inner circle of the Manchukuo government was completely fooled by their local counterparts’ deceitfulness. As accounts of villagers having to resort to eating

²³ Manzhouguo zhi’anbu jingwusi, *Manzhouguo Jingcha Shi* (The History of Manchukuo Police) (Keizyo: Korea Printing Co., Ltd., 1942), p. 238.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

grassroots, tree bark, and domestic farm animals were still reported back to Hsinking on daily basis, officials operating at the central level began questioning the veracity of their local counterparts' reports.²⁵ For instance, whilst blaming the legacy of officialdom from the warlord government, Minister of Finance Hsi-Hsia repeatedly expressed his concerns, both in public and in private, with regards to his suspicions towards the nature of the local governments' funding requests. Seeing how little had progressed, support aid was eventually placed on hold. Additionally, to ensure that no funds or supplies were embezzled and to have an accurate estimation of the damages, Hsinking representatives were dispatched to each locality, assigned to investigate and re-evaluate the local distribution of grain.²⁶ These newly adopted precautions eventually allowed the government to reshuffle its resources to better use, but also significantly delayed the distribution of much-needed subsidies to the people in their time of need.

But the worst is yet to come. Surely, the local officials were largely optimistic about the resolution of social issues and the turbulence that occurred in the first half of 1932, believing that it could be sorted out in a timely manner. However, when the autumn harvest season arrived, few of them displayed the same level of confidence anymore. Indeed, since autumn harvesting was considered to be the most "profitable" season of the year, bandits, who were still running rampant, completely cut off the roads that connected villages to the counties, making it practically impossible to transport grain without the escort and protection of the military:

"... Peasants throughout the country, whether poor or wealthy, are sleeping in humble shelters and experiencing unprecedented starvation... the cities were blessed with the strict protections provided by military and civilian forces, but not the countryside. The time of harvest has come, but peasants living in the midst of this

²⁵ Zhongguo guojia tushuguan ed., *Zheng Xiaoxu Riji* (Diary of Zheng Xiaoxu), 2573.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2968.

chaos do not dare to go one step beyond the limit to even reap their hard-earned grain, as they are trapped in the claws of the tigers and wolves²⁷... For the millions of people who viewed the harvest as their hope and lifeline, would now have to look themselves in despair and be disappointed..."²⁸

When the new regime was founded, the Manchukuo authorities undoubtedly gave priority to all issues that would potentially affect national security. In return, the distribution and supplement of grain were regarded as a matter of secondary importance only. Although financial supports was allocated to the countryside, the larger share of the government's resources was dedicated to the complete annihilation of banditry in the rural regions. Not only did the Manchukuo government want to bring back a sense of security to its population, it was also undeniable that the authorities wanted to enhance the people's trust in the new regime, to eventually justify the legitimacy of its presence. However, when the government's efforts were thwarted, the consequences went beyond the countryside. Surely, the failed harvest shattered the hopes of the peasants whose only wish was to live a stable life with a full stomach, but the damage also extended to the urban regions, resulting in food prices soaring, and in growing disparities in the supply of grain between cities.

As a result of the social turmoil that shook the rural communities, the sense of fear and panic that had already begun to spread beyond the countryside was already well established among the urban residents throughout Manchukuo by the end of 1932. In some popular areas such as Sujiatun, the prices of husked sorghum and soybean per *dou* skyrocketed from nine jiao and one yuan to one yuan one jiao and one yuan five jiao respectively.²⁹ Other regions in Manchukuo such as Songshan and Taonan also witnessed a similarly dramatic price increase for basic foodstuffs,

²⁷ A metaphor to bandits.

²⁸ *SJSB*, 7 September 1932.

²⁹ *SJSB*, 12 December 1932.

where the price of sorghum went up by two jiao five fen per *dou* in Songshan and three jiao per *dou* in Taonan.³⁰ To put this into perspective, the average income of the working class Manchukuoan was nine yuan per month in 1934, two-thirds of which were to be spent on food, condiments and other basic subsistence necessary for survival. Since residents also had to allocate a portion of their salary to pay rent and other unavoidable miscellaneous expenses, no money was left at the end of the month for them to add to their already meagre savings.³¹ Kosone Masahiko, a Japanese official operating in Benxi County, detailed the hardships of the county's residents in his report:

“The clothing that the prefectural citizens wear is very simple and plain, and they do not dare to pursue luxuriant food and housing. They cover themselves with ridden cotton, eat sorghum for all their meals and live in grass tile houses built from soil and paper walls. Only the most upper-class citizens have access to decent clothing and food, but still all within a humble limit... Anyone who enters Manchuria for the first time will immediately experience the scarcity of goods and supplies and see how valuable they are.”³²

At the same time, Manchukuoans living in urban areas were preoccupied by an additional scourge caused by the financial turmoil which resulted in the inflation of goods and shortages. After the Mukden incident occurred, the currency in circulation in Manchuria was disrupted by the unexpected Japanese military occupation. Official bank notes,³³ along with account books from local banks in

³⁰ *SJSB*, 16 December 1932; See also *SJSB*, 26 December 1932.

³¹ Kosone Masahiko, *Benxi xian shiqing* (The situation in Benxi County) (Hsinking: Xiu ying she, 1934), p. 11.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³³ Prior to the Mukden incident, the official bank notes in Manchuria varied between regions, with Feng da yang piao and Harbin Da yang juan being the most widely recognised currency in Manchuria during the warlord regime. Over time, the value of the Feng piao plummeted as a result of Zhang Zuolin's increasing military expenditure, leaving only the Harbin juan as the sole de facto currency used in north Manchuria. See Ha'erbin shi difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Ha'erbin Shizhi*

major cities were confiscated by the Kwantung army as soon as the occupation began.³⁴ To be exact, 80,000 kilograms of bullion were seized from the Northeastern Finance Co. along with bulk assets, gold bars and antique paintings “owned” by the previous warlord regime in Bianye Bank.³⁵ Indeed, under the instructions given by Deputy Director-General Kani Sakaniya during the 16th State Council Meeting, warlord Zhang Xueliang and most of his government members were formally accused of conducting “rebellious acts against the state”, resulting in a significant number of properties and large amounts of capital being expropriated without any objections.³⁶ The state-wide raids on financial institutions triggered movements of collective panic in the urban regions. Every day, city residents desperate to protect their entire life’s savings were found lining up in endless queues outside bank branches, waiting their turn to withdraw all their savings away from the turmoil. As a result, the currency exchange rate of local government bills (*guan tie*)³⁷ to Harbin *da yang* in some regions slumped from 150 to 1 to as low as 350 to 1 in only a few days’ time. The situation deteriorated to such an extent that even the wealthiest urban families soon discovered that from then on, they would only be able to afford the most basic subsistence.³⁸

Due to the underdeveloped nature of the commodity economy in Manchuria, a large variety of banknotes and coupons including foreign currencies from Russia and Japan were used in the region. The four main banks (The

(The Chronicle of Harbin) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chuban she, 1993) for more details on the monetary system in Manchuria prior to 1931.

³⁴ Li Chong, *Wei Manzhouguo Huobi Yanjiu* (Bogus Manchukuo Monetary Studies) (Changchun: Jilin shying chuban she, 2002), p. 4.

³⁵ He Zhian, He Weian, “Riwei Shiqi de Dongbei Jinrong (The Northeastern Economy under Japanese Occupation),” in *Jingji Lueduo* (Economic Exploitation), Wei manzhouguo shiliao congshu, ed., Sun Bang (Changchun: Jilin renmin chuban she, 1993), p. 551.

³⁶ Zhongguo guojia tushuguan ed., *Zheng Xiaoxu Riji* (Diary of Zheng Xiaoxu), 2808.

³⁷ Local government bills (*guan tie*) were issued from 1898 to 1932 in certain areas of Manchuria by each province as a main supplement of the official silver and copper currency.

³⁸ *SJSB*, 26 January 1932.

Northeastern Finance Co., Bianye Bank, Jilin Yongheng Finance Co. and Heilongjiang Finance Co.) in Manchuria alone issued a total of 15 different currencies and 136 different securities and coupons. On the other hand, larger-scale commercial stores and public entities increased the circulation of their own currency and private banknotes (*si tie*).³⁹ In the midst of the artificially created chaos, a vast amount of provisional currency notes and certificates were issued by local chambers of commerce in each county in order to compensate for the official bank notes that were forcefully withdrawn from the market by the Japanese military.⁴⁰ Although equivalent in value on paper, the citizens of Manchukuo often found themselves having to pay more than twice as much for foods and other essential commodities whilst using the new currency notes, which in return aggravated the inflation of commodities due to the endemic nature of such provisional currencies.

Referring to urban life in Manchukuo in the early 1930s as a messy ensemble rapidly disintegrating would not be an understatement. The messiness was linked to the fact that normally simple activities had become unnecessarily difficult for ordinary Manchukuoans to conduct. For instance, having money no longer meant that one had the ability to afford food anymore. For the most part, the new locally-issued banknotes were only good to use locally and attempting to use them in shops outside the locality would result in unpleasant interactions with shops owners. "I went to eat in a restaurant, but the owner refused to accept the notes I used to pay for my bill," shared one indignant citizen. "The restaurant was only 15 to 20 kilometres away from where I live. After a big argument, I was allowed to leave with the promise of bringing back the required amount in the owner's specified currency."⁴¹ For those reasons, many urban Manchukuoans ended up pinning their miseries on the financial disarray caused by the regime. At some point, it was even reported that citizens trying to be more economical chose to

³⁹ Zhang Qingwen, Zhang Congxian and Liu Wanshan, "Weiman Zhongyang Yinhang Jianjie (An introduction to the Manchurian Central Bank)," in *Jingji Lueduo* (Economic Exploitation), ed., Sun Bang, 585.

⁴⁰ *SJSB*, 28 January 1932; See also *SJSB*, 2 March 1932.

⁴¹ *SJSB*, 13 July 1932.

travel longer distances and purchase the same type of food and commodities from Japan-occupied Korea for half the price found in Manchukuo instead.⁴² Nevertheless, although the majority of Manchukuoans experienced the great financial turmoil as an urban nightmare, some also found that period to be a now-or-never opportunity to make fortunes.

The issues of local currency liquidity were accompanied by yet another scourge and soon enough, counterfeit banknotes made their way into the market, circulating extensively and further aggravating the regime's hyperinflation. Since greed and dishonesty can reach people from any societal strata, individuals known to be behind the making of such scams ranged from destitute citizens, businessmen, to even sworn officials in the government whose only common trait was their avarice and their taking advantage of the chaos to enrich themselves at the expense of others. Most of the time, perpetrators were ill-considered and short-sighted, and such was the case of Vasili, an impoverished 32-year-old Russian exile who resided in the Yuchunyang hotel in Hsinking. Living in the city and with no means left to support himself, Vasili hit upon the idea to manufacture counterfeit banknotes. In the process, he managed to convince a shoemaker who was living across his room, and dragged the man into his ambitious plan to become rich. Shortly afterwards, the shoemaker introduced Vasili to Li Yingzhou, a merchant whom he had the pleasure of meeting once. The plan was clear and straightforward. Each of them had a specific role to play in the scheme, and profits were to be divided equally. Vasili took charge of the manufacturing process and Li Yingzhou along with the shoemaker had to provide materials and a safe place to work. After the first batch was made, Vasili and his crew went to test their freshly made fake five-yuan banknotes. However, when they took out the fraudulent banknotes to pay for their meal at a restaurant in the city's old market, their luck immediately ran out. While

⁴² *SJSB*, 13 March 1932.

Vasili ended up in handcuffs and faced prosecution, his partners in crime had managed to flee the scene, and vanished away from the city.⁴³

Vasili's story was only one of the many reported stories of petty con artists emerging throughout the cities, who tried to take advantage of the financial turmoil in any possible way to sustain themselves during times of hardship. Even though their enrichment was achieved at the expense of their peers' miseries, in reality, only a handful of them succeeded in the process, so very few actually suffered from the consequences of their deeds. In contrast, the damages caused by the big "hustlers" to the already malfunctioning society were much more extensive in comparison.

One of the most infamous examples that were known to all, was the case of Chang Yonglin, the Chairman of the Agricultural Association in Xi'an County. Utilizing his position in office, Chang and his accomplices managed to convince local citizens and peasants from nearby villages alike to trade in their "expired" currencies with fake provisional banknotes under the pretence of an impending "financial reform". Fake monies were therefore distributed in the number of tens of thousands, with the local residents of Xi'an unknowingly wasting their entire life savings away, and trading their earnings for a handful of useless papers. It was only when Chang fled from his office that a banning order on the circulation of the fake banknotes was announced by county magistrate Dai.⁴⁴ Late in realizing the large-scale fraud, the damage was already done to the wrongfully depleted people of Xi'an County.

⁴³ *SJSB*, 21 October 1935.

⁴⁴ *SJSB*, 29 December 1932.

The most interesting parts regarding the cases of Vasili and Chang are not so much related to their immoral aspects or to the extent to which such instances had impacted on the Manchukuoans' lives. Instead, they show how some people's behaviours were largely influenced and shaped by the hardships that occurred in the early years of Manchukuo. For instance, it could be interpreted that the abovementioned shoemaker and merchant, who both had steady sources of income, were convinced by Vasili, and succumbed to greed mostly because of the circumstantial financial turmoil that occurred in the early 1930s, and that took the ordinary people by surprise. However, had the financial crisis not occurred, Vasili might not have been able to convince the two men. Similarly, it could be said that Chang, a prestigious local government official, may not have put his entire career, reputation, and family at risk for some quick extra money. Although these may be speculations that have no way to confirm with certainty, they nonetheless show how some Manchukuoans' behaviour was influenced by the overwhelming hardships. However, although many saw these as opportunities to take in order to survive, the regime clearly condemned these actions as crimes.

In the midst of the financial mess, the central government of Manchukuo revealed its ambitious plan to unify and reorganize the disintegrated currency system with the introduction of the new Monetary Law in June 1932, and the establishment of the Manchurian Central Bank (*Manshu Chuo Ginko*) the following month. First tackling the issue of "reformed coupons (*gai zao juan*)" made from old bank notes, the government released a set of new Manchukuo notes with the face value of five jiao, one yuan, five yuan and 100 yuan, to be issued in succession until April 1933.⁴⁵ To many, the government's proactive implementation of a unified

⁴⁵ Jilin sheng jinrong yanjiu suo, *Weiman Zhongyang Yinhang Shiliao* (Historical Data of the Bogus Manchurian Central Bank) (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1984); See also Zhongguo dongbei diqu huobi bianji zu, *Zhongguo Dongbei Diqu Huobi* (The Monetary System of Northeast China) (Beijing: Zhongguo jinrong chubanshe, 1989) for a more comprehensive discussion; Ian Nish, *The History of Manchuria 1840-1948: A Sino-Russo-Japanese Triangle* (Kent: Renaissance Books, 2016), vol. 1 Historical Narrative, p. 176.

currency was indicative of the authorities' way to reassure the population. Surely, the officials did not shy away from making it known to the public that the Manchukuo government had duly performed its stabilizing duties. An announcement addressed to the residents of Manchukuo on 14 July 1932 stated:

“One of the foulest blows ever struck at a hard-working people by men of its own blood was the circulation of millions of dollars' worth of valueless paper in return for their labour and produce. The State is now busily reorganizing its currency, and when plans are completed (they are already well advanced) Manchoukuo will be the only part of this continent with an honest monetary system. Moreover, we intend to recall, and pay for, the worthless paper of the old dictators. This reform alone is worth all the suffering that Manchuria has endured since last September.”⁴⁶

The statement was supported by detailed plans discussed and finalized by the general executive during the 12th Meeting of the State Council on 11 April 1932. The discussions concluded with an official agreement to borrow twenty million yen from the Japanese Business Chambers in advance, stipulating that two million were to be repaid each year with an interest rate of five percent. It was also agreed in the official contract between Manchukuo and Japan that as part of the repayment plan, 20 percent were to be taken out of Manchukuo's monthly salt tax income.⁴⁷ Soon after the funding was transferred into Manchukuo through the Bank of Joseon on 22 June, the Ministry of Finance immediately placed Monetary Order No. 25 into effect in the following week, which formally banned any currency other than the official unified one from circulating in the market.⁴⁸ Even though in hindsight, the Manchukuo government eventually achieved tremendous success in unifying its unstable and broken monetary system which allowed for its integration into the

⁴⁶ “Residents' View of the new Manchukuo,” in *The History of Manchuria 1840-1948: A Sino-Russo-Japanese Triangle*, by Ian Nish (Kent: Renaissance Books, 2016), vol. 2 select primary sources, p. 114.

⁴⁷ Zhongguo guojia tushuguan ed., *Zheng Xiaoxu Riji* (Diary of Zheng Xiaoxu), 2721; See also *SJSB*, 17 December 1932.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2585.

“yen bloc”, in 1932, many considered this decision to be a bold move. Such pessimism could be explained by the fact that the redemption of currencies was a task so hideous that it never went through successfully throughout the relatively short history of modern Manchuria. However, impeded by the lack of sufficient political capital, the hasty implementation of the currency reform by the Manchukuo government was inevitably met with great difficulties during the process, which again, impacted on the people’s daily activities.

By the beginning of November, a report from the Ministry of Civil Affairs Police Division indicated that while one-third of the total 10.5 billion guan tie in Jilin Province had already been recovered, only 15 million new banknotes were issued into the market. The drastic reduction in the active circulation of currencies meant that small transactions that used to be made on a daily basis became practically impossible. Since it was extremely difficult for Manchukuoans to get their hands on liquid currencies, when they did manage to obtain monies, they would save them for essential purchases, which caused small businesses and local commerce to suffer tremendous losses. On top of the inflation that disrupted the means for wholesale distribution, the cost of businesses rapidly escalated, often leaving merchants unable to repay the loans that had been previously made from banks.⁴⁹ For business owners, this also meant that keeping their doors open became an increasingly difficult challenge, as the usual customers and big spenders who kept them afloat were replaced with the struggle to maintain the day-to-day operations.

Another significant source of burden came from the taxation system. Being the third largest source of income after agricultural taxes and vehicle taxes in 1933, the government of Manchukuo had long regarded its commercial tax base to be one of the most reliable sources of revenue to make up for its financial imbalance in

⁴⁹ Liu Shouchun, “Shenyang Zhicheng Yinhang Shimo (A summary of Bank of Zhicheng),” in *Jingji Lueduo* (Economic Exploitation), ed., Sun Bang, 611.

such turbulent times.⁵⁰ Indeed, according to the taxation system in place, it was stipulated that street vendors were to pay one yuan per month for peddlers' taxes, with an additional one yuan of monthly "obligation taxes". Merchants, on the other hand, were required to pay up to 50 yuan per month for operation taxes (*ying ye juan*) alone, depending on the capitals that were registered. In addition, commercial taxes (*shang juan*) equivalent to four yuan per employee were to be paid on a quarterly basis along with shop sales taxes (*ying ye shang juan*) of a monthly four thousandths of the total capital registered. On top of the above mentioned, shop taxes (*pu juan*) were considered by all to be the most damaging to businesses. Based on the registered capitals, up to 700 yuan per month were to be claimed by the local bureaus of finance.⁵¹ To the vast majority of merchants who could not make ends meet due to the lack of business activities, it was no different from extortion and blackmail on a monthly basis except that it came from the authorities.

Indeed, business owners who could not afford to pay the requested amount of their taxes were being racketeered by the officials who managed to collect money in one way or another. For instance, street vendors who peddled goods along the streets were regularly pulled off by the local authorities under the pretence that they were "obstructing the traffic" or simply because they were "causing an eyesore". The only effective way to get out of such situations was to pay their duties or to have their merchandise pawned as "illegal goods".⁵² Additionally, shop owners faced constant harassment from taxation inspectors who visited all too frequently. Minor faults and mistakes were nitpicked from account books, which would often result in shop owners being accused of "tax evasion"

⁵⁰ Minzhengbu difang si, *Datong er niandu difang caizheng gaiyao* (Local Financial Summary in Year Two of Datong) (Datong: Minzhengbu difang si, 1934), p. 52.

⁵¹ Minzhengbu difang si, *Xianshi difangshui yilan* (List of Local taxes in Cities and Counties) (n.p.: Minzhengbu difang si, 1934), pp. 7-44.

⁵² *SJSB*, 18 July 1935.

against which a certain amount of “protection fee” could be paid to the visiting inspector.⁵³

At the same time, ever since the beginning of 1932, merchants and businessmen across Manchukuo had been sparing no efforts to implore the government to reduce the commercial taxes, if not to exempt them from paying them completely. On 20 May, it was reported in Fengtian that a joint request from various sectors in the commercial industries in the city was filed to the local authorities, stating the assorted burdens and difficulties of staying in business under such harsh financial circumstances.⁵⁴ After the request was ignored and disregarded by the city government, a second request was filed the next day stressing the importance of the matter, and the urgency of exempting such levies, though in vain again.⁵⁵ It was not until after a few months in August that a formal decision was released by the Fengtian Municipal Office, announcing the complete abolition of shop taxes, as well as a limitation to the maximum amount of taxes of all types to 18 yuan from the first of September of the same year.⁵⁶ This was only the beginning of a series of reforms the government designed and implemented to simplify the lives of its subjects. After the unified currencies thus came a new reform attempting to unify tax laws on a national level. In this respect, the central government invested unprecedented efforts into the reformation of the tax system in Manchukuo, and for the first time since the establishment of the new state, the authorities announced that businesses with insufficient profit could be exempted from paying taxes. Moreover, the authorities designed separate taxation grids for corporate businesses and individual businesses.⁵⁷ In line with Mitter’s observation, it can thus be said that the reform of the taxation system served the function of improving the credibility of the government to justify the legitimacy of the

⁵³ *SJSB*, 9 September 1932.

⁵⁴ *SJSB*, 21 May 1932.

⁵⁵ *SJSB*, 24 June 1932.

⁵⁶ *SJSB*, 28 August 1932.

⁵⁷ *Hsinking Special Issue, SJSB*, 29 June 1935.

regime.⁵⁸ However, insofar as the commercial sector's taxes represented a significant portion of state resources, government officials were very much aware that the new reforms of the tax system would result in a significant shortfall of their source of income. Clearly reluctant to fully enforce the new taxation system, the Manchukuo authorities prioritized the unification of the currencies instead, claiming it to be the most effective way to keep the financial disorder under control. Inevitably, the authorities' decision to focus on currencies rather than on alleviating the commercial sector's fiscal burden caused a number of pitfalls for merchants and business owners.

As a consequence, unable to keep up with the high taxes while struggling with their day-to-day operations, countless shops and businesses across the state were forced to cease their activities and shut down completely. For instance, in the County of Shuangcheng, hundreds of shops were compelled to close down. Throughout the county, not a single pawnshop or jewellery store could be found anymore as they were all forced out of business.⁵⁹ Night markets that used to be lively and packed with people and merchandise under the glow of street lights had become lifeless, with only a few roaming customers and peddlers, even during traditional rush hours. Not only did the merchants not make any profit from their activities, they also started cumulating losses throughout the seasons.⁶⁰ Xieshengyong clothing and fabric store, for example, was one of the countless cases affected. After failing to make any profit for an entire year, the store announced its closure after dismissing all of its employees.⁶¹ However, being the commercial pillar in the Andong region, the collapse of the business magnate set off a chain reaction among peddlers and retailers all around. Subsequently, within a day's time, it was reported that five more businesses were to close down shortly afterwards.⁶²

⁵⁸ Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 117.

⁵⁹ *SJSB*, 15 June 1932.

⁶⁰ *SJSB*, 14 February 1932.

⁶¹ *SJSB*, 19 March 1932.

⁶² *SJSB*, 21 April 1932.

Like an epidemic, merchants were forced out of business everywhere in Manchukuo. One by one, shops and stalls were disappearing so quickly and in such numbers that it had become increasingly strenuous for urban dwellers to find a place to purchase their daily necessities. Starvation took its toll in the cities, reaping people exponentially. Dead bodies started appearing on the streets on a daily basis, becoming a common sight, as if corpses had merged with the urban landscape. In July 1935, famished citizens in Tonghua were to be found lingering near the marketplace, wrenching to leave even after closing hours, in which as reported:

“... Every day in the market there were only a handful of sellers, maybe three or four, and they were always surrounded by an overwhelming crowd of hungry citizens. The stubbed corns, sorghum, and millets that the merchants were selling were all always mixed with lots of inedible bran and grain husks, yet they are still in very short supply... moaning and groaning can be heard everywhere in the market, as the majority of buyers in the market cannot keep their pots boiling and will have to go hungry for another day.”⁶³

Hence, alongside the sinister transformations of the urban landscape in Manchukuo, the cities witnessed a significant increase of beggars roaming the streets, who gradually begged for food instead of money, as if the value of human life was reduced to a few bites:

“... In such times, many people could not find work to do and a lot of them have become beggars. The city government tried to help them by giving them copper coins, but they often disregard such kind gestures and request for a steamed bun instead. Such are the hardships of life and the miseries of inflation.”⁶⁴

⁶³ *SJSB*, 4 July 1935.

⁶⁴ *SJSB*, 26 January 1932.

In the city of Jiyuan, deprived dwellers could be found begging their way along the most prosperous streets of the city, knocking from door to door asking for food and also on the off chance, if anyone was hiring. One concerned resident reported to the local press that “every five minutes, [he would] find at least one beggar standing by [his] door, begging for food, or even scraps of food.” Cities soon became invaded by mendicants whose miserable appearance did not go unnoticed by the inhabitants who still had a roof over their heads. According to the same resident, “[beggars] do not have any proper clothes or anything to eat; they beg for food during the day with their families and sleep in the dirty alleyways at night, their living conditions are quite miserable.”⁶⁵ The scarcity of goods inevitably generated social tensions and a vicious cycle of hostilities within the urban regions, leading to the rate of thefts and robberies in the cities to reach a high mark. Burglaries regularly occurred so often that marketplaces, for instance, were looted on a daily basis. Of all goods that were reported as stolen, thieves targeted mainly staple foods. Unsurprisingly, most offenders of such crimes were not high profile criminals, but were in fact described as “desperate and reckless citizens”.⁶⁶

With the upsurge in crime, it was dangerous to wander the streets alone in many cities in the first half of the 1930s. “What are you carrying in the bag?”, “Five litres of sorghum that I just borrowed from my relatives.”, “Let me eat some first, or I will scream that you raped me.”, such was the unfortunate encounter between a raggedly dressed man in his early forties and local resident Miss Zhang in a desolated alleyway near her home. When summoned to the local police station the following day for questioning, Zhang reluctantly confessed her wrongdoings and shared her side of the story: “I knew I broke the law and committed a crime. But I have not eaten a single meal in three days, what else could I possibly do?”⁶⁷ The dramatic decrease in obtainable goods and purchasing power had indeed triggered the survival instincts of many, who resorted to robbing and threatening their own

⁶⁵ *SJSB*, 25 July 1935.

⁶⁶ *SJSB*, 8 July 1935.

⁶⁷ *SJSB*, 29 June 1935.

peers in hope of living through another day. Even the normally most law-abiding citizens had to sharpen these “skills” to survive. Like most offenders, Zhang was not a hard-hearted criminal, but her story reflects the ordinary people' common behaviour and mindsets, misshaped by their need to survive.

Since the surge in crime was a matter of public concern, the government responded by launching a new “re-education” program in an attempt to reduce criminality and clean up its cities. A restrictive banning order on “loitering” was issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and homeless beggars along with unemployed citizens of working age were all evicted off the streets to be sent off to detainment camps to learn to become “useful citizens”.⁶⁸ Known to the people as “workhouses for the homeless (*You min xi yi suo*)” and “correctional factories (*Jiao yang gong chang*)”, detainees in such camps were to be held for at least one year. Completely imprisoned within the facility, no permission was given even to see their families or to communicate with the outside world. Detainees were thus assigned to repetitive labour such as woodworking, dyeing, printing, spinning and tailoring. Even though the detained were supposedly obliged to undertake such tasks until their sentences expired, in practice however, labour sentences were often extended indefinitely. Indeed, such facilities were empowered to postpone the release of their detainees if “false attitudes” and reluctance to change were discovered.⁶⁹ Overall resembling the labour camp system established by the People’s Republic of China after 1957, the “re-education” program proved to be an effective counter-measure to the soaring levels of street crime, but the contribution to the actual improvement of the living standards of the population was minute compared to the energy and resources deployed to enroll forced work in re-education camps.

⁶⁸ Guowuyuan tongji chu, *Diyici Manzhouguo Nianbao* (First Annual Report of Manchukuo) (Dairen: Manzhou wenhua xiehui, 1933); See also *SJSB*, 29 December 1932.

⁶⁹ Manzhouguo zhongyang shehui shiye lianhe hui, *Manzhouguo Shehui Shiye Gaiyao* (A Summary of Social Programs in Manchukuo) (Hsinking: Guangyong Xiuzao, 1934), p. 9.

Certainly, in spite of the many official promises of reforms aimed at resolving the financial disorder that caused the regime to further dysfunction, the real progress made by the Manchukuo government was minimal in the first half of the 1930s. Wondering if their situation could be any worse than it was already, the ordinary Manchukuoans were far from thinking that the years lying ahead would be just as complicated, if not worse.

3.3. Empty Showcases and Personal Connections

To many, the year 1937 got off to a good start. The reform of commercial taxes was in full effect, and the currencies in circulation were finally stabilized.⁷⁰ Triumphant news of successful military operations against banditry continued to pour in from the countryside. At the same time, the rural population's welfare significantly improved thanks to the soybean trade agreement worth over one million yen per year initiated between Manchukuo and Germany.⁷¹ This resulted in a substantial boom in trading volumes, which in return contributed to a significant improvement of the peasantry's quality of life. During this period, their profits increased, which allowed them to gain access to the consumption of goods which they previously could not afford. This ricocheted in urban vendors' daily activities as well. While they used to struggle to make ends meet, this new wave brought them an influx of rural customers ready to enjoy their newfound riches.

Indeed, the beginning of 1937 was often referred to as the most prosperous time since Manchukuo had been founded. With merchants having to run around in circles in their shop to handle all the queries of their customers, it was hard not to capture the sense of enthusiasm. Official news reports during this period included testimonies and analyses indicating that "Peasants now are either spending their hard-earned monies on commodities or saving them at home, the bad financial situations in the countryside are finally behind them now."⁷² Owing to the shopping boom, big businesses in the cities also began to recover. At last, in March, the city of Harbin recorded a surge of 103 new business openings while only 73 closed down, making it the first time in the city that the number of store openings

⁷⁰ "Four years of Manchukuo administration," in *The History of Manchuria 1840-1948: A Sino-Russo-Japanese Triangle*, by Ian Nish (Kent: Renaissance Books, 2016), vol. 2 Select Primary Sources, p. 121.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122; See also Tim Wright, "The Manchurian Economy and the 1930s World Depression", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 5 (2007), pp. 1073-1112.

⁷² *Hsinking Special Issue, SJSB*, 19 January 1937.

exceeded the number of store closings since the establishment of the regime.⁷³ Branded department stores such as Hongshuncheng, Xingtaihao, and Zhongshungong that were once on the edge of bankruptcy, could now finally boast of an average revenue of 7,000 yuan on a daily basis, with local peasants consuming enough to contribute to the largest portion of the daily turnover.⁷⁴ As it was reflected in the regime's propaganda, the modest economic recovery that occurred in early 1937 injected a tremendous confidence boost in the state authorities who deployed unremitting efforts to disseminate a sense of optimism to the Manchukuoans via news stories that emphasised on the sharp contrast between the past hardships and the present fortunes.

However, the reality of life of the majority of urban residents in the puppet state during the beginning of 1937 was a completely different story, and other reports suggest that reporting of the economic "boom" were, at best, selective. The living standards remained low as they were severely impacted by the increasing prices of sorghum, which peaked at over two yuan per *dou* when it used to be no more than one yuan five jiao at the end of 1936.⁷⁵ Moreover, the unemployment rates were still high. In the city of Jinzhou alone, it was reported that over 30 percent of the population was living below the poverty line.⁷⁶ During this period of time, welfare facilities and soup factories also witnessed a peak of famished visitors, forcing them to stretch well beyond their capacities to provide the proper help to the needy.⁷⁷ To put a temporary end to starvation, some even resorted to selling their children. The average price for a young 18-year-old girl was 20 yuan, or the equivalent of five pecks of millets in face of the staggering grain prices.⁷⁸ Picking wild plants growing along the streets was also one of the more common ways to alleviate hunger. And more often than not, this was part of the lower-class

⁷³ *Jinzhou Special Issue, SJSB*, 11 April 1937.

⁷⁴ *SJSB*, 16 January 1937.

⁷⁵ *Jinzhou Special Issue, SJSB*, 6 January 1937.

⁷⁶ *SJSB*, 17 May 1937.

⁷⁷ *SJSB*, 24 March 1937.

⁷⁸ *Jinzhou Special Issue, SJSB*, 20 January 1937.

Manchukuoan's diet, which on a good day, consisted of wild plants as their staple food, accompanied by expired meat or fish. In June 1937, a sinister portrayal of such miseries of urban life was presented in the newspapers:

"... From a dilapidated mud wall stood three very low thatched rooms. Sounds of anguish and depressive souls coming from inside propagated across the neighbourhood and into the ears of passers-by. Inside, the rooms were very dark, and everything was covered with a thick layer of dust. On one side of the brick bed laid a plain-looking man in his early forties with his eyes firmly shut. Next to him was an emaciated woman his age, constantly panting and painfully gasping to breathe. It was obvious from glancing at them that undernutrition could not be the only cause for such deteriorated physical conditions. Between the couple reclined a naked three to four-year-old child. The rickety boy had nothing more than skin and bones. His two small hands were tightly grasped across his chest as his body shivered, expressing dreadful pain, tears stained his face. After noticing that all his neighbours came to his home to visit his family, the man, Li Yanqing, struggled to get out of bed to welcome them, but was stopped by his neighbours after failing repeatedly. Li's lips started to tremble, trying to utter something to the group, but instead, only green foam flew out of his mouth."⁷⁹

Whilst attempting to make sense of the awful scene presented in front of them, some of Li's neighbours guessed that the family was probably suffering from starvation. "His family did not have any food in the past five days. I remember Li coming to my home to borrow some grain, but we had been out of food for over two days as well." Others, on the other hand, insisted that it was a suicide attempt. "If they were just hungry, then why they couldn't they speak? Maybe Li and his family poisoned themselves and tried to commit suicide because they were unable to find food." The speculations ended when a big pot of half-eaten wild plants was subsequently discovered in the Li household kitchen cupboards, suggesting that his family was indeed suffering from food poisonings aggravated by their starved

⁷⁹ *Hsinking Special Issue, SJSB*, 10 June 1937.

state.⁸⁰ Without a doubt, what happened to the Li family was not an isolated tragedy. With hindsight, the calamities and countless stories of misery associated to urban poverty at the beginning of 1937 were very similar in gravity to the ones occurring in the first half of the 1930s when the everyday lives of the people were severely disrupted by the tremendous hardships that overwhelmed their lives. However, a closer examination of the evolution of the ordinary Manchukuoans' everyday lives reveals the complexities that enable distinguishing the different scourges that plagued them from the earlier years of the regime to the present chaos.

Nevertheless, despite the publication of such tragic stories in Manchukuo's cities local press, the authorities still believed the overall trajectory to point upward in the beginning of 1937. Although the previous warlord era had certainly left traces of turmoil, the arrival of the Japanese and the birth of Manchukuo added another layer of social instability and financial disorder to the existing chaos. Yet, almost downplaying their part of the responsibility in provoking such turbulence, the authorities deliberately put a stronger emphasis on the failures of the previous era that resulted in a crippled society where members' daily routines were to be salvaged by their leadership. Hence, after the various reforms, the authorities considered these issues to be solved, and classified social and financial crises to be a thing of the past. Moreover, in an attempt to instill a spirit of optimism into the Manchukuoans, the authorities insisted on the successes of their previous reforms, emphasizing more particularly the positive effects such reforms were to have on the people's quality of life, and further stressing the lasting benefits the peoples would be able to experience in the future:

"The people were [once] burdened with over-taxation to the point where they faced ruin and starvation. The currency system was completely ruined. The business of the country became stagnant and

⁸⁰ Ibid.

finally collapsed... Robbery, arson and massacre by the lawless elements (banditry) terrified the entire population, who, bereft of protection, were exposed to outrage and hunger in all parts of the country... To-day peace reigns all over the land; internal security is no longer the question ... The unified currency system and the centralized credit system are outstanding examples of [our] successive achievements... [and] the standard of living of the Manchoukuo people will rise day by day.”⁸¹

Enthusiasm among the authorities and Manchukuoans was indeed burgeoning insofar as the government leaders harboured grand visions for the future of Manchukuo. An ambitious Five-Year Industrial Development Plan (*Manshu sangyo kaihatsu 5-ke-nen keikaku*) that was already in the making since 1936 was officially announced in April 1937. Detailed arrangements were laid out as part of the goal to completely overhaul the single agriculture-led commodity economy at the enormous expense of nearly three billion yen. With the influx of Japanese investments, the rigorous control of the regime’s economy came to an end. Instead, the government of Manchukuo gave way to the active participation of private capitals in its state-building project, with the ultimate aim of achieving speedy economic development.⁸² Initiated by Ishiwara Kanji and Miyazaki Masayoshi, the Five-Year Industrial Development Plan was clearly inspired from the Soviet development model. At the same time, the large sum of financial investments from the home islands also granted Japan a legitimate reason to assign Japanese personnel to every important position in Manchukuo’s key industries.⁸³ Indeed, while the strategic consideration to integrate the region’s economy reflected Japan’s perceived needs to exploit the rich natural resources of Manchukuo, it also further blurs the boundaries between informal and formal empire, fundamentally

⁸¹ Fumimaro Konoye, “Manchoukuo, Precursor of Asiatic Renaissance and the Government by Wang-Tao (Kingly Way) based on Theocracy,” in *Imperial Japan and the World 1931-1945*, ed., Antony Best (London: Routledge, 2011), vol. 1, pp. 73-75.

⁸² Nagaharu Yasuo, “Manchukuo’s New Economic Policy,” in *Imperial Japan and the World 1931-1945*, ed., Antony Best (London: Routledge, 2011), vol. 3, pp. 113-115.

⁸³ Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan’s War*, 122; See also Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 192.

transcending Japanese imperialism to an entire new level and reinforcing the status of Manchukuo as a colony in everything but name. However, for the ordinary people, the preoccupations were different. What mattered to them was not so much the news about foreign capital pouring in large sums of money to invest into the regime, but rather the impact it would have on their daily lives, and the creation of long-awaited and much-needed job opportunities, as well as the promises of better wages to improve their living standards. Even though the average Manchukuoan might or might not have shared the same intensity of optimism with regards to the government's visions, they could not simply ignore the promises given to them at hand. Without a doubt, for the time being, it was still very difficult for Manchukuoans to get by every day. However, hopes for a brighter, more abundant future no longer seemed to be an unreachable dream, which made their present lives easier to bear.

Nevertheless, during the same year, the overwhelming desires for future abundance and the government's plans of rejuvenation were abruptly disrupted by the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July and the outbreak of the battle of Shanghai in August. With the Kuomintang leadership refusing to succumb to Japan's demands, the regional conflicts between the two countries escalated. Soon enough, the second Sino-Japanese War was in full swing. In order to finance the new war, a series of patriotic bonds were subsequently issued in Japan, along with the implementation of an economic drive policy and nation-wide mobilization.⁸⁴ Manchukuo, on the other hand, was also forced to undergo a series of adjustments in order to accommodate the new political climate and the directives that ensued. The comprehensive Five-Year Development Plan for Manchukuo hence redirected its original purpose to achieve self-sufficiency, and began focusing on the exportation of raw materials and on the production of munitions to support the war economy.⁸⁵ In addition, as Japan was virtually Manchukuo's sole supplier for

⁸⁴ *Mainichi Shinbun*, 15 August 1937.

⁸⁵ Ramon H. Myers, "Creating a Modern Enclave Economy: The Economic Integration of Japan, Manchuria, and North China, 1932-1945," in *The Japanese*

finished industrial and commercial products insofar as in 1937, nearly 80 percent of Manchukuo's total import volume came from Japan,⁸⁶ the imminent threat of the war triggered a state-wide increase in commodity prices, which inevitably affected the ordinary people who began experiencing a dramatic surge in the costs of living.

Henceforth replacing the short-lived promises of abundance, this sudden shift in priorities was clearly reflected in the authorities' calls for their subjects to live frugally, strongly encouraging them to save money and avoid unnecessary expenses. Certainly, frugal living and economization were omnipresent in the regime's everyday rhetoric. "We all know that we cannot avoid purchasing essential items, but we also need to be prepared for the rise in prices and its impacts. In such times of emergency, we will all need to live humbly, and this is the only way to tide over the difficulties of life together (with Japan)."⁸⁷ Such types of statements were made to instil faith and confidence into the citizens, and although they were intended to reassure them, they had the exact opposite effect more often than not. After all, rather than impalpable long-term political visions perceived as impractical or even irrelevant solutions to remedy their miserable conditions, or improve their quality of life, the reason why the peoples could harbour such spirits of optimism was because they believed in a foreseeable future that was to become a reality before long. With the promises of abundance shattered to pieces, all there was left for Manchukuoans were the hardships and miseries of the present, with no incentives for them to form future projects any longer.

In addition to shattering the people's hopes for the future, the changes in the political climate caused Manchukuoans to grow increasingly insecure vis-à-vis

Wartime Empire, eds., Duus, Myers and Peattie, pp. 136-170; See also Xie, *Wei manzhouguo shi xinbian* (New Edition of the History of Bogus Manchukuo), 506.

⁸⁶ Tokutomi Masataka, *Manzhou Jianguo Duben* (Readings on the Founding of Manchukuo) (Hsinking: manzhouguo tongxun she, 1940), pp. 74-81.

⁸⁷ *Dairen Special Issue, SJSB*, 5 February 1938.

their chances to acquire goods in times of potential crisis. Everyday products and goods that were still available for purchase were perceived differently and took on a new sense of importance. Indeed, goods mattered not because of the fact that they were in short supply, but rather because of the anticipation that they might be in even shorter supply in the near future. Being able to buy something was no longer relevant. Instead, having the chance and ability to acquire an item when needed became the new dominant form of concern, whether the item in question be a daily necessity or more specific goods. Long queues in front of stores and merchants' stalls could be seen across the cities on a regular basis, with urban residents carrying large shopping bags around to make purchases of whatever they could get their hands on, "just in case". Indeed, people were becoming increasingly sensitive to even the smallest fluctuation of prices. These widespread everyday anxieties took on such magnitude that in January 1940, it was reported that all the shops in the city of Tieling had been fully cleared out of kerosene, and that during the cold wintry season, not even a single match could be found in any of the retail shops of the city.⁸⁸ Shortages of everyday items aggravated to the point that even the most basic condiments such as salt became all but impossible to acquire through regular channels.⁸⁹ At the same time, in Hsinking, a slight increase in the price of tobacco did not go unnoticed by consumers on the lookout, which sparked a wave of cigarette shortages that swept all shops throughout the city.⁹⁰

Although panic purchases and customers raiding the stores one after the other on a daily basis would normally suggest that merchants across the regime enjoyed a lucrative amount of profits, the reality was otherwise. In fact, since December 1937, the government had allocated all private businesses operating throughout the regime to respective unions (*zu he*) which was designed to empower the authorities to become the sole distributor of unprocessed raw

⁸⁸ *SJSB*, 11 January 1940.

⁸⁹ *SJSB*, 9 January 1940.

⁹⁰ *SJSB*, 16 January 1940.

materials and commodities to each store prior to retail.⁹¹ The idea behind such organization was simple. It is in human nature to speculate on resources in the event of crisis. Thus, the control over the distribution of materials was not only meant to prevent merchants from taking advantage of the shortages and inflation by retailing goods at too high a price at the consumers' expense. The goal was also to reduce the costs linked to business operations, and therefore required merchants to retail goods at low prices regulated by the government.

However, the establishment of such unions neither solved the costs of operating businesses nor the price inflations. Under the system, many merchants were left with no choice but to join several unions at the same time. For instance, a store normally specializing in fabric dyeing would have to be a member of the coal and cotton unions in addition to being a part of the expected dyestuff union. Certainly, for the shop to maintain its normal operation, simultaneous membership to multiple unions was indispensable insofar as failure to do so was likely to result in the near impossibility of obtaining the needed raw materials and goods to display for retail.⁹² Additionally, because the unions kept strict control over the sourcing and supply of all such commodities, it became increasingly difficult for retailers to make any of these products available to the ordinary Manchukuoan who fell victim to shortages rapidly taking over most supplies.⁹³ Consequently, by April 1938, nearly all basic foodstuffs and essential daily commodities had fallen under the category of regulated products. These included corn, sorghum, wheat, millets, charcoal and cotton clothes, all of which were to be sold within a specifically

⁹¹ Ha'erbin shi difangzhi bianzuan weiyuan hui, *Haerbin Shizhi Jinrong Zhi* (The Chronicle of Harbin: Economy Edition) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1995), p. 52.

⁹² Zhang Xiaoyun, "weiman shiqi riben dui tieling de jingji qinlue (Japanese economic invasion of Tieling during Bogus Manchukuo)," in *Tieling Wenshi Ziliao* (Tieling Historical Data), eds., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Liaoning sheng tieling shi wenshi ziliao weiyuan hui (Tieling: Internal Release, 1988), p. 41.

⁹³ Sun Weiyi, "Changbai Yongcheng Gongyaodian de Xingshuai (The Rise and Fall of Yongcheng Pharmacy in Changbai)," in *Hunjiang Wenshi Ziliao* (Hunjiang Historical Data), ed., Zhengxie hunjiang shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuan hui (Hunjiang: Internal Release, 1989), p. 146.

designated price range. As such, not only had it become increasingly difficult for merchants to get their hands on the necessary materials for retail, all such regulated prices also meant that the profit margins made over the few items displayed in their shop were close to negligible. In practice, as expected, it was barely manageable for merchants and vendors across the regime to keep their businesses going while following the directives, and selling products at the regulated retail price. On 11 June 1939, 55-year-old Quan Jifu who was then the owner of Fushuncheng, sent a letter to the police commissioner in Xingnong, on behalf of eight other butcher shops in the county:

“... As per the County’s regulations, the selling price of pork is three jiao two fen per 500 grams. However, the cost price of pigs including transportation fees from Hailun County and the nearby villages have already exceeded the predetermined sale price of pork ... if we cannot increase our prices we will not only be unprofitable, but we will also lose money and be driven out of business. With no other choice, please consider our earnestly request to increase the price of pork to three jiao six fen to aid and cultivate the development of businesses in our county.”⁹⁴

To prevent their businesses from going under, merchants had to circumvent the limitations introduced by the unstable unions over the acquisition of materials needed for retail. As a possible alternative, many of them thus resorted to finding more stable suppliers to source materials outside their respective unions. Well aware that the risks were not to be underestimated, many merchants strove to purchase supplies from other distributors without being caught by the authorities, since they knew they would be liable to a fine of up to 300 yuan, and possibly a prison term of up to six months.⁹⁵ The other option for them was to resort to stockpiling their supplies, and to refrain from putting them for sale unless they

⁹⁴ See Appendix 2: Qing qiushu (Request Letter).

⁹⁵ Man zhou sifa xiehui, *Xin zhiding manzhou diguo liu fa* (The New Formulation of Six Major Legislations of the Empire of Manchukuo) (Hsinking: Manzhou sifang xiehui, 1940), p. 509.

estimated that a favourable profit could be made. But this too became illegal. The Manchukuo government therewith referred to any merchants they considered to be “hoarding merchandise with the intention of gaining profits” as “dishonest and evil traders (*jian shang*)”. In the meantime, an even bigger penalty of up to 6,000 yuan was introduced to further dissuade merchants from trying their luck in these behaviours regarded as vile.⁹⁶ Indeed, it was becoming increasingly clear that under the amended Five-Year Industrialization Plan, the priorities of the regime had been redesigned to focus even more on heavy industry. The government’s heavy penalties and inflexibility towards merchants’ activities eventually left them with little to no wiggle room. This also suggests that the authorities were confident in their own distribution scheme wherein unions were to be the sole suppliers for most commodities, believing that such system would minimize risks of inflation, and keep shortage issues under check. Unfortunately, when the authorities designed and implemented the monopolized distribution scheme, little foresight seems to have been taken into consideration with regards to mid to long-term consequences affecting the relationships and hierarchical structure within the society.

In these troubled times, having “friends” took on a crucial importance when navigating in Manchukuo society. It was essential for Manchukuoans to have the right “friends” at the right time insofar as such “friends” could often make almost any type of inconvenience go away. Many therefore sought after their “friends” for help whenever they encountered a problematic situation that needed to be solved, and the Manchukuo shop owners who were struggling to turn a profit were no exception. In this specific context, “making friends” refers more particularly to the process whereby two parties engage in a reciprocally instrumental relationship that involves the constant exchange of bribes and favours. For example, in Changbai County, Lü Ziyang, an employee working in Decheng soy sauce shop, retold his experiences when serving the shop owner’s “friends”:

⁹⁶ *SJSB*, 24 January 1940.

“Because all of the materials needed to make soy sauce (soybeans, salt, etc.) are all distributed and supplied by the union and the Monopoly Bureau, the officials were always treated as guests of honour whenever they came to the shop. During special occasions, holidays and new year’s, my employer would always send me to the officials’ home to deliver specially crafted premium soy sauce and pickles that could not be bought anywhere else. The chief of the Monopoly Bureau, Wang Hanmin would come by every day to the shop to play *mahjong* and *pai gow* poker. He would stay here to eat and drink all day long and sometimes even ask for money from the shop. But still, my employer always treated him as a distinguished guest. As long as Wang and his friends were here, we would always serve them very cautiously, in fear of offending them. When they played *mahjong*, we stood next to them to light their cigarettes, pour water and cater them with fruits. Our shop owner always greeted them with a humble smile and welcomed them, as well as seeing them off outside the shop. Every time [when they leave] they would be given bottles of soy sauce free of charge as well.”⁹⁷

And as much as “friends” are supposed to help each other out in times of need, in return, the officials would turn a blind eye to the shop’s everyday operations. These instances were all the more outrageous since they could not even be compared to the mediocre products sold to the average customers. In contrast, inferior or even defective soy sauce that had been excessively diluted with water was served to the ordinary masses who would walk through the door. From time to time, some of the produce sold in the store had made their way onto the shelves posing as soy sauce, even though all that the bottles really contained was a horrid mixture of leftover soup, peppercorns, aniseeds and coloured sugar. “I do not know how much money the shop was making every month,” as Lü stated, “But once, I overheard my shop owner in a conversation: ‘How can I not make money if my business is collaborating with the local bosses? If there was any less money to make, I would not even be

⁹⁷ Lü Ziyang, “Riwei tongzhi xia de changbai gongshangye – wo suo zhidao de decheng jiangyuan (Business and industry in Changbai under Japanese control – what I know about the Decheng soy sauce shop),” in *Hunjiang Wenshi Ziliao* (Hunjiang Historical Data), ed., Zhengxie hunjiang shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuan, 181.

doing this.”⁹⁸ Indeed, the example of Lü’s employer and his “friendly” relationships with officials occupying seats in the higher spheres was characteristic of the not-so-hidden mechanisms of Manchukuo society operating in the context of monopolized distribution. Although in a way, the distribution scheme was created to combat shortages and price inflations, such a system ended up worsening the existing social inequalities among Manchukuoans. Surely, in the event of shortages, access to whatever goods were available for purchase depended almost exclusively on the type of connections one had. For the unprivileged ordinary masses, gaining access to goods was a much more complicated story.

Manchukuoans incessantly grumbled to express their discontentment vis-à-vis the mediocrity of the few goods merchants would make available for them to purchase. This was especially evident after the official introduction of the rationing system in 1939, which operated as follows. The authorities appointed a number of merchants and retailers across the regime who were to distribute rationed goods obtained from the abovementioned unions, to eligible Manchukuoans. Undeniably, this newly imposed distribution system further worsened the shortages situation, wherein the already scarce goods could only be obtained upon proof of cash and of rationing documents (*pei ji tong zhang*). On top of that, the majority of the rationed goods distributed to the public were, in fact, an ensemble of rejects and defective products which the light industries in Japan exported for distribution to the Manchukuo market. Products deemed unfit for sale to the Japanese consumer market thus made their way to become highly-prized goods among the toiling masses of Manchukuo who struggled to get hold of regular commodities. Such commodities were regarded as highly-prized, not because of their quality or because of the high price that they fetched, but because it was so difficult to even obtain them due to their scarcity, that possession of such goods was already a semi-victory. Another possible reason why the products made available to the people by rationing were lacking in so many respects was because merchants prioritized the

⁹⁸ Ibid.

better ones to their “friends” in hope of staying on their good side. Practically all types of commodities were affected. Shoes, for instance, were so poorly manufactured that they were reputed not to last longer than seven or eight days before the soles completely broke off and the threads came off loose. Watches were not very functional either, and were commonly ridiculed for their uselessness, rebranded as the “three diligent watches (*san qin biao*)”, simply because it required the owner to align, dial and tighten the watch all the time for it to function as it should.⁹⁹ On the other hand, with regards to foodstuffs, merchants in charge of distributing food staple ration purposely contaminated the rations with inconsumable impurities. In Fengtian, citizens had reportedly discovered that in their portion of millets, nearly half consisted of sickening mixtures of sand and rocks.¹⁰⁰ Without a doubt, it can be said that amoral and unscrupulous merchants took advantage of their fellow Manchukuoans since they were confident that given the shortages situation, they would rather purchase subpar rationed goods than have nothing at all. When they saw the opportunity to maintain a profit from their fellow peers, they therefore willingly took their chances, to the loss of the ordinary people. Unfortunately, as time went by, the shortages situation continued regressing, affecting all strata of society.

⁹⁹ Hun Shixiu, “1894-1941 nian de Linjiang Shangye (Businesses in Linjiang from 1894 to 1941),” in *Hunjiang Wenshi Ziliao* (Hunjiang Historical Data) ed., Zhengxie hunjiang shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuan hui, 121.

¹⁰⁰ *Binjiang Special Issue, SJSB*, 26 May 1940.

3.4. Holiday Rationing and the Year 1940

The authorities' initiative to implement the rationing system in 1939 could be understood as a way for them to acknowledge the severe supply and distribution problems that were plaguing the regime. Nevertheless, the authorities put together a number of special rationing arrangements in order to accommodate the upcoming holiday seasons in 1940. On the one hand, for the ordinary people of Manchukuo, holidays were important, not only because they considered holidays to be a festive break from their daily miseries and routines, but also because holidays were regarded as a symbolic vestige representative of their traditional practices and values. On the other hand, and precisely for those same reasons, holidays were judged to be dangerous but necessary by the Manchukuo authorities. They were deemed to be dangerous since they temporarily overthrew the constructed societal structures and hierarchy which the authorities imposed on its subjects. And yet, holidays were also regarded as necessary because they allowed for the Manchukuoans to blow off the steam built up by the hardships accumulated throughout the years, but within a limited and predetermined period of time which the authorities could anticipate. In other words, it can be said that holiday periods were brief but powerful outbursts of repressed cultural values during which the oppressed generated such energy that it could bridge the established hierarchical distance between the subjugator and the subjugated.¹⁰¹ As such, for the ordinary people in Manchukuo, holidays represented a long-awaited, and indispensable portion of their everyday life. However, the extraordinariness experienced during the holiday seasons was so far-fetched and unlikely to happen on regular days that it could barely be considered normal, or part of their everyday life. Finally, inasmuch as holiday celebrations were traditionally associated with abundance and fortune, the Manchukuo government had to take extra precautions to transition smoothly into and out of the festive periods in order to maintain its stability and

¹⁰¹ Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, 123.

legitimacy¹⁰², especially with the overwhelming backdrop of shortages affecting all the layers of the society.

The first round of holiday rationing was announced to the public early in the beginning of 1940. In preparation for the Lunar New Year, the minister of Economic Affairs issued a statement on 10 January wherein he made promises to deliver special rationing of wheat flour to every household in Manchukuo for the upcoming celebration:

“The rationing of general necessities is our utmost concern, especially during important traditional holidays such as the upcoming Lunar New Year ... We have heard about the baseless rumours [regarding hoarding and the shortage of goods] before, but that was because there were only a few appointed ration shops [in each area]. Due to their own financial problems, they were not able to receive the predetermined amount of goods for distribution [to the residents]. In fact, the government has already taken notice of such problems, thus this time we have prepared over three million bags of flour to ensure that everyone will be able to obtain their special rations.”¹⁰³

Interestingly, the minister’s statement stresses on the authorities’ awareness and understanding of the shortages situation that caused Manchukuoans to have difficulty accessing goods. Nevertheless, it also specifies that the merchants’ own failures are to blame for the situation, and denies any responsibility. However, to alleviate the people’s burdens, the statement further emphasizes the authorities’ generosity towards its subjects in such troubled times. A disproportionate amount of effort was thus put towards the promotion of the authorities’ sagacious decisions and benevolence, which prompted the local

¹⁰² For more on the “performance legitimacy” of Manchukuo see Tim Wright, “Legitimacy and Disaster: Responses to the 1932 Floods in North Manchuria”, *Modern China*, Vol. 43, No. 2, (September 2016), pp. 186 - 216.

¹⁰³ *SJSB*, 12 January 1940.

governments to circulate rationing tickets of up to three kilograms of wheat flour per person.¹⁰⁴ For the ordinary people, the authorities' message overall was without doubt an encouraging one, as wheat flour, along with other staple foodstuffs such as white sugar and rice, were considered to be a luxury largely inaccessible to the average Manchukuoans on a normal basis.

However, far from fulfilling their promises, the authorities failed to meet the expectations they had themselves given to the people, and the Lunar New Year rations turned into a complete disaster. In the space of a few days only, the ambitious "rationing for every household" slogan evolved into "rationing as much as possible", to eventually become "until stocks last". The rationing tickets issued in large quantities to urban residents grew into nothing more than bitter scraps of paper. City residents who stood in line in the cold for hours holding onto their ration tickets felt all the more deceived when they discovered that all along, there had been no flour at all.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, the authorities were once again quick to push the blame onto the "unscrupulous" merchants, "Although there are different theories (regarding the issue of rations), the speculators and the profiteers are the ones to blame", noted one official, "... we have urged the police department to handle the issues in a timely manner and to stabilize the prices, as it is the only way to soothe the hardships in people's lives."¹⁰⁶ Certainly, the delivery of these types of statements to the public resembled more to mere formalities which the authorities went through not because they meant the declarations made in the statements, but rather chose to go through the motions for the sake of it, because of the fact that they were facing growing popular criticisms. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily imply that the Manchukuo authorities were completely unaware of what the real cause was behind the failure of the rationing of these luxurious goods.

¹⁰⁴ *SJSB*, 22 January 1940.

¹⁰⁵ *SJSB*, 29 February 1940.

¹⁰⁶ *Binjiang Special Issue, SJSB*, 24 March 1940.

In a society plagued by shortages causing its members to heavily depend on establishing and maintaining personal connections with relevant “friends” so that they could secure goods, it became natural for members withholding privileges to prioritize themselves over others. At the same time, such practices had become so common that none of those with privileges even considered themselves to be in an advantaged position anymore. The special rationing intended for the holidays did not escape the persistence of the shortages, and were thus in extremely limited quantities. Even the most influential individuals in the Manchukuo society needed to act quickly in order to get their hands on any such rations. In Dairen, before the distribution of the rations for the Dragon Boat Festival (*Duan wu jie*) was even announced to the public, connected individuals had already begun to activate their “friendships” with various ration shop owners throughout the city. Name cards were thus circulating among “friends” who also received phone calls that saturated the lines, just so that they could secure their specified amount of wheat flour before it ran out. Consequently, ordinary customers who had been queuing for long hours in anticipation, even before the shops’ opening times, were faced with yet another disappointment. Insistent on being “out of stock”, shop owners hence mechanically told disbelieved customers that they had come “too late”, or that the day’s rations were all “out of stock”. The situation was all the more ironic and hard to accept for ordinary customers because piles of wheat flour bags in the back room were clearly visible for all to see.¹⁰⁷ Surely, such blatant excuses were clearly made up to brush off customers, but often, such implausibility concealed much more complex mechanisms.

As a rule of thumb, the authorities allowed the ration shops to work out the details of the distribution process in whichever way they saw fit. However, granting them *carte blanche* on the rationing operations would inevitably cause negative repercussions on the ordinary people who could not secure goods with “friends”. In

¹⁰⁷ *Dairen Special Issue, SJSB*, 19 June 1940.

practice, this often equated to shop owners using tricks to hide their real intentions, for instance by resorting to promises to deliver the special rations to the people while in reality, they never intended to do so. For example, in Dairen, a ration shop owner dispatched his employees to the nearby neighbourhoods prior to the day of the distribution to announce that one bag of flour to be divided between four households, was to be “distributed” for the festivities, as long as residents showed proof of their rationing tickets. In view of their previous experiences of having to beseech in vain to obtain their rations, the neighbourhood residents felt dubious at such sudden lavish decisions coming from the ration shops. Oddly, at the same time, they were grateful for –though hesitant towards– the generosity displayed for the festivities. It was not until the day of the festival that the residents discovered that the rationing branch intended to sell one bag of flour to groupings of four households, with demands to pay for the bag up front. “There was actually no clear way to divide the flour”, shared one dispirited person. “When the average household in the city cannot even come up with enough money to buy four kilograms of flour for themselves, how do they expect us to raise enough money to purchase an entire bag?”¹⁰⁸ In another rationing branch, customers who were queuing outside the store were urged to hand in their tickets, and to return the next day to collect their share. Promising them there was “more than enough for everybody”, many did so and came back the second day only to find out that their portion had been sold out, and had become “out of stock”. Being deprived of their rationing tickets, some tried their luck again the day after, and repeated the process until their patience grew thin. Disheartened, they decided that they would rather not have the flour any more than having to face the prevarications and lies from the shop.¹⁰⁹

For those reasons, when walking past ration shops in Manchukuo, it was not uncommon to witness conflicts, heated arguments, or see desperate and angry citizens pushing and shoving one another after having wasted their time waiting in

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ *SJSB Comprehensive Edition*, 26 January 1942.

line for nothing. On some occasions, riots even broke out. On one cold morning in Dairen, an angry crowd took a ration branch by storm as soon as the owner opened his shop for business:

“... Young men with good physical fitness in the back of the crowd violently shoved their way into the front and started to grab the rations from [shop owner] Wang’s hands, leaving the more senior people vulnerable, who had been here since six in the morning eagerly standing by and waiting for their turn. Some women started to curse and yell as the crowd quickly turned into a chaotic mess. By nine o’clock, passers-by and onlookers all started to gather and joined in the chaos even if they were not eligible for the rations. Half an hour later, all rations were gone, snatched away by the crowd. It was impossible to tell who had taken what and in what quantities, nor how much damage was caused in total.”¹¹⁰

When such events occurred, law enforcement patrolmen were generally quickly dispatched to the scene. In Harbin, police officers were reportedly beating and battering their way into Xinbin street as they were called to intervene onsite following an argument that went sour, degenerating into a large brawl between the Yiyuansheng branch and the residents who were turned down from their rations. It was reported that on this occasion, a 60-year-old lady who suffered from poor eyesight and deafness was caught in the process, and was violently pushed down into a roadside ditch that was several meters deep. As the police was undoubtedly siding with the rationing branch owner’s interests, nobody in the crowd dared to lend a helping hand to the lady who was suffering from a broken leg and cried in agony.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, these official reactions do not necessarily suggest that the Manchukuo government was completely unaware of the ordinary people’s

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ *Hsinking Special Issue, SJSB*, 27 July 1940.

complaints of the all-too-common recourse to privileges, and the consequences they entailed. Surely, no matter how much the authorities considered the participation in speculation, and acts of hoarding as criminal activities punishable by the law, in contrast, making use of personal connections, or rather, relying on “friendships” to obtain goods was not regarded as legally reprehensible, especially since many of the beneficiaries were officials. The most important aspect when establishing and maintaining those “friendships” lay primarily in the human and relational aspects which these personal connections consisted of. Rather than relying on one-time large sums of money to bribe someone, it was considered to be much more worthwhile to make “friends” to gain regular access to goods in the long run. As illustrated in the cases above, accessing goods through connections was far more fruitful than attempting to claim them legitimately with rationing tickets. Although the special holiday rations in 1940 were introduced by the central government with good faith, the local officials and the ration branches carried out their tasks half-heartedly to downright fraudulently. Later on, after the collapse of the regime, Wang Xianwei who formerly exercised the role of the mayor of Fengtian, admitted that in reality, the so-called special rations were “merely acts to pay lip service to the public.”¹¹² These confessions relayed the fact that saying that in the Manchukuo society, influential people had privileges was simply redundant, an unnecessary specification. However, for the faceless and nameless ordinary masses, daily survival was for the best-connected.

Hence, from 1940, as a direct consequence of those lies and accumulated frustrations, the few days following each holiday season were marked by a sharp increase of violence and criminal activities characteristic of the period. In the city of Dairen alone, a total of one murder case, 412 cases of thefts, 462 cases of robberies and 753 cases of fraudulent extortions were reported in the short period of time

¹¹² Wang Xianwei, “Wo qigong congzheng dang le hanjian (I abandoned my job and became a ‘traitor’ politician),” in *Wenshi ziliao cunao xuanbian* (A selection of Historical Data Manuscripts), ed., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi quanguo weiyuan hui wenshi ziliao weiyuan hui (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2002), p. 484.

following the failed holiday rationings supposedly initiated for the Dragon Boat Festival.¹¹³ Ironically, among the fraudsters targeting ration branches, those who succeeded in their scams managed to do so by dressing up in suits, or by wearing uniforms. In full disguise, they would be seen walking around in broad daylight, carrying around a stick and imitating local officials or police officers. On a macro-level, as indicated by the Manchurian Central Bank, the state-wide cost of living index from July to August saw another sharp 97 percent increase.¹¹⁴ In addition, the regime witnessed a major 4,295 percent increase in the cost of living compared to 1939, and an alarming 11,542 percent increase prior to the Macro Polo Bridge Incident in 1937.¹¹⁵ This shows clearly that the introduction of the distribution scheme and the rationing system did not solve the shortages and price inflation crises. This also indicates that the failed holiday rationings further aggravated the crises, which showed no sign of alleviating in the foreseeable future.

The multiple failed attempts to keep the shortages crisis under control prompted the Manchukuo government to resort to more radical decisions to stabilize the turmoil that weigh down its citizens. First of all, to put their plan into effect, the authorities decided that after 1940, statutory holidays and special rations were to be revoked. Additionally, traditional Chinese celebrations officially became “empty formalities”, and deemed to be “outdated conventions” that no longer justified special celebrations nor considerations. As such, the authorities called for the complete abolishment of any of such holidays.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, in the very context of shortages, this had a substantial impact on the peoples’ morale. Regardless of how small or temporary the improvement would have been, the suppression of traditional holidays annihilated the chances for ordinary people to live out of their daily miseries and experience for the slightly better lifestyle which they longed for. By denying the holiday celebrations, Manchukuoans could no

¹¹³ *SJSB*, 16 June 1940.

¹¹⁴ *Dairen Special Issue*, *SJSB*, 8 September 1940.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *SJSB*, 25 January 1942.

longer taste a glimpse of what the life of the privileged was and bridge the social gap, even temporarily. Moreover, by taking control over the people's tradition to celebrate the holidays and by downplaying the symbolic significance of their cultural values, the authorities not only trampled on the people's heritage and identities, but they also reinforced the hierarchical structures in the society, where the privileged increased the distance from the poor who became even more marginalized. On the one hand, it could be interpreted that the Manchukuo authorities chose to annul the traditional Chinese festival in order to ensure that they could maintain a complete exploitative and oppressive hold on the Manchukuoan's every aspect of life. However, on the other hand, the decision itself was not an easy one to make.

3.5. The Downward Spiral

The government's decision to abolish the celebration of all Chinese traditional festivities was a manifestation of its own failures, symptomatic of the officials' incapability to combat the state-wide shortage crisis and poverty. As a form of compromise, the authorities began to increase their tolerance levels with regards to illegal activities related to the black markets established across the regime. In effect, the black market was often the only reliable option for the ordinary people to obtain daily necessities as well as luxurious goods. This was reflected in unofficial discussions between members of the Manchukuo government, in which Shokemuri Nobuyoshi for instance, who acted as the chief of the Secret Service department in Fengtian, once repeatedly urged the director of the city's police department that "it would be best to stop the ban on illegal open-air markets and refrain from suppressing the transactions occurring in these places."¹¹⁷ However, despite making adjustments and adopting a softer stance, the authorities' fight against "unscrupulous" merchants still went on relentlessly on an official level. As such, the authorities ordered all retailers to freeze their commodity prices (*Wu jia ting zhi ling*) on 25 July 1941. The official notice thus prohibited all merchants to make any changes to the prices or indices of their retailed commodities, regardless of the fluctuations of the costs related to transportation, maintenance, or storage.¹¹⁸

The new ordinance was broken down to four subcategories: (1) "public (*gong*)", (2) "assist (*xie*)", (3) "stop (*ting*)" and (4) "self (*zi*)". As stated by the new

¹¹⁷ Xie, *Wei manzhouguo shi xinbian* (New Compiled History of Bogus Manchukuo), 786; See also Dongbei caijing weiyuan hui diaocha tongji chu, *Weiman Shiqi Dongbei Jingji Tongji* (The Economy of the Northeast during the Bogus Manchukuo Era) (n.p.: Dongbei caijing weiyuan hui diaocha tongji chu, 1949), p. 588.

¹¹⁸ Zhongyang shejiju dongbei diaocha weiyuan hui, *Weiman Shangye Zongjiantao* (A complete review of the Commercial Sector of Bogus Manchukuo) (Changchun: zhongyang sheji ju, 1945), p. 533.

regulation, all industrial and commercial entities operating throughout the regime were required to reorganize their commodities and prices, and post up clear identifiers and price tags according to these four categories.¹¹⁹ Firstly, “public” commodities consisted primarily of basic life necessities, which included grain, coal, oil, salt, or fabric. As the name indicates, “public” commodities were controlled by the authorities, who were in charge of allocating the finished products to merchants at the final stages of distribution. Second was the goods pertaining to the “assist” category, which included general groceries, farming tools, and small handicraft products. With regards to distribution to merchants for retail, the responsibility remained under the various unions in all relevant sectors. Thirdly, all the other small and miscellaneous groceries fell under the “stop” order. Prices of any such commodities were strictly controlled, and merchants were formally forbidden from inflating them any further. Fourthly, the “self” category applied to all the products purchased or manufactured after the 25 July for which merchants were required to report detailed costs and price listings to their local economic services branch, as well as to the local Police department. Products were allowed to be displayed on shelves under the label “self” only after the officials had formally approved the merchants’ requests. Additionally, products that had made it onto the shelves were to be priced according to the authorities’ “advised” retail price.¹²⁰ The Manchukuo government’ decision to freeze prices can be interpreted as a final desperate attempt to keep goods circulating in a society which, in face of the acute shortages, was heavily affected by the abuse of personal connections to obtain practically anything. The officials’ determination to put an end to the disorder resulted in the multiplication of crackdowns and raids carried out in succession, with the aim to bring down profiteers and hoarders. Unfortunately for the authorities, whenever a new rule was initiated, it was followed by individuals coming up with new ways to bypass the restrictions as well.

¹¹⁹ Ma Chunting, “Weiman Panshanxian de qi er wu Wujia Tingzhi Ling (7.25 Price halt order in Panshan County),” in *Panjin Wenshi Ziliao* (Panjin Historical Data), ed., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Panjin shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuan hui (Panjin: Internal Release, 1992), p. 163.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Indeed, despite being subjected to frequent inspections, merchants who were well-connected were often tipped off by their “friends” prior to each official visit. Consequently, two sets of account books were prepared in advance: one that recorded all the real prices and transactions, and one tweaked version, made in anticipation for the inspections.¹²¹ Shop owners also began resorting to coding the elements surrounding them, using complicated ciphering to hide messages embedded into their everyday decorative objects in the shops. Yushengxiang, a grocery ration store located in Linjiang County, is an illustration of such widely used practices. The popular ration store thus rearranged its ten-character shop couplet “*yu fa lin jiang di, sheng cai si hai tong* (shop originated in Linjiang, makes money from over the four seas)” to represent numbers from one to ten. When employees combined “*fa*” and “*di*” for example, this would equate to a sum of 25 yuan, whereas “*lin sheng*” could indicate a sum of three yuan six jiao. In most cases, such codes were exchanged among shop employees verbally to determine which illicit sale prices were suitable to use and display for the day’s unwitting potential customers. However, these codes were most often meant to determine the amount of bribe needed to pay off government inspectors.¹²² In contrast, merchants who carried on with their businesses more honestly were unlikely to catch the wind in advance of the government’s crackdowns, and therefore often faced a completely different outcome.

Liu Yukun, the heir to a canned food factory operated by his father Liu Ziming in Harbin was one of the unlucky ones. One morning in July 1942, four police officers arrived at his home and demanded to audit his account books. After

¹²¹ Dong Yisan, “Runji Maodian (Run Ji Hat Shop),” in *Liaoning Wenshi Ziliao* (Liaoning Historical Data), eds., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Liaoning sheng weiyuan hui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuan hui (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chuban she, 1989), p. 219.

¹²² Sui Shixiu, “*Shangdian Anma he Andian* (Secret codes and Telegraphs in Commercial Stores),” in *Hunjiang Wenshi Ziliao* (Hunjiang Historical Data), ed., Zhengxie hunjiang shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuan hui, 198.

skimming through a few pages symbolically, the police officers hastened to announce that Liu was accused of being a “profiteer”, and placed him in custody to await trial. During his time under arrest, Liu was repeatedly interrogated by Huang Xinan, the deputy director of economic security. Huang “the skin peeler”, as popularly nicknamed by Liu’s fellow cellmates, was thus in charge of making Liu confess his wrongdoings and admit his economic crimes. Believing in his own innocence and refusing to succumb to the fabricated accusations, Liu was severely beaten on a daily basis until he finally came to the realization that it was all in fact just an act of extortion.¹²³ Reluctantly, Liu eventually pleaded guilty to profiteering when he was arraigned by Huang again. “Give me a number”, “2,000 yuan” whispered Liu. “2,000 yuan? It is good to know that you still have some sense”, concluded Huang as he left with a self-satisfied smile on the face. In the end, Liu was ultimately sentenced to prison for six months, and received an additional penalty fee of 2,000 yuan which in all likelihood, made their way into the pockets of the police officers who interrogated him.¹²⁴ Regardless of whether Liu had actually conducted acts of profiteering or not, his experience is an apt illustration of how the lockup quotas were fulfilled by law enforcers. Even though it is difficult to tell exactly how many people were affected by the authorities’ commitment to clear up economic crimes in the 1940s, it can nonetheless be said with certainty that the number of those who were impacted was far too high to overlook their experiences.

By 1943, the authorities began to hunt down “profiteers” even more relentlessly than they already were. People suspected of committing such criminal acts faced even greater penalties than before as the meaning behind the accusations of “profiteering” reached a new level of gravity in the eyes of the government. Police checkpoints were set up along the main roads, and random searches were conducted on passers-by on a frequent basis. For instance, in the

¹²³ “Jingji lueduo de dashou (Thugs of the economic exploitation),” in *Haerbin weiman jingcha zui e* (Crimes of the Harbin Police in Bogus Manchukuo), eds., Xiao Binglong and Wang Xiwen (Harbin: Ha’erbin renmin chuban she, 1992), p. 52.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Harbin railway station, more than 100 people were arrested on a daily average by the local police officers. Then again, because the bar was set very low, individuals caught carrying as little as one kilogram of food would be immediately convicted of economic crimes.¹²⁵ The fact that people were being thrown in jail with no real charges can be understood as the Manchukuo government's own realization that its efficiency was close to nil with regards to the shortage crisis that took over the regime. Indeed, to the authorities, in order to maintain some level of stability and to prevent state-wide uprisings from the populace tired of the aggravating shortages, having recourse to mass arrests was seen as their only option.

So not only did the authorities implant fear in the daily lives of ordinary citizens, they were also exploiting and relying on the peoples' anxieties to organize society and make it function in the ways the Manchukuo government had decided. This inevitably destroyed whatever was left of the public's trust in the authorities. By 1945, lootings and raids had become such a commonplace occurrence that government buildings and police checkpoints were frequently targeted and assaulted by droves of hungry mobs that had passed the point where they could no longer afford to eat.¹²⁶ But then again, as mentioned above, receiving help from "friends", or making use of personal connections was not legally reprehensible. Ironically, it was the authorities' tolerance and involvement in the abusive recourse to "friendships" that led to the subversion of the rationing scheme and distribution system which they had originally designed to improve the lives of the Manchukuoans during times of hardship.

Overall, on the state level, and in line with Mitter's observations, it can be said that the main motive behind the political elites' decision to collaborate with the "Japanese devils (*gui zi*)" was principally linked to their desire to minimize the

¹²⁵ Xie, *Wei manzhouguo shi xinbian* (New Compiled History of Bogus Manchukuo), 784.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 786.

Japanese's disruptions to their lives by securing a certain amount of continuity to their economic and social statuses.¹²⁷ In this regard, similarities can be drawn out when going down a level – from state to local level. To some extent, it can be said that the ordinary people of Manchukuo also exercised a form of “collaboration”. Although the people were not directly “collaborating” with the Japanese by keeping their distance, they certainly were with the privileged elites, or the “secondary Japanese devils (*er gui zi*)” at the local level. Negotiating their own terms, the people's greatest concern largely remained about food and commodities, and just as importantly, their possibility to access those, and secure procurement when needed. The above examples demonstrated the mechanisms and consequences of mutually beneficial relationships between the various ration shop owners and local influential members by shedding light onto the ways in which a number of ordinary people managed to secure non negligible economic and social privileges for their own. At the same time, rowdy grumbling against the practice of personal connections was widespread among the unconnected masses while criminality witnessed a sharp surge. This may suggest that left-out Manchukuoans affected by the crises who failed to procure goods by means of complying with the merchants, and thus contributing to the system, resorted to alternative strategies to compensate for their lack of connections. If the ordinary people of Manchukuo can be regarded as passive in their response to the various economic policies forced onto them over time (all they really did was grumble), in contrast, they were much more proactive when demonstrating resistance, expressing dissatisfactions against the hardships caused by the shortages. On a larger scale, the different behaviour of ordinary people further points to the co-existence of compliance and resistance within the same context of occupation, as well as to the behaviour moulded by the different circumstances Manchukuoans encountered in their everyday lives.

¹²⁷ Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 129.

3.6. The Compulsory Grain Sale Policy and Rural Society

Insofar as the implementation of the rationing of general goods and daily necessities largely remained an urban initiative, one may wonder how the rural society of Manchukuo operated during these times of economic crises, and in what ways peasants were affected by the shortages. To begin with, the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 instantly triggered a dramatic increase in the production and exportation of agricultural products, which in turn put significant pressure on the production capacity of the already worn out Manchukuoan peasants. However, considering that at the same time, the Manchukuo government was focusing primarily on heavy industry, the total amounts invested in the regime's agricultural sector witnessed an inevitable decrease of nearly nine percent under the amended Five-Year Development Plan.¹²⁸ Under such circumstances, peasants across the countryside were given no choice but to produce more with fewer resources, which expectedly caused their profits and personal income to worsen every year. Hence, in an attempt to ensure sufficient agricultural yield in the following years, the authorities gradually introduced a series of agricultural policies leading up to the Compulsory Grain Sale Policy (*Liang gu chu he*) in 1940.

Serving as a complement to the introduction of the rationing system in urban regions, private intermediary agencies such as wholesale grain stores in the countryside were abolished altogether, and peasants throughout the regime were required to sell their grain at designated governmental trading posts under the supervision of their respective grain depot unions.¹²⁹ Certainly, the Manchukuo government sought complete control over the allocation and distribution processes as a way to contain inflation and guarantee the circulation of grain within the regime. However, as time went by, the shortage crisis in the regime showed no

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 548.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 343.

signs of relief, and grain procurement targets were often unrealistic and systematically overestimated, leaving the peasants having to bear the cost.

It is worth specifying that the vast majority of the rural population in Manchukuo consisted primarily of land cultivators rather than landowners. Surely, during the founding of the regime, the Japanese preserved the existing societal structure in the countryside as a compromise to appease the big landowners, allowing them to retain their properties in return for their acceptance and support towards the new administration.¹³⁰ Therefore, land cultivators were under the increasing pressure to meet demanding grain quotas on top of having to pay land rent and compound interest to their landowners. This meant that however much was left for them to keep would be unlikely to last long enough to survive until the next harvest season. To elaborate, after 1940, the annual production of grain in the regime averaged approximately 18 million tons, 12 million of which would be needed to circulate within the countryside to maintain the minimum standard of living.¹³¹ However, the grain procurement targets each year stood at roughly seven million tons,¹³² meaning that it was virtually impossible for cultivators to achieve, if no one were to be left starving to death.

From the rural population's perspective, the practice of the Compulsory Grain Sale Policy was hardly distinguishable from acts of daylight robbery and extortion. This is not only because of the fact that peasants were demanded to turn in more grain than they were willing to, but also because of how little the grain depot unions were paying for the amount of grain that they expropriated. In line with the efforts to maintain low selling prices in the cities, the acquisition of grain

¹³⁰ Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 120.

¹³¹ Dongbei wuzi tiaojie weiyuanhui, *Nongchan shengchan pian* (Agricultural production edition), Dongbei jingji xiao congshu (Beijing: Jinhua yinshuju, 1948), p. 17.

¹³² *Ibid.*

was also regulated at low prices, for which farmers were compensated as little as 2.5 yuan for 50 kilograms of corn. Compared to the previous years during which the market selling price was on average 12 yuan for 50 kilograms of corn, farmers had no choice but to count their inevitable losses.¹³³ Aware of the peasants' frustrations and lack of enthusiasm in contributing to the implemented system, grain procurement enforcers began using public humiliations and violence against the peasants as methods of persuasion.¹³⁴ For instance, the police commissioner of Chaoyang County organized an admonitory meeting gathering land cultivators from the neighbouring villages, during which each household received specific grain imposition tasks following the harvest period.

Summoned early in the morning, peasants who arrived late were subjected to harsh punishments, and in addition to receiving beatings and slaps on the face, latecomers were to kneel through the entire meeting.¹³⁵ Given the unrealistic obligations to turn in grain, some protested by stating the obvious facts related to the already tough situation: "My family could not even harvest 5,000 kilograms of grain this year, how can you assign us to hand in 2,500 kilograms of grain? We cannot afford this, if you do not believe me then you are welcome to search in my home." However, despite being aware of the harsh circumstances of rural life, the local authorities responded to the peasant's remarks by carrying out severe thrashings, accusing him of having a "negative attitude" towards the procurement

¹³³ Yu Xingju, "Cong 'Liangshi Tongzhi' dao 'Qiangzhi Gouxiao' (From Grain control to compulsory regulations)," in *Hunjiang Wenshi Ziliao* (Hunjiang Historical Data), ed., Zhengxie hunjiang shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuan hui, 211.

¹³⁴ Qu Bingshan, "Riben Ruhe Lueduo Dongbei Renmin de Liangshi (How the Japanese plundered grain from the people)," in *Wenshi ziliao cunqao xuanbian* (A selection of Historical Data Manuscripts), ed., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi quanguo weiyuan hui wenshi ziliao weiyuan hui, 170.

¹³⁵ Fu Chengxun, Fu Chengqing and Han Guoxiang, "Riwei Shiqi Chaoyangxian Renmin Jiao Chuheliang Yu Juanshui zhiku (The Bitter experiences of the Compulsory Purchase and Sales of Grain and Taxes of the Chaoyang People)," in *Chaoyang Wenshi Ziliao* (Chaoyang Historical Data), eds. Liaoningsheng Chaoyang shi zheng xie, dongmei gongsi beipiao kuangwu ju (Chaoyang: Internal Release, 1989), p. 38.

of grain, and also of course, for talking back.¹³⁶ However, this does not mean that the authorities systematically dismissed all the objections voiced by the peasants with regards to the procurement targets. Nevertheless, in a context where severe scarcities affected the regime, it was also in the peasants' interests to emphasize the peculiarities of local difficulties as a tactic to protect themselves from the burdens of grain requisition. Unfortunately, the local officials could easily see through such strategies since they had been holding similar discourses and arguments when reporting to the central government.

On top of the pressures produced by the ongoing war, one could understand why the grain procurement targets set by the central authorities were largely perceived to be impractical on the regional level. In fact, quotas were calculated based on estimations from previous harvests, without taking into account the seasonal specificities potentially damaging the upcoming yield. However, since the provincial administrators were familiar with the local circumstances affecting their respective regions, the central authorities' assignment to have them collect such large quantities of grain following each harvest was perceived as an improbable directive to accomplish successfully. This meant that for once, both the peasants and the local officials commonly agreed that the central government's grain targets were unrealistically high. As such, it inevitably brings out the issue of what were the "realistic" targets, as well as how they could be determined.

To be sure, regional officials tried their hardest to test out the waters, often by using the miserable status quo and the regional hardships as leverage in their attempts to "barter" with the central authorities. In March 1943, during a Governor Conference organized by the Ministry of Agriculture to announce the annual grain quota, Chancellor Huang Fujun, who attended the meeting, recalled:

¹³⁶ Ibid.

“... During the meeting, when I announced the year’s target of grain assignments, a few governors instantly stood up and expressed their opposition to the number I had just announced and proceeded to detail all the various hardships in the rural areas in their respective provinces before they requested a reduction of the total amount. In order to quell their discontent, I made a brief speech to encourage them, albeit I could tell that they were not satisfied with my answer. As the governors continued to press on the issue, [Minister of Agriculture] Inahara, who was sitting next to me, suddenly stood up and instructed them in a stern tone about the importance of assisting the Imperial Army in the Holy War, reminding them that Manchukuoans had a duty to contribute to the cause. By the end of his speech, Inahara euphemistically assured the governors that the central government had made sufficient preparations, and that the stated goal was achievable if everybody worked hard, also implying that for their own good, governors should not deliberately make things more difficult”.¹³⁷

Indeed, apart from emphasizing the Manchukuoans’ responsibility to devote themselves to the war, it can be said that Inahara’s confidence reflects the extent to which the Manchukuo government had thought about the implementation of the Compulsory Grain Sale Policy. Whilst recognizing the fact that high grain quotas would inflict tremendous strain upon the peasants, the central authorities also clearly knew that its rural population could never be in a position to actively resist against it either. Surely, under the system of monopolized distribution, if anyone refused to hand in the designated amount of grain, the authorities could also refuse to provide them with the seeds necessary to cultivate the lands in the future. Because of the distribution system imposed on them, peasants were on the disadvantageous end of the “blackmail”. As such, complete resistance against the Compulsory Grain Sale Policy would equate to having no crops and no source of income at all, something that the peasants could certainly not afford.

¹³⁷ Huang Fujun, “Ribei dui Dongbei Renmin de Liangshi Lueduo (The Exploitation of Grain and Food by the Japanese),” in *Wenshi ziliao cunqao xuanbian* (A selection of Historical Data Manuscripts), ed., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi quanguo weiyuan hui wenshi ziliao weiyuan hui, 150.

This was especially evident when Huang visited Sanjiang province, as a follow-up to the earlier conference. The meeting was intended to instil motivation and confidence within the peasants which was thought was needed to stimulate agricultural production. Organized by provincial governor Sun Bofang, 30 peasants were gathered from the villages near Huachuan and Boli Counties to express their thoughts towards grain production. In the end, the motivational encounter lasted three hours, gradually turning into a way for the regional authorities to collect messages and complaints from the peasants to be relayed to the Chancellor. "After the implementation of the compulsory sales, the remaining grain were not even enough for us to save some for ourselves, let alone to feed the livestock", "We also never got the chance to obtain any basic commodities", "We were only given ten yuan after each harvest. How could we cultivate the farmlands with only ten yuan? It is barely enough to buy five packs of cigarettes."¹³⁸ Even though all such complaints had been expressed countless times before the meeting, peasants did not fail to voice out their concerns. Whether this time, their voices had been heard or not, these messages and grumbles really were all that the peasants could say to the authorities. In return, the villagers received no more than the usual standardized answers. "I knew that the peasants were all exhausted," stated Huang, "But what was I supposed to do? Nobody could break the rules and disobey the policies."¹³⁹

On the other hand, since the peasants rarely resorted to violence to resist to the policies implemented by the government, they began considering alternative ways to circumvent the law. One of the most used solutions was to hide the grain needed to survive in advance and hope not to be found out by the procurement officers. Trying to save themselves, desperate peasants thus resorted to burying stacks of grain in the yards, hiding handfuls under the pillows, firewood piles, and in

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

some cases, in outhouses, or even under animal manure and graveyards.¹⁴⁰ The development of such practices became so common that they transformed each procurement visit to the villages into a cat and mouse game. But just as the villagers grew more and more desperate to save themselves, so were the procurement authorities who were tasked to collect the required amount of grain.

Special teams composed of procurement supervision members (*du li ban*) and search members (*sou he ban*) were hence assembled by local officials and police departments to assist in the collection of grain. Equipped with shovels and wooden sticks, the procurement teams would go from house to house, poking around and searching for any suspicious corners and rummaging through any potential hiding spots until late in the evenings. In the case of an unsuccessful search, a beating would be given to whoever remained in the household and had failed to flee from the sights of the search teams, for having “wasted their time”, or for having hidden the grain too well.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, if anything was found, peasants would automatically receive a severe beating as well, mainly as a punishment for disobeying the procurement policies, and also to “reward” the inspectors for defeating the peasants at their own game.¹⁴²

In some other instances, local officials would simply refuse to play the game at all. Rather than dedicating manpower only to the hunt for grain, procurement teams had decided instead that peasants who fell short of their quotas were to be

¹⁴⁰ Huabei liangshi pingheng cangku, *Man, Huabei Shiliang Souhe Jigou ji Souhe Duice Bijiao Yanjiu* (A Comparative Study of Grain Searching Agencies, Methods and Countermeasures in Manchuria and North China) (n.p. huabei liangshi pingheng cangku, 1943), p. 139.

¹⁴¹ “Ha’erbin xianbing duizhang guanyu binjiang sheng nongchanwu chu he yinqi nongmin fanxiang de baogao (Harbin gendarmerie captain’s report on the peasants reaction towards grain procurement in Binjiang province),” in *Dongbei Jingji Lueduo* (The Exploitation of the Northeast Economy), eds., Zhongyang dang’an guan, Zhongguo di’er lishi dang’an guan, Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan, 559.

¹⁴² “Huang Fujun kougong (Confession of Huang Fujun),” in *ibid.*, p. 548.

taken away by the authorities as “hostages”, with the only condition for release, to have their “ransoms” paid in full. Villager Li Fu, who lived with his family near Huachuan County in 1941, was once the unfortunate victim of such dreadful experiences. Growing up in a poor family, Li became a swineherd for the local landlord Wei Guofeng in the neighbouring village of Wengang after his father, a farm labourer, lost his job due to his illness and inability to work effectively in the fields. Even though Li’s family had no land registered under their names nor were they the proprietaries of any crops, procurement officers still made their way to Li’s household doorsteps, giving them an ultimatum. Either they handed in the specified amount of grain within the next two days, or their son would be taken away as “mortgage”. Fearing for their son’s safety, Li’s parents instructed him to go away and hide for a few days, until the heat died down. However, three days later, when the officials returned and discovered that Li was not home, they took the family’s youngest son instead, without any explanation. “I do not have any solution for you,” one of the officials said to the parents as they were about to leave, “the orders came from above, I will give you five more days to collect the necessary grain to trade for your son, otherwise we will send him away for labour duties.” After the authorities left, Li’s parents cried and wailed desperately as they knew it would be impossible for them to get the required grain in time. Not bearing to lose their youngest son, Li’s mother proposed to his father to sell her and use the money to redeem her son back. “If you do not sell me, our entire family will starve to death anyway”, cried his mother as his father ultimately agreed to her suggestion. The following day, Li’s father found a buyer through a trustee in the county. With the intention of purchasing a wife for his mute brother to marry back in Shandong province, the buyer, who was the owner of an oil mill, agreed to pay a sum of 350 yuan and took the woman away. After receiving the money, Li’s father quickly headed back to town and purchased the required amount of grain, and managed to get his son back before it was all too late.¹⁴³ Surely, to the Li household, such

¹⁴³ Fu Min, “riben qiangdao lueduo qiong ku nongmin zao yang – ji lifu yi jia zai riwei tongzhi xia de zao yu (Bandit-like plundering of the Japanese and the sufferings of the poor peasants – The experiences of the family of Li Fu under Japanese rule),” in *Jiamusi Wenshi Ziliao* (Jiamusi Cultural and Historical Data), ed., Zhongguo renmin

extreme measures taken by the local officials were barely distinguishable from the acts of banditry that plundered the countryside in the early years of Manchukuo. In a way, both exploited the peasants to great lengths, and both had a “justifiable” reason for doing so. The main difference between the two tormenters was that the Manchukuo authorities systematically “pillaged” the villages, seized everything they could, and demanded more every time. In contrast, bandits were more likely to limit their pillaging and demands to the things they needed for their survival.

If from a distance, such appalling stories about grain procurement in the rural regions seem like unfortunate and isolated incidents, the cruel realities of the countryside suggested otherwise. In the villages surrounding Wangkui County, more than 30 cases of suicide were recorded within five days, right after the imposition of grain procurement. In 1943, it was noted in Fengtian province that a large proportion of the peasants living in the jurisdiction of Fushun County had already starved to death, while the situation in many villages adjacent to the northwest of Shenyang County was no better.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, the dreadful situation was so alarming that even the Japanese gendarmerie commanders garrisoned across the regime began to worry about the potential damage such demands forced onto the peasants would cause to the long-term stability of the state. In May 1942, it was reported in Harbin that “The peasants [were] having doubts and also expressed their hatred towards the [Compulsory Grain Sale] policies. Some [had] already given up on themselves and chose beggary instead. The most essential element in the agricultural sector is the peasants. But now they have all lost motivation towards agricultural production.”¹⁴⁵ Two days after, a similar concern was evoked by the

zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Jiamusi shi weiyuanhui wenshiziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui (Harbin: Heilongjiang chubanshe, 1990), p. 170.

¹⁴⁴ Yao Yunpeng and Li Fengxia, “Riwei Tongzhi xia de Fushun Jingji (The Economy of Fushun under Japanese Occupation),” in *Jingji Lueduo* (Economic Exploitation), ed., Sun Bang, 92.

¹⁴⁵ “Ha’erbin xianbing duizhang guanyu binjiang sheng nongchanwu chu he yinqi nongmin fanxiang de baogao (Harbin gendarmerie captain’s report on the peasants reaction towards grain procurement in Binjiang province),” in *Dongbei Jingji Lueduo*

commander in Qiqihar, with great emphasis on the consequences of the procurement methods carried out by the local counties: “The local administrators completely disregarded the bad harvest of last year and forced the peasants to turn in grain that they do not have... [As a result] the lives of the peasants have been trampled down and now a countless number of them have died due to starvation and sicknesses.”¹⁴⁶ In May 1943, an anonymous letter addressed to Qu Bingshang, the governor of Siping Province, incriminated the man, cursing him: “Ever since you became governor, the grain output target increased every year. Tell me how can we survive an entire year on just 15 kilograms of grain? You made old people, young children, and our livestock starve to death. Their spirits will haunt you. We wish we could sleep on your corpse and eat your flesh.”¹⁴⁷

Indeed, it was evident that many within the government clearly understood that the Compulsory Grain Sale Policy was incoherent. However, under the tremendous pressures generated by the urban shortage crisis as well as the war, one could also understand the reasons behind why the Manchukuo government was making incoherent decisions. But at the same time, what the Manchukuo authorities failed to comprehend was that even if the shortage crisis continued, its urban residents could still, to a certain extent, rely on their earnings or established connections to obtain daily necessities for survival. But if the villagers were completely stripped of their crops, there would be nothing else left for them to depend on.

(The Exploitation of the Northeast Economy), eds., Zhongyang dang'an guan, Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan and Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan, 560.

¹⁴⁶ “Guandong xianbing dui siling guan guanyu yanshou xian minshi kuang Zhuang diaocha de tongbao (Report of the Kwantung gendarmerie commander on the investigation of the food situation in Yanshou county),” in *ibid.*, p. 565.

¹⁴⁷ Qu Bingshan, “Riben Ruhe Lueduo Dongbei Renmin de Liangshi (How the Japanese plundered grain from the people),” in *Wenshi Ziliao Cungao Xuanbian* (A selection of Historical Data Manuscripts), ed., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi quanguo weiyuan hui wenshi ziliao weiyuan hui, 161.

The enormous hardships that the grain procurement quotas inflicted upon the villagers brought about dramatic changes to the social dynamics in the Manchukuo countryside. For the impoverished peasants, one of the few remaining options to survive was to flee from their villages altogether and try their luck in the cities, which some did.¹⁴⁸ For those who could not afford to leave everything behind, another possible solution was to seek help and relief from the local wealthy landowners. Unfortunately, help did not come around cheaply. As discussed further above in this chapter, personal connections in urban regions presume a form of reciprocity that required each party to receive personal favours from the other in exchange for something else, may this be goods, services, or access to anything. As for the countryside, this suggests that for poverty-stricken peasants who had nothing to offer, to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with the big landowners meant that they would have to tweak the terms of their agreement.

For the most part, what the peasants wanted was nothing more than a full stomach, and what they were required to do in exchange was to serve as the landowner's "farm helps". In the modern sense, becoming a farm help would normally suggest the employment in a contractual job regulated by standard working hours and salaries, but this definition was far from the case in the Manchukuo countryside. To minimize work delays and disruptions, landowners implemented a work routine which the "farm helpers" had to stick to. The typical day of a Manchukuo farm helper usually started early in the morning before daybreak. When they returned in the afternoon, further work was awaiting them, varying from digging trenches, shovelling manures, painting walls to layering paddocks. Unsurprisingly, farm helpers were seldom allowed any time to take a break. Sick leave was also strictly prohibited, and taking time off during the weekends was, out of the question. Most farm helpers were required to work seven days a week, for eleven months a year. As a matter of fact, disgruntled peasants

¹⁴⁸ "Hua Rongdong zhengci (Testimony of Hua Rongdong)," in *Dongbei Jingji Lueduo* (The Exploitation of the Northeast Economy), eds., Zhongyang dang'an guan, Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan and Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan, 573.

working as farm helpers who contemplated quitting halfway would be immediately reminded by the landowners of the reasons why they originally sought after them in the first place. “Go to work or return my money now, the grain that I lent you were for emergency purposes only”, “If you quit and go back home in the morning then I will have you arrested by the time you finish lunch”.¹⁴⁹ On top of being deprived of personal freedom, most hired farm helpers would actually end up owing money to the landowners because of the accumulation of trivial favours they received from the landowners, and also because of “insufficient” working hours.¹⁵⁰ Hence, apart from not officially being the legal property of the landowners, “serfdom” would be appropriate to describe the relationship between farm helpers and landowners.

On the other hand, this sense of exploitation that existed between landowners and peasants could also be reflected in the customary practices of personal connections between landowners and local officials. To begin with, Mitter has illustrated how county-level elites were empowered by the Japanese to preserve and uphold the existing social order and stratum in the early years of Manchukuo.¹⁵¹ This argument could be further extended down to the empowerment of influential rural landowners in their respective villages. Despite the great burden that the procurement of grain had placed on the rural regions, wealthy landowners were regularly filtered by the local authorities who lowered the quotas for them so that they would not have to turn in their full share. When procurement brigades arrived in the villages, they were also habitually hosted by the landowners who entertained the officers with good food as well as opium in exchange for the “guests” to discharge the landowners from heavy grain impositions.¹⁵² Under such circumstances, the social discrepancies in the rural parts

¹⁴⁹ *Fengtian tun de Diaocha* (The investigation of Fengtian village), Nongcun diaocha cailiao cankao zhiyi (n.p. 1947), pp. 1-6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 106.

¹⁵² *Fengtian tun de Diaocha* (The investigation of Fengtian village), Nongcun diaocha cailiao cankao zhiyi (n.p. 1947), pp. 1-6.

of Manchukuo between the rich and poor grew even further as ordinary peasants were reduced to having to beg for food, while the wealthy remained wealthy, if not growing wealthier.

The way such favours were returned could be seen through the role of wealthy landowners in the grain procurement process. This was especially evident in the ways in which landowners made use of their position to motivate peasants to contribute towards the procurement targets. In Fengtian village, the local landowner Li Xianting could be heard making declarations to encourage the peasants to work harder to reach the procurement targets. Sounding like the authorities' spokesperson delivering a message to the peasants, he reminded the peasants how "the Japanese took good care of us, it is our duty to repay them by turning in more grain. There will be further rewards later on". To some extent, local peasants who were chained to the landowners because of outstanding debts had few options and most often, would comply with those demands.¹⁵³ Given their low status, ordinary peasants were never in a position to turn down "favours" when they were asked for one, even if it meant putting themselves in a worse situation. Additionally, in times when ordinary peasants ran out of food to survive, they could always go back to the big landowners and borrow some more if they maintained a good "relationship" with the latter. This, however, also means that they would enter into a vicious cycle wherein they had to borrow not only to eat, but also to pay back previous debts.

Outsiders visiting any village in Manchukuo in the 1940s would easily be able to distinguish the wealthy landowners from the rest of the peasantry. Certainly, with the help of their connections, the wealthy ones were able to maintain a relatively "civilized" way of living. Being high above the others in terms of social status, and therefore in an advantageous position to fulfil the procurement targets,

¹⁵³ Ibid.

wealthy landowners were also often the beneficiaries of grain procurement prizes that were rewarded to peasants who managed to meet their quotas early on. Such prizes included yards of fabric, soap, hand towels and wash basins. In Fengtian village, scraps of fabric and poor-quality commodities that were undesirable to the landowner were distributed to the peasants. According to the “benefactor’s charity”, scraps was all the peasants deserved insofar as “the quality of grain you [the peasants] sold to the authorities were poor to begin with, and that makes you a dishonest person. The grain that I sold were much more superior in quality, and that is why I deserved the good quality ones”.¹⁵⁴

In contrast, common peasants could be easily identified by their lack of proper clothing, pale and thin faces, as well as their ability to handcraft makeshift goods. He Shanshui, a peasant living in Tongbei village in the province of Heilongjiang province in 1940 recalled:

“... Like most other families in my village, we always heard about the distribution of commodities, but we never received anything. That all went to the wealthy households because they were well connected. At best we were given some large chunks of salt that reeked to marinate soybean paste with. Missing meals were not uncommon, and we did not have any proper clothes to wear. In fact, we never had any soap, so we could never really wash our clothes. If we wanted to wash our face, we would go to whoever that was slaughtering pigs to borrow some trotters, and then mix it with alkaline and soil to break it in smaller pieces to use as soap. Otherwise, my family would take the ashes of incinerated yellow soybeans and rub that up to use to clean ourselves ...”¹⁵⁵

On top of having to develop their improvisation skills, peasants had to be able to make use of the limited resources at hand. When asked about his

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ He, Shanshui. Personal Interview with Qiunan Li. Benxi, 29 October 2015.

experiences in the 1940s, Liang Guangshan from Liangjia village near Benxi County stated:

“...My family would always have dinner by the time the sun set, and my father would light up the oil lamp. However, in order to preserve oil, the lamp would only be lit for five minutes at the most, just enough for my family to lay out the mats on the brick bed as well as getting ready to sleep. There are 18 people in my family, and we all sleep on the same bed. There was no sleepwear, not even shirts so we all had to sleep naked. I had only one pair of shoes that my mother made for me. Whenever I went outside, I would always take them off and carry the shoes in my hands in fear of wearing them out because I would have to wear them for at least two or three years. In the winter I would wear shoes made out of *wula* grass that was stuffed with corn leaves inside and tied together with a rope. It always ground my foot, but we had to make do with it because we could not afford to buy socks.”¹⁵⁶

All in all, the fact that the Compulsory Grain Sale Policy resulted in catastrophic effects in the countryside is unquestionable. Even though the procurement of grain was a procedure promulgated by the central government, the regime’s decision makers were not the only ones to blame for the hardships in the rural regions. Indeed, for the most part, the everyday life of the peasants revolved around an endless struggle to obtain grain which drastically worsened when the establishment of personal connections became an inescapable norm in the rural society. Different from how connections, or “friendships” were maintained between shop owners and influential figures in the cities, the connections that existed between wealthy landowners and peasants in rural societies were far more one-sided, and the exploitative nature of such relations was comparable to serfdom. However, at the same time, although these relations were initiated by poorer peasants who knew very well that they had nothing to offer in return to balance the relationship with the landowners; very often, the choice of “serfdom” was the only option they had if they wanted to survive.

¹⁵⁶ Liang, Guangshan. Personal Interview with Qiunan Li. Benxi, 28 October 2015.

3.7. Conclusion

On the whole, it was not surprising that Manchukuo was on the verge of economic collapse by 1945. During its fourteen years of existence, the daily routines of its citizens repeatedly underwent dramatic changes. While some people experienced slight improvements, the vast majority suffered from the degradation of their already mediocre quality of life. Indeed, following the creation of the regime in late 1931, both rural and urban regions witnessed a sharp decrease in living standards, accompanied by the upsurge of banditry and financial turmoil. Uncertainty and instability characterized the early years of the regime, during which a sizable part of the population suffered tremendous losses. In contrast, some others turned the people's hardships and turmoil into opportunities to make fortunes, and attempted to enrich themselves, often through dishonest means at the expense of their peers. To some extent, the ambient sense of uncertainty was slowly dispelled for a short while by the successful unification of the dishevelled currency system, as well as with the implementation of taxation reforms. With businesses brought back to life, the defeated Manchukuoans began developing optimism.

As the years progressed, the various discomforts of the Manchukuoans' everyday lives were gradually replaced by visions of future abundance, only to be prematurely interrupted by the sudden outbreak of war in 1937. Later on, the authorities implemented a new distribution and rationing systems to ensure the circulation of goods in the regime. Although such schemes were designed to provide a fair distribution of goods to the population, the average Manchukuoan soon discovered that standing in line for hours to claim their rations would not give them access to any of the retailed goods unless they had the right "friends" to help them procure those. In a way, it can be said that by taking control over the circulation of commodities and general goods, as well as how those should be

allocated, the Manchukuo government assumed the complete responsibility for the general well-being of its subjects. At the same time, the fact that in order for the society to function, the authorities regularly had to intervene and deploy efforts to empower its regional officials also indicated that the regime was not yet operating in the ways that the Manchukuo government had initially planned. The seemingly never-ending hardships experienced by the ordinary people during the early days of Manchukuo were a clear example of the extent to which daily activities could be disrupted during times of crises. The weight of life in Manchukuo, therefore, caused people living under the regime to prioritize themselves at all times in order to ensure survival. This included local officials, as well as influential members in the society, who naturally prioritized their own skin first, which caused further hardships for ordinary Manchukuoans.

Traces of privilege and the practice of personal connections can be found in all kinds of societies. One of the most comparable parallel to the case of Manchukuo could be the case of the Soviet Union in the 1930s, since both regimes witnessed the introduction of similar distribution and rationing systems, and wherein the daily routines of the peoples were subjected to drastic disruptions and changes under the development of each regime's respective Five-Year Plan.¹⁵⁷ However, this thesis also argues that the experiences of ordinary people in Manchukuo stand out from the common war-time experiences of other countries not only because the regime was the sole allocator for all things commodities, but also because of the puppet state's heavy reliance on Japan for all trade procurements, which inevitably exacerbated the scarcity of goods as the war progressed. As a distinct feature of Japanese occupation, this was also evident in the case of Shanghai, where comparable shortages occurred due to the Japanese military operations.¹⁵⁸ With shortages crises settling and taking on various forms,

¹⁵⁷ See Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*.

¹⁵⁸ For the case of Shanghai see Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh eds., *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

the importance for people to continually secure access to goods became crucial. Subsequently, different types of “friendships” gravitating around goods were established, at the cost of the unprivileged ordinary masses whose every day was made increasingly unbearable by the severity of the shortages. In the countryside, the peasants’ living standards also continued to decline after the implementation of the Compulsory Grain Sale Policy. In an attempt to uphold the supply of staple foods, unrealistic procurement targets were assigned by the central government, which the local authorities ensued to carry out, usually using brute force. Starvation eventually became a common state of being, which triggered some peoples’ survival instincts to seek relief from wealthy landowners, who in return exploited the lives of the ordinary peasants even further.

Overall, the rationing and distribution systems that the Manchukuo government painstakingly implemented were undermined by its own unwillingness to face the consequences that emerged from the prevalence of abusive use of personal connections. For the central authorities, the ability to determine who could be entitled to anything within the regime, and how they were to use it efficiently, was not an easy task, especially since there was no experience to draw on. When things went wrong, it was a matter of readjustment for the government, but it was very often a matter of life and death for the ordinary masses.

Chapter Four – “Homelessness”

4.1. Introduction

To begin with, housing can refer to a building structure wherein individuals reside safely, a roof under which people can settle for generations, a hearth wherein people live their daily routines, and an everyday private space that provides a sense of security. However, for Manchukuoans, none of those characteristics could be vouched for. Safe housing structures were a luxury the ordinary Manchukuoan could not afford, settling down under a roof was impossible for most people who were either at the mercy of bandits, government policies, or greedy landlords, daily routines were constantly disrupted by endless relocations, and private space was an unimaginable comfort that vanished as overcrowded spaces became a norm. In the midst of uncertain tomorrows, the daily lives of ordinary people in Manchukuo were characterized by a miserable living environment, a grave lack of the most basic amenities, and by overcrowding. Such were the elements that characterized the routine life for many, and it meant that being able to have a roof over their heads was not a given as Manchukuoans had to juggle between unreasonable rent prices and homelessness amid a housing crisis. Although the majority of Manchukuoans detailed in this chapter were not homeless, their inability to secure adequate housing throughout the different stages of the regime inevitably called for a sense of “homelessness”, which was not an unfamiliar feeling for the ordinary people of Manchukuo.

To understand the sense of “homelessness” among the Manchukuoans, it is necessary to examine the reasons behind the occurrence of the housing crisis as

well as how such issues impacted on the daily life of the people. This chapter begins with an overview of the social disturbances in the countryside that resulted in the abnormal flow of rural refugees to the cities. Following the various efforts made by the government to restore peace in the rural areas, this chapter then details how a big portion of Manchukuo's rural population was forced to abandon their homes and relocate to newly established collective villages that resulted in a sharp decrease in the people's living conditions. Next, this chapter turns to examine the impact of rapid modernization, and how the exceptional growth of Manchukuo's urban population exacerbated housing shortages, showing how, in contrast to incontestable improvements in the infrastructures of the modernized cities, the living conditions of many Manchukuoans were marked by discomforts that had become the new normal. Finally, this chapter looks into the conflictual relationships between landlords and tenants, and the failed attempt made by the government to control and regulate rent prices in the cities. Overall, this chapter reflects on the impact of Japanese-induced modernity on ordinary people in Manchukuo, and discussed how under the "self-sacrificial" efforts of the Japanese to construct the puppet state, the livelihoods of ordinary Manchukuoans were sacrificed instead under the cry of Pan-Asianism.

4.2. Displacements of Peoples and Forced Migrations

Without a doubt, the early years of Manchukuo were severely marked by the damages caused by the rise of banditry that wreaked havoc in all corners of the regime. And as raids and attacks on villages multiplied, the political turmoil which the Mukden Incident had generated soon paralyzed the normal operability of the rural society. The previous chapter provided extensive details on the subsequent economic damage extended by the social unrest in the countryside, and explained how the financial turmoil affected the routines of the people. Unfortunately, this was only a portion of what the Manchukuoans had to suffer through. And the more the bandits proliferated in the countryside, the more the rural population's feeling of insecurity increased, along with uneasiness and fear. As the Kwantung Army reported on 27 October 1931, "the sudden surge of bandits and deserting soldiers from the old warlord regime has run rampant everywhere".¹ And in addition to this, "they hurt and kill people, conduct arson, rape, kidnappings and robberies regardless of where they are, there is no evil deed that they have not already committed."² For many Manchukuoans living under the pressures of being the bandits' next targets, the message that such reports conveyed by the Government meant that they could not rely on the new authorities to protect their livelihoods, at least not in the foreseeable future.

In contrast, since urban areas were guarded by Japanese troops and local garrison regiments, living in towns and cities was relatively safe compared to living in the countryside. As a result, cities began witnessing a considerable number of peasant-refugees roaming in waves and occupying its streets. In urban Panshi County, for instance, flows of helpless peasants were transported in regularly from the nearby villages several times per day. As could be read in daily reports, refugees

¹ Manzhouguo zhi'anbu jingwusi, *Manzhouguo Jingcha Shi* (The History of Manchukuo Police), 167.

² Ibid.

arrived “while holding the old by the arms and the young by the hands; they came with all of their possessions or whatever they [had] left with them in hope of safety.” When asked “Why would you abandon your livelihoods and come here?”, they would often answer, wearily, that “the harassments from bandits [had become] unbearable”, leaving them no other choice but to leave, even though they had “no savings nor means to support themselves in the county”.³ Such occurrences were not isolated. In fact, it was reported that the urban County of Lujiatun saw a wave of refugees from the countryside swarming into the town. Within a few days only, panic-stricken refugees had rented away all the vacant rooms and houses in the county, which resulted in a new form of shortages, this time of housing.⁴ In the provincial capital of Heilongjiang, asylum seekers became a serious issue as they came flocking in masses, also renting out all the vacant accommodation, leaving hotels and hostels overcrowded by desperate villagers looking for a place to settle down in the city.⁵ In Fengtian, the former capital of the warlord administration, as well as the biggest city in the region, it was reported that a total number of 14,713 new residents had settled in the city in just under a month, increasing its population with an additional 3,554 new families who all sought a more stable life, or at least, a semblance thereof.⁶ Indeed, for the peasants used to making a living out of working in the fields, leaving the countryside to resettle in urban areas implied having to start everything from scratch. With no means to make a living in the cities, relocating was not the ideal choice, but was nonetheless a decision they each had to make in order to survive. For long-time urban dwellers, on the other hand, the continuous and abnormal surge of rural migrants was inevitably unwelcomed, which once again, generated new problems and tensions on top of the already harsh situation.

³ *SJSB*, 5 May 1932.

⁴ *SJSB*, 3 June 1932.

⁵ *SJSB*, 20 January 1932.

⁶ *SJSB*, 17 February 1932.

The seemingly unending waves of villagers fleeing the countryside placed tremendous stress on the receptive capacities of the cities, thus resulting in the fluctuation of housing prices. For example, in Tieling, the average rent prices skyrocketed from a mere three to four yuan per month to over 30 yuan per month due to the high demand.⁷ In the newly established capital of Manchukuo, rent prices tripled, affecting all accommodations available in the city, regardless of their standing or quality. By August 1932, it was reported that even the wealthiest tenants residing in the city were having difficulties meeting the rent due dates. At the same time, average families who were already struggling to make a living in the midst of financial hardships were also faced with eviction orders when they failed to pay their rents.⁸ Since the authorities did not formally prohibit landlords from freely setting prices on their rented properties, countless greedy property owners were reported to increase their monthly rents. More than three times a month on average, and without giving proper notice or explanation for their decisions, landlords would just appear on their tenants' doorsteps to collect the inflated rents. "It is impossible for the average tenant with their old and young waiting to be fed at home to sustain a living anymore, we have nowhere else to go and nobody cares about our situation," protested Yu Dehai, a tenant residing in Yanji. "If there are no restrictions [on the landlords], the long-term effect will be devastating, the poor will all either starve to death in their home, or freeze on the streets and the roadside ditches."⁹ And yet, in spite of such overwhelming price surges, the demand for vacant rooms remained strong, though in short supply, if available at all.

As rents prices increased persistently, tensions between devastated tenants and their landlords inevitably began to rise throughout the regime. On the one hand, rent-seekers and tenants alike multiplied attempts to haggle down prices as much as possible with only a lucky few of them managing to come to a reasonable agreement with the property owners who generally refused to budge even a bit in

⁷ *SJSB*, 1 March 1932.

⁸ *SJSB*, 24 August 1932.

⁹ *SJSB*, 3 November 1932.

face of the strong housing demands. From time to time, some tenants fed up with the intransigent attitudes of their landlords would take the issue to the authorities, which resulted in local police departments being deluged every day with letters asking for interventions in their favour.¹⁰ Nevertheless, despite the impending housing crisis, local officials disregarded the people's complaints, and however frequent or widespread they were, showed little concern towards the tenants' calls. Indeed, compared to the financial turmoil that was overwhelming the lives of all, the chaos caused by the turbulence in the housing market was considered to be minor collateral damage. Moreover, as a way to evade responsibility for the misbehaviour of urban landlords which were at the centre of the people's complaints, the authorities pushed the blame onto the remnants of the legacy of "old and bad habits" cultivated during the old warlord regime.¹¹ However, in contrast to the attitudes of the authorities avoiding the issue, landlords were much more active in responding to the complaints of their tenants. Unfortunately for the latter, the formers' strategies to settle disputes often involved the use of physical violence.

Landlord Wang was one example. He was the owner of several properties located in the northern outskirts (*Xiao bei men*) of Fengtian. On a cold night in October 1932, Wang decided to pay his tenants a visit after uninvited police officers had shown up at his door and asked him questions following a complaint filed against him:

"...without any prior notice, Wang went to [tenant] Shi's home and demanded for his pending rents to be paid immediately. Although Shi attempted to reason and discuss the issue with him, Wang refused to listen to any his excuses. Conflict began to break out as Shi refused to comply to Wang's unreasonable request."¹²

¹⁰ *SJSB*, 30 March 1932.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *SJSB*, 18 October 1932.

It was only when concerned neighbours started to cluster outside Shi's house that the ruckus was finally brought to an end –though too late. Shi and his wife were both severely wounded during the nightly brawl in which Shi suffered from severe bleeding all over his face while his wife sustained injuries from trying to dissuade the two parties from fighting. And even so, after hours of dramatic supplications, yelling, and fighting, the argument ended with Shi succumbing to Wang's unreasonable demands. The former paid his rent early as initially commanded, and the latter returned to his home with a pocket full of cash.¹³ Indeed, much of what happened that night reflects the power imbalance that commonly existed between tenants and landlords all over the regime. Despite landlords' unethical behaviour, tenants often had little choice other than to meet their demands out of fear. This was further reinforced by the landlords' given rights to evict tenants at their own discretions, especially if they were considered to be "problematic". Tenants' fates were at the mercy of landlords who profited from the housing crisis. Indeed, property owners were well-aware of their power and therefore took advantage of the state-wide crisis, knowing that few tenants would dare move out of their own accord or refuse to pay the increased rents since they would be unlikely to find alternative housing anywhere else given that the crisis affected the entire regime. Being thrown out at the whim of their landlords was one of most urban residents' worst fears, as it equated to becoming homeless and having to live on the streets.

However, this was not all. Because of the uncontrollable influx of asylum seekers in the cities, the local police departments in all provincial capitals, second-tier cities and counties were tasked with conducting an initial household census with the purpose of ferreting out "illegal individuals and lurking bandits" in residential quarters with a concentration of rural migrants. Moreover, a "household master (*hu zhang* or *yuan zheng*)", usually an individual with good connections to the local officials, was appointed in each neighbourhood. Household masters were

¹³ Ibid.

responsible for the monitoring of residents and were instructed to report any “illegal behaviour and suspicious conducts” that occurred under their jurisdiction.¹⁴ In parallel to the appointments of new household masters, the Ministry of Civil Affairs introduced a new unique identification system. The Temporary Certificate of Identity consisted of the only proof of identity for the Manchukuoans to differentiate themselves from bandits and political dissidents, and was required to be carried at all times in case of random inspections.¹⁵ Empowered with such authority, household masters had the permission to dislodge and report to the police any tenants who failed to provide the necessary documents to prove their identity and place of origin. Tenants would then either be convicted as bandits, or be repatriated to the countryside.¹⁶ Overall, it can be said that the Manchukuo government implemented such measures across the regime as a way to solve the housing crisis that had spread in urban areas in the early 1930s. The authorities’ efforts to inhibit and regulate the migratory flows to the urban regions instead of relieving the tensions between property owners and their tenants suggested that the government believed the root cause of the housing problems in the cities to stem primarily from the countryside. This further supposes that by getting rid of the disturbances troubling the rural regions, the housing crisis in the cities would sort itself out and come to end. This reasoning was applied through the different policies and interventions carried out by the Manchukuo authorities.

In an attempt to patch up the damage in the rural regions, the State Council formally announced on 31 October 1932, under Order No. 62, the creation of a new Countryside Rectification Committee (*Qing xiang wei yuan hui*). The reorganization of the Committee included new subdivisions where all established Provincial Committees were subordinated to one Central Committee. The Central Committee consisted of the Minister of State Affairs acting as the Chairman, senior

¹⁴ *SJSB*, 2 July 1932; See also *SJSB*, 22 December 1932; Heihe sheng gongshu, *Diyihui xianzhang huiyi yishilu* (The proceedings of the first county council meeting) (Heihe: Heihe sheng gongshu, 1935), p. 63.

¹⁵ *SJSB*, 19 October 1932.

¹⁶ *SJSB*, 2 July 1932; See also *SJSB*, 22 December 1932.

advisors from the Military and Political departments, the General Director of the State Council, as well as Ministers from various departments acting as members. Provincial Committees on the other hand, was composed of provincial governors acting as heads, and local garrison commanders, military advisors and chiefs of police departments as members of the committee.¹⁷ The fact that all levels of the Committee included both government officers and military members suggest that the authorities were aware that restoring order in the countryside was such colossal task that it would require more than implementing new administrative rules. Even though political concerns prioritized bringing back peace and order in the rural regions without turning them into ruins and minimizing collateral damages, the military component of the Committee believed otherwise.

While the Manchukuo government was still exploring options to offer amnesty and enlistment possibilities to appease the bandits, the Kwantung Army was more than determined to conduct large-scale military actions instead.¹⁸ As such, during a meeting held on 13 June 1933, the Kwantung Army's Chief of Staff expressed with resolution that the only means to restore law and order in the countryside was to resort to "force, and nothing else".¹⁹ In the face of such stubbornness, the Manchukuo government eventually agreed to allocate one million yuan every month, as per the demand of the Kwantung Army, to the operations, and for maintaining the costs stemming from all such plans. Moreover, county-level police forces and self-defence groups were further mobilized and

¹⁷ Ha'erbin shi difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Haerbin Shizhi* (The Chronicle of Harbin) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chuban she, 1993), p. 59; See also Manzhouguo zhi'anbu jingwusi, *Manzhouguo Jingcha Shi* (The History of Manchukuo Police), 188.

¹⁸ For an overview of the banditry issue in Manchuria see Yaqin Li, "'Bandit Suppression' in Manchukuo (1932-45)" (PhD diss, Princeton University, 2012).

¹⁹ "Guandongjun shishi de 'saofei' shouduan gaiyao (A summary of the Kwantung Army's tactics of military operations to eliminate banditry)," in *Dongbei 'dataofa'* (The great 'crusade' in the northeast), Riben diguo zhuyi qinhua dang'an ziliao xuanbian, eds., Zhongyang dang'an guan, Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan, Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan and Riben diguo zhuyi qinhua dang'an ziliao xuanbian (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), p. 5.

trained by the Kwantung Army to participate directly in the counterinsurgency battles.²⁰ Nevertheless, despite the confidence expressed above and the tremendous sums invested to run the operation, limited progress was achieved during the initial phase of the campaign. In one of the reports compiled by the Kwantung Army staff, military deployment in the countryside was described as efforts that “had only cured the symptoms, but not the disease itself”. As stated in the report overview:

“The largest group of bandits retreated to mountainous areas north of the South Manchuria Railway, and south of the Songhua River. The terrain is rough and rugged, and is largely covered by dense forests propitious to their settlement. These conditions created a good hideout for bandits to avoid our pursuits and attacks. The rich natural resources there also made it suitable for them to cultivate opium, trading it for weapons and ammunition and entrench their bases... Most of the bandit groups have now fled to remote mountainous zones, making it very difficult for us to conduct further operations.”²¹

One of the main factors that contributed to the repeated failures of the military operations was linked to the peasants’ alleged “support” of certain bandit groups. The idea that peasants supported bandits may seem paradoxical since this suggests that the victims aided their tormentors, for bandits frequently raided villages, extorting grain from peasants, and more generally, because they were the main culprits behind rural disturbances. However, the peasants’ “support” was usually forced by bandits who often used coercive means to push local villages into submission in the face of the military operations conducted against them. In effect, bandits levied “protection taxes”, and expropriated so much local manpower for logistics supplies that they were able to establish various facilities that included

²⁰ “Guandongjun guanyu Zhaohe shinian qiuji zhian suzheng dui manzhouguo fangmian de yaoqiu (Kwantung Army on the requirements of law and security to the Manchukuo government),” in *ibid.*, p. 11.

²¹ “Guandongjun canmoubu guanyu Zhaohe shi niandu qiuji zhian suzheng gongzuo gaikuang (A summary report by the Kwantung Army’s Staff on the public order work in autumn season),” in *ibid.*, p. 13.

factories to finance their running battles against the Japanese military. When discovered by the Kwantung Army, military officials often expressed their astonishment vis-à-vis the bandits' comprehensive organization. "Everything, from uniforms to blankets, is produced self-sufficiently."²² Peng Shilu, a newly recruited fighter for the New Fourth Anti-Japanese Army (*Xin si jun*) in Manchuria even qualified life with the rebels as being "surprisingly comfortable". Formerly a high school student from Zhiwu County, Peng had prepared himself to face hardships when he joined the rebels. On the contrary, he was taken aback when he found out that rebels kept a stockpile of supplies. One day, Peng discovered an abundance of provisions in the secret camp located near Fangzheng County in Heilongjiang Province:

"...I asked someone in the group, where does all this food come from? Did you farm those yourselves? 'No', he replied as he glanced at me with surprise, 'we never need to do any farming around here, we always rely on the peasants to deliver food for us.'"²³

Peng soon learned how rebel groups were organized and how the region was split into smaller territories each under the control of one rebel group. Each group could run its own territory and was to levy grain only within the boundaries of their respective resupplying areas. In return, villages that collaborated with them would receive protection from the repeated harassments of other bandit groups eyeing the area. As Peng was told by one of the rebels, "The northeastern villagers are such naïve and honest people. We ask them to deliver grain and they do exactly as told." The rebel nevertheless acknowledged that without their help, it would have been "impossible to survive for sure [due to the Japanese military operations and blockades]." Another rebel who joined in their conversation added, "Absolutely. If they had guns, we would take them; if they had money, we would take it too. Since

²² Ibid.

²³ Peng Shilu, *Wo zai kangri lianjun shinian* (My ten years in the Anti-Japanese Resistance force) (Changchun: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992), p. 85.

they have none, it is normal that they give us grain. How can they possibly object to this?"²⁴

However, to the Kwantung Army, whether the peasants were coerced into cooperating with the bandits unwillingly or whether they did so voluntarily made no difference. The authorities indeed did not value the necessity to distinguish the underlying causes behind the behaviour of the peasants, and showed no mercy to whoever contributed to sustaining the bandits' activities, whether it was directly by joining the bandits, or indirectly, by supplying them with anything instrumental to the bandits' survival. As an officer of the Kwantung Army reluctantly noted in the progress report mentioned above, "Contrary to our expectations, the rural population and the bandits are not sworn enemies. The villagers usually have their own understanding of banditry in these regions. We can even safely assume that even though they do not dare to arm themselves with weapons or revolt against us, spiritually and mentally, the majority of the thirty million population of Manchukuo is no different from the bandits."²⁵ Reporting to the central authorities, the observations emphasized how large and populous the rural population was, and how big of an obstacle peasants represented to the progress of the operations. Pressing the government to provide a swift solution to this problem, military commanders repeatedly stressed how much "the supportive and friendly allies of the bandits contributed to the various failures of the recent military operations".²⁶ At the same time, with the backdrop of pressures from the international audience towards the regime's legitimacy, the Japanese urged the Manchukuo government to solve the persisting issues in rural areas in a timely manner, which eventually led

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Guandongjun guanyu Zhaohe shinian qiuji zhian suzheng dui manzhouguo fangmian de yaoqiu (Kwantung Army on the requirements of law and security to the Manchukuo government)," in *Dongbei 'dataofa'* (The great 'crusade' in the Northeast), eds., Zhongyang dang'an guan, Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan, Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan, Riben diguo zhuyi qinhua dang'an ziliao xuanbian, 12.

²⁶ Ibid.

to the introduction of “defensive collective villages (*Shudan buraku/Ji tuan bu luo*)” in the countryside.

The original vision of “defensive collective villages” was drawn from prior experiments conducted in the province of Jilin in 1933. In effect, based on historical customs and also because of the *Chuang guan dong* (Crashing into Manchuria) movement dating back from the late Qing Dynasty, the formation of the villages in Manchuria was sporadic, scattered around arable resources and lands where an average of three to five households would settle in each location. However, such layouts gravely complicated all communication processes. The conveyance of instructions to rural communities all around Manchukuo was certainly inefficient and reached the people living in those areas irregularly. This then often resulted in lack of development in many of those more remote locations, rendering them impermeable to administrative power.²⁷ With the rise of banditry, Panshi County Counselor Jiraiya Senju and E’mu County Counselor Takoi Motoyoshi proposed to relocate the dispersed rural families in the region by clustering them into larger and more concentrated collective villages so that local armed forces would be able to follow the authorities’ instructions as well as guard the clusters more easily.²⁸ Starting with households that resided in more remote areas, peasants were rounded up and rushed into the eight pilot collective villages near the Counties of Yanji, Helong, and Hunchun. As peasants were rapidly swept away from their homes, their left-behind dwellings were subsequently destroyed by the Japanese military to prevent bandits from using them as shelters.²⁹ In the earlier stages of the

²⁷ Heihe sheng gongshu, *Diyihui xianzhang huiyi yishilu*, 83; See also, He Xinwu, *Baori hebing zhong de wei manzhouguo zhenxiang* (The truth of the bogus Manchukuo under the brutal annexation of the Japanese) (Nanjing: Nanjing dongbei yanjiu xiehui, 1934), p. 149.

²⁸ Manzhouguo shi bian zuan kanxing hui ed., *Manzhou guoshi fenlun shang* (The History of Manchukuo), trans. Dongbei lunxian shisi nian shi Jilin bianxie zu (Changchun: Dongbei shifan daxue, 1992), vol. 1, p. 524; See also Manzhouguo zhi’anbu jingwusi, *Manzhouguo Jingcha shi* (The History of Manchukuo Police), 230.

²⁹ Guandongjun sili guan, “Guanyu jituan buluo shezhi (Regarding the establishments of Collective Villages),” in *Dongbei Kangri lianjun shiliao* (Historical

operation, many leaders within the government expressed scepticism about the initiative, arguing against it by pointing out the tremendous costs it involved. Since such methods were unprecedented, the results of the initiative provided valuable experiences in the making of Manchukuo's rural relocation policies.

The initial success of the pilot villages eventually caught the central government's attention, who in return praised the experiment as "a unique and efficient strategy to separate the bandits from the rural population".³⁰ Soon enough, the collective villages in Jilin Province became a template for the other troubled regions in the regime to follow. Eventually, the Ministry of Civil Affairs officially approved of the program, which gained momentum under Order No. 969 in December 1934:

"...with the establishment of defensive collective villages, we would be able to enforce law and order and save the people living in remote areas from banditry... under an orderly community life, we would be able to promote the spirit of self-governance, and prevent the people from walking in the wrong path by becoming accomplices of the bandits."³¹

To be precise, the typical defensive collective village was designed to receive up to 150 households and was built on carefully chosen terrain conducive to defensive purposes. Moreover, each collective village was meant to be constructed in a square shape, with forts overseeing the surroundings at each corner. Mud walls

data of the Anti-Japanese resistance army in the northeast), *Zhongguo gongchandang lishi ziliao congshu*, ed., *Dongbei kangri lianjun shiliao bianxie zu* (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chuban she, 1987), vol. 2, p. 805.

³⁰ Guowuyuan tongji ting, *Manzhouguo xianshi* (The current situation of Manchukuo) (Hsinking: Manzhouguo tongxunshe, 1935), p. 186.

³¹ *Manzhouguo Zhengfu Gongbao* (Manchukuo Government Gazette), 13 December 1934; See also *Manzhouguo zhi'anbu jingwusi, Manzhouguo jinghca shi* (The History of Manchukuo Police) (Keizyo: Korea Printing Co., Ltd., 1942), p. 231.

and trenches were also envisioned to further reinforce the periphery of the village. To enter and exit the community, residents would have to use the only gateway, a 3.5-meter-wide double door situated on the side of the fort.³² Surely, with a strong resemblance to fortresses, the defensive collective villages were promoted as an infrastructure designed to offer protection to their inhabitants. But in reality, the main function of such structures was to isolate the peasants from unnecessary communications with the outside world, which inevitably generated new problems.

Originally, and for the most part, the authorities introduced the defensive collective villages to secure and pacify the countryside. They however, still largely remained vague concepts which the Manchukuo government was not yet familiar with and knew little about how to actually enforce. When peasants were first informed about the relocation plans, many expressed dissent. Some refused to leave their homes, and others proceeded to file joint petitions to local gendarmeries, requesting to remain in their villages or at least, to postpone their displacement until after the end of the plowing season in spring.³³ Liu Chunman, a villager in Heijuzishan village in 1934, recalled: "It was during the coldest days in the winter when we heard the news. Nobody wanted to move, where were we supposed to go? We had nowhere else to live; we would either starve or freeze to death [if we followed the orders]."³⁴ In a report written to Tojo Hideki, who at the time was serving as the Kwantung Army Gendarmerie Commander, Captain Nakai from the Mudanjiang Gendarmerie expressed his concerns about the difficulties of executing his orders:

³² "Jianli jituan buluo gaikuang (The current progress of the establishment of Collective Villages)," in *Dongbei 'dataofa'* (The Great 'crusade' in the Northeast), ed., Zhongyang dang'an guan, Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan and Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan, 170; See also *Manzhougou zhi'anbu jingwusi, Manzhougou jingcha shi* (The History of Manchukuo Police), 232.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

³⁴ Xu Qingxiang, Liang Xiuwen, "Taotian zuixing (Heinous crimes that are too much to fully document)," in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), Wei Manzhougou Shiliao Congshu, ed., Sun Bang (Changchun: Jilin renmin chuban she, 1993), p. 66.

“For the sake of security, the Dongning County authorities planned to implement 23 collective villages within its borders.... The peasants are all depending on their farmlands to sustain life, but the relocated area has less arable land and is far from the collective villages, so there will be a reduction in harvests. Most of them believe that banditry is only a small problem [in the county]; if bandits could not be eliminated they can still be expelled from the region, but moving into the collective villages will have a more negative impact and create tremendous difficulties for them to be able to feed their families.”³⁵

Regardless of the peasants’ reasons for resisting the uncertainty impeding their daily routines, the authorities forcefully displaced and relocated millions of families to clusters more easily reachable for the Manchukuo authorities. Although it is necessary to take into account the peasants’ concerns to better understand their attitudes and negative reactions to the announcement of the new collective villages, in practice, it was difficult to distinguish whether peasants were hesitant to change because of the anxiety and fear of not being able to sustain a living in the new collective villages, or if they were reluctant to leave their old villages because they were too accustomed and emotionally attached to the places wherein most had spent sedentary lives. And in spite of the firm orders to relocate, many reluctant groups therefore acted with indifference, and chose to ignore the call altogether. However, the authorities interpreted this response as defiance, which triggered an arduous process to enforce clustering. The authorities thus opted for more radical methods to move the peasants into collective villages, and resorted to the use of violence and coercive means.

³⁵ Dudanjiang xianbingdui, “Dudan jiang xianbing duizhang zhongjing chuangei guandongjun xianbing dui siling guan dongtiao yingji de baogao (Mudanjiang gendarmerie captain Nakai’s report to the gendarmerie commander Tojo Hideki),” in *Dongbei ‘dataofa’* (The great ‘crusade’ in the Northeast), eds., Zhongyang dang’an guan, Zhongguo di’er lishi dang’an guan and Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan, 202.

During the evening of 4 August 1933, two trucks full of Japanese garrison soldiers and local police forces arrived at the entrance of Qiupigou village. Panic began to break out as soon as the soldiers jumped out of the trucks and ordered the peasants to vacate their properties. “The police were igniting torches, and they were going to burn our houses. I was completely shocked when it happened,” recalled resident Cui Qinglan.³⁶ It was only when a soldier scolded him that Cui came back to his senses and rushed to rescue whatever he had left in his home. Since fire quickly spread across the village, Cui and his wife only managed to salvage one sack of green corn while the rest of their belongings all turned to ashes. “Why are you all still here and not moving towards Xiapengjie? Do not expect to find a place to sleep anymore if you arrive late!”, yelled a soldier. Following his instructions, the destitute villagers faced the facts and came to the conclusion that they had no other choice but to head towards the assigned collective village.³⁷ When the soldiers and the police drove away, some villagers went back to their burnt houses looking for anything to salvage, while others went up to the mountains to find food. A number of villagers reticent to move to the collective village left in a hurry to search for a shelter to live in.

Although the authorities promised security to the peasants once in the collective villages, no means of transportation was arranged to reach the new villages. Since families consisted of peoples of all ages, the trip from the old to the new village could last from a few days to more than a week. As a result, more than half of the displaced peasants had to find temporary shelters to spend the nights until they reached the assigned collective village, but only a handful of them was lucky enough to find a spot to sleep in warehouses, mill sheds or horse stables. “It was a complete disaster, a nightmare... but it was real, a living nightmare, it really happened in our lives”, shared Cui.³⁸ The forceful relocation from Qiupigou thus

³⁶ Li Yiming, “Canbao de guitun binghu (The brutal forceful relocations to Collective Villages),” in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 96.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

caused 38 out of the 97 households to be left homeless without shelter for the cold nights until they reached the destination. As a temporary solution, some managed to find classrooms in a nearby school to live in, while the most unfortunate ones had no choice but to build shacks to spend the night.³⁹ When the peasants finally arrived at their destination, they discovered to their dismay that only some of them were to have their own dwellings. Lacking enough space to accommodate all the incomers, families were to share homes in the already packed collective village. Such forceful relocation methods became a standard practice employed by the military to drive people out of their homes to the designated villages. Moreover, anyone caught trying to return to their old villages risked being charged with “complicity” and “collusion with bandits”.⁴⁰ To further discourage villagers from returning to their homes, the authorities made sure nothing could be salvaged from the burnt houses, burning any ruins to ashes. As it was described: “After the forceful relocations, the depopulated areas became desolated and lifeless. Pigs turned into wild boars and chickens became pheasants. People simply could no longer survive, and those who did not want to enter the ‘*Renjuan*’ (defensive collective villages) escaped to mountain caves to live like ape-men.”⁴¹

Indeed, the term “*Renjuan*”, which literally translates as “pigsty for humans”, captures the essence of the misery of daily life experienced in the collective villages. In fact, the defensive collective villages could be compared to wastelands, empty vessels waiting to be filled. If the authorities had thought through the design of the defensive collective villages, their construction was often yet to be commenced or at best, just laid out. Upon arrival after a long and toilsome journey, peasants discovered unfinished vacant structures whose “defensive” purposes were either flawed or outright inexistent. In most cases, the new collective villages were just

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Wang Hui, “Huadian ‘jituan buluo’ shengce de shishi qingkuang (The Implementations of Collective Villages in Huadian),” in *Huadian wenshi ziliao* (Huadian Cultural and Historical Data), ed., Zhengxie Huadian xian wenshi ziliao bangongshi (Huadian: Internal Release, 1987), p. 16.

⁴¹ *Jinchaji Ribao*, 19 May 1946.

intended to be the place peasants were told to go after being forced out of their home villages. Everything else needed to be built. The new inhabitants were not only required to contribute to the construction of fences, gates, and other defensive fortifications to protect the “*Renjuan*” from unwanted bandits, they were also ordered to prioritize the building of those protections over the building of their own homes.⁴²

Helpless, the villagers complied, settling for temporary huts primarily made out of rotten wooden sticks to solve their housing needs: grass mats and mud were used to cover the inner and outer layers of the hut, significantly reducing the living space to fit one bed only. Without any choice, larger pieces of furniture were commonly placed outside the hut whereas personal belongings needed to be covered with hay. Wealthier households who could afford additional space would set up separate straw sheds to store their cooking utensils, including stove top and pots and pans, whereas the average families could only afford to eat outside in the open air. In addition, cooking often became impossible on rainy days, and since there was no way to make a fire to boil pots under such weather conditions, it was not uncommon for the residents of the defensive collective villages to starve or choose to cook during irregular hours. Furthermore, water seeping down from the roofs and walls made out of mushy mud was also a common problem. For the completely deprived families who were unable to even gather the most basic materials to construct their primitive huts, the only solution was often to squeeze into the village forts to shelter themselves. Essentially, forts were divided into two floors, with each floor being three meters long and two meters wide, barely big enough to accommodate one family. With only a few blast-holes to serve as windows, the inner side of the forts was dark and damp all year round, making it

⁴² Wang Hui, “Huadian ‘jituan buluo’ shengce de shishi qingkuang (The Implementations of Collective Villages in Huadian),” in *Huadian wenshi ziliao* (Huadian Cultural and Historical Data), ed., Zhengxie Huadian xian wenshi ziliao bangongshi, 17.

the ideal breeding ground for bed bugs and fleas.⁴³ On the other hand, families that had managed to settle in a house in the collective villages did not have it easy either.

Due to the high population density and limited housing availability, one home was required to accommodate at least three to four families, with eight or nine people sharing a single brick bed.⁴⁴ As a result of such crowding, typhoid fever and dysentery, along with other common infectious diseases, started spreading rapidly, for one sick person would inevitably infect an entire household.⁴⁵ Hence, “day and night, patients groaning in pain, children crying tearfully, mourning and endless grieving could be heard from one house to another” as villagers dying of illness were reported regularly.⁴⁶ And even though the priority was given to the building of the fortification, peasants thought their precariousness would eventually come to end. However once again, the reality was otherwise.

In order to build the facility, including the defensive forts and their own dwellings-to-be, peasants were provided with materials and supplies. However, since the majority of them were originally farmers, their craftsmanship skills were often non-existent, which resulted in defensive works being completed through trial and error. Since such works were prioritized over the building of homes, the resource wastage caused by their errors also meant that the remaining materials from the infrastructures that the peasants had spent months working on were no longer enough to build their own homes. Consequently, housing issues persisted,

⁴³ Jin Qingfan, “Wo suo jingli de ‘guitunbinghu’ (My experiences of the forceful relocations and the Collective Villages),” in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 71.

⁴⁴ Zhang Deyu, “Guiweizi qiangxing binghu shao shaofu canburendu (Building fences, forceful relocations, and the miseries of burn down houses),” in *Fushun wenshi ziliao* (Fushun Cultural and Historical Data), ed., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Fushun shi weiyuanhui wenshiziliao wei yuanhui (Fushun: Internal Release, 1987), p. 109.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

gradually intensifying as displaced villagers had not only lost all their belongings when they were forced out of their villages, but were also stripped of any sense of security, contrary to the promises made by the Manchukuo government. All that these displaced Manchukuoans were left with were dwindled spirits and bitterness. Even so, living in temporary huts was by no means considered to be a durable solution, especially with the prospect of Manchuria's cold winter seasons. To meet their needs and in preparation to fight lower temperatures, many resorted to upgrade their shelters into "*majiazi* (literally "horse shelves"), a cheap version of today's semi-basement shacks, which gradually became the norm for housing in rural Manchukuo.⁴⁷

To be precise, the commonplace "*majiazi*" was constructed half a meter below ground level. Walls were two meters tall and built from mud and grass while sorghum stalks served as roofs, and ceilings were supported by a single wooden pole. Windows consisted of a layer of paper covering a small hole carved into the wall, making the rooms excessively dark. Instead of doors, straw curtains were used as an alternative, and the only way to get in and out of the hut was to crawl through the straws since the entrance was too low to walk under. Due to the materials used to construct such houses, proper indoor heating was impossible, which inevitably exposed its inhabitants to heavy moisture and frost during colder weather.⁴⁸ As published in the *America Magazine* in 1937 in an article entitled "The Tokugawa Clan's search for Credence", T.A Bithorn compared the phenomenon of defensive collective villages in Manchukuo to rural prisons, observing:

"...the so-called construction of the defensive collective villages is, in fact, a simple disguise to separate the peasants from the bandits with enforcement by the Japanese authorities. They forcefully relocated

⁴⁷ Jin Qingfan, "Wo suo jingli de 'guitunbinghu' (My experiences of the forceful relocations and the Collective Villages)," in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 73.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

one-tenth of their total population and burned down their houses, all without any compensation. Such five million peasants were also forced to engage in hard labour, as well as sharing the burden of material costs, excessive taxation, national defence donations and so on, forcing them to bear all of the obligations."⁴⁹

All in all, despite the downsides of the operations, which were largely borne by the peasants, the Manchukuo government considered the implementation of the defensive collective villages to be successful in restoring its rural societies. In effect, as a result of the clustering of the previously dispersed villages, the raging issue of banditry in the countryside witnessed a steady decline over the years, with the number of bandits plummeting from over 360,000 in 1932 to merely 200 by 1941.⁵⁰ Surely, because of the persistent disturbances afflicting the regime in the early 1930s, it can be said that the Manchukuo authorities spent significant efforts to tackle the issue of rural security, not only because of international pressure, but also because the authorities' foremost concern was to keep things running and prevent society from collapsing altogether. However, peace and order were restored at a tremendous price, at the expense of the peasants. Not only did they experience a sharp decline in living conditions, the long distances they had to walk from the defensive collective villages to the farmlands also caused a significant reduction in their cultivation possibilities, which inevitably resulted in the decline of personal incomes.

⁴⁹ Manzhouguo zhi'anbu jingwusi, Manzhouguo Jingchashi (The History of Manchukuo Police), 223.

⁵⁰ Manshukoku shi hensan kankokai, *Manshukoku shi: Kakuron* (The History of Manchukuo: Detailed exposition) (Tokyo: Manmo doho engokai, 1971), pp. 302-303.

4.3. The Rise of Urban “Image Projects”

While the Manchukuo government focused on restoring peace in the countryside, Japanese urban planners never ceased to develop plans to achieve their ambitions to create new cosmopolitan zones in the Far East. Prior to overtaking Manchuria in 1931, the Japanese had already made significant contributions towards city planning and had invested in the construction of new infrastructure in the northeastern region. Based on Russian colonial legacies, the Japanese expanded the small town of Dairen in the Kwantung Leased Territory into a mighty city decorated with timely and ample lighting. Modern facilities were built along newly paved streets, producing a stark contrast with the adjacent underdeveloped Chinese cities.⁵¹ The seizure of Manchuria following the Mukden incident allowed for even more freedom for architects and engineers alike to fulfil their ambitions and exercise their talents to the fullest.

More than 209 cities and counties were involved in the Japanese grand vision to modernize the regime.⁵² Previously an ordinary and typical northeastern Chinese city with an estimated population of 90,000 in 1932,⁵³ the capital of Manchukuo, Hsinking, underwent an extensive construction program put forward by Japanese urban architects to expand the city into a 200 square kilometre city capable of accommodating up to one million people.⁵⁴ At the same time, major

⁵¹ Jones, *Manchuria since 1931*, 207.

⁵² Yu Mengyan (Yolanda), *Instrumental Autonomy, Political Socialization and Citizenship Identity* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2016), p. 77.

⁵³ Guowuyuan zongwuting qingbaochu, *Manzhouguo daxi di qi ji difang dushi* (Grand View of Manchukuo: Regions and Cities) (Hsinking: Guowuyuan zongwuting qingbao chu, 1933), vol. 7, p. 8.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Manchuria since 1931*, 204; See also Guowuyuan zongwuting qingbao chu, *Manzhouguo Daxi di qi ji difang dushi* (Grand View of Manchukuo: Regions and Cities) (Hsinking: Guowuyuan zongwuting qingbao chu, 1933), vol. 7, p. 16; Wang Shengjin, *Weiman shiqi Zhongguo dongbei diqu yimin yanjiu* (Immigration Studies of

financial and business institutions started appearing to decorate the city's skyline, along with new government edifices, plazas, as well as the Imperial Palace, all built in quick succession; and despite such grandeur being intimidating, the magnificence of the new constructions was qualified as "the fusion of Eastern and Western architectural art".⁵⁵ In addition, city planners also took pride in their design of the urban ecosystems, wherein seven percent of the total public space in Hsinking was dedicated to the construction of public parks, sports fields, and plazas that were opened to all, far above the average ratio of green spaces in other urban areas, even compared to major western countries of the time.⁵⁶

While Hsinking was chosen to become Manchukuo's political and administrative centre, Fengtian, being the largest and most prosperous city in the region, was thus designed to be the main hub of industrial development along with the more traditional mining cities of Andong and Harbin.⁵⁷ Deemed by Louise Young as "a showpiece of modern industry",⁵⁸ Tiexi District, located in the city of Fengtian, expanded into an eight-square kilometre major industrial hub home to more than 100 factories, with an additional 36 in construction and 48 more in planning by 1939. As a direct result of the rapid industrialization, more than 80,000 migrant workers were drawn from all over the region, increasing the density of the city's population significantly.⁵⁹ Apart from first-tier cities, all second and third-tier cities, towns and counties in Manchukuo benefited from a varying degree of development due to the active construction of roads and railways. Investments to improve the overall infrastructure across the regime developed at a steady pace over the years.

Northeast China During the Bogus Manchukuo Period) (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2005), p. 29.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 204.

⁵⁶ South Manchuria Railway Company, *Sixth Report on Progress in Manchuria* (Dairen: South Manchuria Railway Company, 1939), p. 109.

⁵⁷ Industrial investments were made under the joint-invested Fengtian Industrial Real Estate Company by the Manchukuo government and the SMR in 1935, in which ownership was fully transferred to the Fengtian city government in 1937.

⁵⁸ Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 255.

⁵⁹ South Manchuria Railway Company, *Sixth Report on Progress in Manchuria* (Dairen: South Manchuria Railway Company, 1939), p. 77.

In Fushun, for example, the mining city witnessed an almost nine-fold increase in expenditure, topping at 9,841,000 yuan in 1938 compared to the mere 1,292,000 yuan spent in 1933. Investments to modernize Hsinking and Fengtian increased less than threefold over the same period, with respectively a total expenditure of 38,227,000 yuan and 45,600,000 yuan in 1938.⁶⁰ In line with what F.C. Jones described as “the chief feature of the epoch of Japanese rule”,⁶¹ Manchukuo even managed to exceed Japan in manufacturing for a brief period between 1936 and 1940, which allowed the regime to enjoy a threefold increase in its GDP and a productivity index progress of more than 60 percent.⁶² Moreover, while older cities continued growing and benefitted from a nearly uninterrupted momentum, new emerging cities began raising their international profile. As a result of the swift municipal advancements achieved within the regime’s short fourteen years of existence, Manchukuo was even argued to have few equally or better-performing counterparts elsewhere nor in the history of the world.⁶³ To be sure, the enormous sums poured into urban development were not only meant to remodel the Manchukuo cities, but also to improve the regime’s image, not just as a major exporter of raw industrial and agricultural goods, but also as a progressive state worthy of international recognition. After all, propaganda could always be disseminated with ease, but positive attention on the other hand, often had to be earned the hard way.

Many of the Westerners who had the chance to visit Manchukuo in the mid to late 1930s often associated their experiences with amazement towards the

⁶⁰ South Manchuria Railway Company, *Fifth Report on Progress in Manchuria* (Dairen: South Manchuria Railway Company, 1936), p. 57; South Manchuria Railway Company, *Sixth Report on Progress in Manchuria* (Dairen: South Manchuria Railway Company, 1939), p. 107.

⁶¹ Jones, *Manchuria since 1931*, 211.

⁶² Yu, *Instrumental Autonomy, Political Socialization and Citizenship Identity*, 75.

⁶³ I.B. Taeuber, “Manchuria as a demographic frontier”, *Population Index*, Vol. 11 (1945), pp. 260-274; See also Rosalia Avila-Tapias, “Imperial Expansion, Human Mobility and the Organization of Urban Space in Manchuria (Part I)”, *Shakai Kagaku*, Vol.43, No. 3 (2013), pp. 35-56.

regime's accomplishments in contrast to their expectations prior to their visits. "... we did not know what to expect and we had no idea of what Dairen would be like... Because it was the first place we saw, apparently it impressed us more than anything we had seen before or have seen since... Dairen was very much like a European city." shared Lewis Schmidt, Chairman of the American student delegation to Manchukuo in 1938. "Hsinking was also a refreshing experience in many ways, because one half of the city, the new part, was very different, being more like what we would expect of any American city, and it was not as dusty as other sections of Hsinking or other Manchurian towns."⁶⁴ In 1939, similar remarks were articulated from a visiting Canadian amateur basketball team, whose team members showed no reserve when praising the metropolises that they had visited. More laudatory commentaries about the achievements and the prowess displayed by Manchukuo were commonly recorded by foreign visitors. "I felt that Manchoukuo has more possibilities than any country that I have seen so far in the Far East", noted Al Beaton, a junior partner in a printing firm, "The Japanese have a lot of credit coming to them for financing this country and extending aid and helping Manchoukuo in putting law and order into effect immediately."⁶⁵ When commenting on the city's growth, Dick Wright, a high school teacher stated: "the preparations must have been made for a hundred years ahead, to take care of an increase of 200,000 in a short time means that there is exceptional organization behind everything, the strides taken by Hsinking in seven years are remarkable. At the same rate, there should be about a million people here in five years."⁶⁶ Further describing the regime's showcase city of Hsinking as "the model city for all civilizations to learn from", Sonny Watson, a mining supervisor who played for the team added:

"I could not believe that the majority of buildings of Hsinking have been built within five years. It is tremendous and compared with Vancouver with a history of fifty years of building behind it, it is almost

⁶⁴ *Manchurian Monthly*, 1 September 1938.

⁶⁵ *Manchurian Monthly*, 15 March 1939.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

incredible... I heard from an American newspaperman in Japan that Japan had done considerable development work in Manchoukuo, but when we came here I found that the development was on a much larger scale than I had ever dreamed.”⁶⁷

Indeed, the large number of Japanese urban planners actively involved in the building of Manchukuo not only shaped the regime’s identity and future, but further problematised the conventional understandings of informal imperialism.⁶⁸ Japan’s ability to mobilise its society to such magnitude further supports Young’s concept of “total empire”, where the nation-building project of Manchukuo was at the centre of its Pan-Asianist imagination. The grand and ambitious designs on the other hand, suggested a symbolic representation of Japan’s role to guide and lead other Asians into prosperity.

However, beneath the glamorous high-rise city landscapes, urban life for most of the Manchukuoans was grim, to say the least. In the eyes of the Japanese architects, the titanic task to transform Manchuria’s poorly designed cities into modern and orderly developed metropolises necessitated for them to start from scratch. But more often than not, starting from scratch also meant that they had to get rid of the existing building first. Despite the relatively rich history in the region, the city of Fengtian had formerly been belittled repeatedly as a “humiliation” by the Japanese.⁶⁹ Judging the intricate yet disorderly state of the city’s old quarters, the Japanese considered the cityscape to have brought shame to Manchukuo, since it was thought to be “lacking any of the characteristics a cultural city should have”.⁷⁰ To make way for a development plan that involved a massive reconstruction and extension of 43,455 meters of asphalt pavements and another 16,578 meters of gravel roads, countless houses that were considered to be

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan’s War*, 115.

⁶⁹ *SJSB*, 16 May 1937.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

“obstructing traffic” or simply “a blot on landscape” were forcefully demolished without the residents’ consent, all in the name of modernization.⁷¹ Offered little to no compensation, many of the residents who received eviction notices protested fiercely, only to be eventually greeted with ultimatums and threats of imprisonment by the authorities.⁷² Once more, worse was still to come.

While it can be said that the urban planners redesigning Manchukuo were generally zealous in their efforts to pursue infrastructural accomplishments, few of them seemed to have anticipated the tremendous pressure that rapid modernization would bring to the cities’ limited reserves of water and land. The exceptional expansion of urban regions and the creation of better employment opportunities were accompanied by the stimulation of internal rural-urban movements as well as flows of migration from China proper. So not only did construction work contribute to depleting reserves, the high number of migrant workers attracted by such opportunities also drew on these resources. While in 1933 the total population of Manchuria accounted for roughly 29,120,000 inhabitants⁷³, two years later, by the end of 1935, the number had increased to 34,200,923.⁷⁴ By 1940, the total population of Manchukuo had skyrocketed to 43,202,880, reaching an impressive urbanisation rate of 11.9 percent, which raised the regime’s position to the ninth most populous state in the world.⁷⁵ However, the cities’ development of infrastructures and facilities could not follow the pace at which the urban population was growing. For instance, with a 70 percent increase

⁷¹ *Dairen Special Issue, SJSB*, 23 May 1937; See also *SJSB*, 11 December 1935.

⁷² *Hsinking Special Issue, SJSB*, 18 April 1939.

⁷³ Zhang Shanyu, *Zhongguo renkou dili* (Population and Geography of China) (Chongqing: Chongqing chuban she, 1985), p. 3.

⁷⁴ Guowuyuan zongwuting tongji chu, *Kangde er nian mo manzhoudiguo xian zhu hukou tongji* (Current Household Statistics of the Manchukuo Empire in 1935) (Hsinking: Guowuyuan zongwuting tongji chu, 1936), p. 3.

⁷⁵ Guowuyuan zongwuting linshi guoshi diaocha shiwu ju, *Kangde qi nian linshi guoshi diaocha baogao diyijuan quanguo pian* (The temporary report on the National Power in 1940 National Volume) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1943), p. 3; In correspondence, China proper’s modernization rate remained to be approximately five to six percent whilst Japan peaked at 37.7 percent.

of urban residents, the total growth rate of cities during the corresponding time period was no more than 47.8 percent.⁷⁶ This inevitably brought about the over-saturation of the cities. With the urban population increasing more rapidly than the capacity to receive them, Manchukuo cities began showing signs of resources deficiencies (which contributed to a series of shortages, as discussed in Chapter Three). Since the authorities had not yet found an effective mechanism in place to match the extraordinary rate of population growth, the strain on the cities persisted.

As a consequence of the overpopulation in the cities, it became increasingly challenging for most people to find accommodation. “*Zhu zhai nan* (difficult to find housing)” was a popular expression among the average urban inhabitants in face of the inadequate amount of housing that was available. In Hsinking, “Did you find a place to live yet?” was a common greeting phrase among migrant workers who had just moved to the city. As vacant rooms usually attracted hordes of potential tenants, it was almost impossible to secure accommodation without having stable and well-paid employment.⁷⁷ Indeed, so acute were the housing shortages that even governmental personnel transfers were affected: appointed officials were not able to find housing either, and were thus unable to assume their new posts. For instance, within the Concordia Association (*Xie he hui*), more than two-thirds out of the 320 employees were unable to arrive for their assignments despite prior coordination and assistance from local authorities.⁷⁸ Under such circumstances, many of the city residents had no other choice but to share already small spaces and live with other families, just to be able to afford a roof over their heads. Known as “tenement yards (*Da za yuan*)”, tenants would resort to the parcelling of their shared living space by putting up wooden partitions to create smaller rooms.

⁷⁶ Taeuber, “Manchuria as a demographic frontier,” 265.

⁷⁷ Yoon Hwy Tak and Jin Lan, trans, “Manzhouguo de “liulangzhe (nomad)” zai man chaoxian ren de shenghuo he rentong (“Nomad” of Manchukuo: Life and Identity of Koreans in Manchuria)”, *Taiwan Historical Research*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 2015), p. 88.

⁷⁸ *SJSB*, 7 March 1940.

Families thus had to undertake their daily activities cramped in these confined spaces, pushing them to search for the most ergonomic ways to optimize any corner of the home.⁷⁹ Often, the lack of space even led households to repurpose the house entrance into a communal kitchen, cramming in small self-built shacks on both sides to use as extra storage rooms, and in some cases, to accommodate another tenant. Shao Jutian, formerly residing in Fengtian, recalled his appalling experiences of living in Tiexi District. Looking back on his memories of such times, he stated:

“... I lived in Yaming tenement yard, and eating was always a problem. The yard had residents from different backgrounds, and it was always bustling and noisy. Because we had no kitchen, we had to cook all of our meals outside our home in the open air, and it always caused disputes with our neighbours over the usage of coal and water. During eating hours, the yard was always crowded with families making fires and boiling their pots. We always had to be vigilant when we cooked so that our neighbours would not steal any grain (from us) or knock our kitchenware over.”⁸⁰

Living in a packed compound in Manchukuo required people to live with one another, and Shao’s story illustrates how overcrowded urban dwellings in Manchukuo compelled residents to share limited living spaces with strangers, having to deal with petty conflicts on a regular basis. Shao’s vivid recollections of the trivial yet frequent conflicts between him and his neighbours capture the essence of the miserable experiences of everyday urban life.

Apart from the all-too-common overly stingy neighbours, one could also understand why something as petty as the usage of coal and water was a genuine

⁷⁹ Yoon and Jin, trans, “Manzhouguo de “liulangzhe (nomad)” zai man chaoxian ren de shenghuo he rentong (“Nomad” of Manchukuo: Life and Identity of Koreans in Manchuria),” 88.

⁸⁰ Shao, Jutian. Personal Interview with Qiunan Li. Shenyang, 24 September 2015.

concern for most people living in such cramped environments. To begin with, Manchukuoan residential quarters were ill-supplied with –sometimes even deprived of – the most basic services. Modern sewage and water treatment connections were non-existent, making running water a luxury few people got to enjoy freely, which impelled the government authorities to set a strict quota of fewer than eight hours of running water per day.⁸¹ Most of the housing structures were built from wooden sheets, and to gain extra space, residents often added shabby inflammable planks and clapboards, subsequently causing frequent fires. In such highly dense residential areas, small accidents could lead to devastating disasters that in turn could potentially wipe out an entire neighbourhood. On a windy morning in May 1937 in the city of Yanji, a careless resident in Huibao hutong knocked over an oil lamp. The fire spread out over the block, and within an instant, 350 houses were burned down to ashes and rubble. The fire quickly invaded the alleyway before rampaging across the district, leaving the fire brigade's intervention useless as they could do nothing to help but to watch the fire slowly fade away. The accident resulted in two casualties and cumulated losses amounting to over a hundred thousand yuan.⁸² In the first half of 1940, the city of Dairen alone reported over 1,487 events of fire causing over 1,448 families to lose their homes, and over 9.5 million yuan of damage.⁸³ In a way, the hazardous living environment of the ordinary urban inhabitants not only showcases the inconceivably low health and safety standards for the average households,⁸⁴ but it also points to the impression that the regime was overwhelmed by the sudden growth of its urban population, and was forced to face its incapacity to supply urban Manchukuoans with the most basic amenities.

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the poor living conditions experienced by ordinary Manchukuoans were not a unique phenomenon. On the

⁸¹ *Binjiang Special Issue, SJSB*, 18 June 1940.

⁸² *Dairen Special Issue, SJSB*, 28 May 1937.

⁸³ *Hsinking Special Issue, SJSB*, 24 June 1940.

⁸⁴ For the issue of health see Chapter Five.

contrary, such precarity could almost be considered a norm for Chinese people during the war years. In Chongqing for example, ordinary dwellings were usually built with clapboards or bamboo frames, and were frequently exposed to fire hazards with no effective water supply system in place to tackle the problem.⁸⁵ Additionally, similar to how Manchukuo cities were saturated by mass migration, KMT's wartime capital of resistance also faced tremendous difficulties to supply its residents with adequate housing on top of the massive refugee flight from occupied China.⁸⁶ However, despite the underlying similarities, the ordinary experiences of Chongqing point at how people prioritized safety due to the frequent Japanese bombardments, whereas the experiences of Manchukuo were more specific to the context of life under occupation, where the search for comfort and the sense of "home" were an utmost concern.

⁸⁵ See for example, "Women from Poor Peasant Families," in *Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China*, Danke Li (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), pp. 83-93.

⁸⁶ Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 173.

4.4. Landlords, Tenants, and the Escalation of Housing Shortages

Even though the Manchukuo government was fully aware of the housing crisis that grew increasingly severe over the years, the authorities never prioritized solving the issue until it grew into a state-wide calamity. As a matter of fact, housing shortages were never officially recognized as a crisis per se, and were never considered as “shortages” either. They were only referred to as “difficulties” at most and much later in late 1939; the careful choice of wording can be interpreted as a means used by the government to downplay the particular issue of housing in the midst of the state-wide shortage of general goods that plagued the Manchukuo society discussed previously in Chapter Three. This also suggests that the authorities considered the urban housing issue to be only a temporary phenomenon stemming from modernization, believing that it would resolve itself with time. However, considering that even government representatives were having difficulties securing housing, the authorities’ official stance on the matter might seem contradictory. At the same time, the authorities may have chosen not to prioritize solving the housing “difficulties” given the fact that, despite the soaring rent prices across the cities, most urbanites managed to scrape a spot to live each day, which surely made the issue of lesser importance in the eyes of the government. However, while the authorities underestimated – or plainly ignored – how strenuous and loathsome the process of securing a place to live could be, the ordinary people, on the other hand, were faced with the complex reality of a tense housing market.

Arguably, just about every kind of housing fraud imaginable was practised in the urban regions of Manchukuo. Out-of-towners just arriving in the city who were in search of short to mid-term accommodation were often the easiest targets from which landlords could make money. This meant that anyone speaking without a local accent could potentially be subjected to a temporary price increase, often

twice the amount of the already exorbitant rent prices, which prospective tenants had no choice but to accept.⁸⁷ Taking advantage of the common people's inability to distinguish real excuses from false pretenses, a small change in the appellation "housing tax (*fang juan*)" to "home tax (*jia wu shui*)" put forward by the government in January 1938 was enough for the landlords to use as a pretext to increase rent prices. In truth, the amendments were only made to unify the existing tax types and to better control tax evasions, which had little to no impact on tenants and property owners.⁸⁸ In addition, unlike in contemporary societies where landlords are normally responsible for repair and maintenance works in their rental properties, Manchukuo tenants were unduly held responsible for the costs of maintenance of their accommodation, which more often than not, would be neglected, ending up in decrepit condition. A typical case was that of Qiao Deren and his wife who lived in No. 38 Zhenghongqi Hutong in the Bahumen area. In March 1936, the Qiao family mourned the death of their 9-year-old son who was crushed under a wall that had collapsed in their tenement yard. Instead of sending his condolences for the tragedy, the landlord demanded the family to pay for the expenses for the wall. "It is completely absurd and outrageous," said Qiao, "Not only does the landlord refuse to take responsibility, he is blaming us for letting our child play near the wall and causing the damage. I could never imagine anybody that is as evil and cruel as him."⁸⁹ When such tragedies occurred, local police officers were often called to act as mediators, and held regular meetings with the landlords. However, since law enforcers had no power over regulation and control over the rent prices nor over property owner's responsibilities, few landlords would take their warnings seriously.⁹⁰ Rather, resourceful landlords would frequently bribe the police into collusion, not only to turn a blind eye to the large number of complaints from the tenants, but also to assist them in the collection of rent payments, and in some cases, the forceful eviction of property occupiers failing to pay the demanded payments.

⁸⁷ *SJSB*, 7 July 1940.

⁸⁸ Ha'erbin shi difangzhi bianzuan weiyuan hui, *Haerbin Shizhi* (The Chronicle of Harbin), 67; *SJSB*, 9 August 1938.

⁸⁹ *Hsinking Special Issue*, *SJSB*, 18 March 1936.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Shan, a long-term resident of over eight years renting from Zhou Hui's two-story building on No. 21 Fude Street was one of the many recipients of such unfair treatment by his landlord, supported by corrupted police officers. In a failed attempt to collect a rent advance payment from Shan, an altercation broke out between Shan and Zhou, resulting in the two parties sharing a trip to the local Police Department on Yongle street. However, much to Shan's surprise, Patrol Officer Zhang Tianyi then on duty, showed no sympathy towards his situation, and instead began to interrogate him:

"... officer Zhang firmly believed Shan's statements to be complete nonsense. He then forced Shan to kneel on the floor and slapped him on the face several times. After Zhang finished venting his anger on Shan, he ordered Shan to leave, and to borrow money to pay the rent before moving out of the room."⁹¹

Unfortunately for Shan, his nightmare was only beginning. Two days after, on 7 September 1938, Officer Zhang paid Shan a follow-up surprise visit in his home to force him to pay the rent demanded by Zhou again. Realizing the connections and influential power Zhou had, Shan ended up begging Zhang to allow him a few more days for him to gather the money, as well as to find a new place to stay. Instead, because Zhang believed Shan was intentionally procrastinating and resisting his orders, Shan was kicked out onto the streets with nowhere to go and his belongings were confiscated as mortgage for the rent.⁹² To be sure, since landlords became accustomed to anxious tenants tacitly agreeing to pay whatever costly prices they were asking for, Shan's experience could be seen as a reflection of the general unescapable nightmarish conditions of having to rent a home in urban Manchukuo.

⁹¹ *SJSB*, 16 September 1938.

⁹² *Ibid.*

For many urban dwellers, “homelessness” was an all too familiar feeling reflecting the precariousness of their everyday lives. For some, the combination of greedy landlords and housing shortages meant that they had to live a nomadic-like lifestyle. Many were never able to really settle down for good and were always ready to pack up and find another place to stay for a short while until whimsical landlords came up with new excuses to increase the already extravagant rents. At some point, it became common for people to move into a property in the morning and check out before the evening, just to be able to briefly have a roof over their heads in-between their searches for more economic options. Such practices were so prevalent that the central post office in the city of Hsinking reported that in April 1940 alone, over 857 letters failed to be delivered due to the frequent relocation of addressees and for not having a new address for the mail to be forwarded to.⁹³ For some others, the shortage of housing meant that they would need to lodge successively at their relatives or friends’ homes, until they could find an affordable place of their own. Recalling his childhood memories of growing up in Fengtian with his mother, He Yonggui stated:

“... we were very poor because my mother could not find a proper job in the city, jobs were hard to come by. We also had no place to stay, and since my mother was originally from Shandong, we knew nobody [in Fengtian]. When my father left us, I and my mother wandered from door to door on the streets, begging for our neighbours to take us in or to give us some food.”⁹⁴

Every now and then, kind-hearted neighbours would show sympathy towards the mother and son pair and offer a corner in the hallway or kitchen with straw bits (*gan cao*) as beds for them to spend the night. During the day, He and his mother worked as servants for the host families, helping with cleaning and cooking chores,

⁹³ *SJSB*, 4 May 1940.

⁹⁴ He, Yonggui. Personal Interview with Qiunan Li. Beijing, 5 January 2017.

conducting all possible manual chores as a return for the shelter that had been offered to them.⁹⁵

The miserable conditions of urban living aroused countless concerns among an increasingly weary and disgruntled society. The growing pressure eventually prompted the Manchukuo government to make large-scale adjustments in an attempt to remedy its housing crisis. By 28 December 1939, Prime Minister Zhang Jinghui and the Minister of Economic Affairs Yu Jingyuan introduced a new Temporary Housing Rent Control Law (*Lin shi zhu zhai fang zu tong zhi fa*) under Order No. 349, Article 36 of the Constitutive Law. Starting from Hsinking, and later implemented to all provincial capitals across the regime, the Temporary Housing Rent Control Law was later extended to 28 metropolitan areas in Manchukuo in total, along with the creation of local housing review boards (*Fang zu shen cha wei yuan hui*) in each city. Under the new law, the general rent prices for housing were set to be based on regulated prices suggested by the local administrations and housing review boards in each city, which needed to be approved by the Ministry of Economic Affairs. In addition to overseeing rent prices, individuals caught violating the new law were to face a hefty penalty of 300 yuan as well as a risk of imprisonment.⁹⁶ In many ways, the implementation of the Temporary Housing Rent Control Law could be paralleled to the rationing system approach introduced earlier that year. However, as was detailed in Chapter Three, the rationing system only made sense because of the state-monopolized distribution scheme in place to support it. For the authorities to implement price regulations on housing even though they had no real control over distribution suggests that the Manchukuo government began to view accommodation more as a common commodity, neglecting the social functions of housing as a living space wherein people live, find rest and security.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Fengtian dongya shudian, *Manzhou diguo zuijin xiuzheng tongzhi faling huibian* (Compilation of the recently amended Legislations of the Manchukuo Empire) (Fengtian: dongya shudian, 1941), p. 491.

The new housing law instigated a state-wide peak of evictions with landlords hastening to throw out their tenants forcefully in fear that the government's interventions would substantially hinder the value of their properties. In Hsinking, it was reported that a few weeks before the official implementation date of the Rent Control Law, landlords on Dongsan, Dongsi and Yongchang Streets had colluded, and jointly began to evict their tenants, on the pretext of the necessity to retrieve the houses for their own personal use.⁹⁷ Similarly, in the city of Harbin, tenants living in the downtown area were forcefully driven out of their homes after receiving evasive excuses from their landlords who claimed they needed to conduct maintenance work or use the property for themselves. This resulted in a sharp increase of disputes with 59 cases filed in just under two weeks' time after the implementation of the Housing Rent Control Law.⁹⁸ Indeed, it may well be argued that the new law in place had little impact on the total demand for housing in general, but severely decreased the supply of available accommodation in the housing market. The "hoarding" behaviour of the landlords could be attributed to the deviation of housing from their main function of being a space for inhabitation to becoming an asset that offered financial security to property owners in face of the strict rent regulations and the ongoing shortage crisis.

Utilizing case studies of present-day metropolitan areas in the United Kingdom and the United States, political economists were able to coin the term "financialization of housing" to identify the risks of aggravating wealth inequality and the displacement of people within urban society.⁹⁹ Even though major cities in

⁹⁷ *Hsinking Special Issue, SJSB*, 6 March 1940.

⁹⁸ *Binjiang Special Issue, SJSB*, 24 December 1940

⁹⁹ See for example, Manuel B. Aalbers, *The Financialization of Housing: A political economy approach* (London: Routledge, 2016); David J. Madden and Peter Marcuse eds., *In Defense of Housing: The Politics of Crisis* (London: Verso Books, 2016); United Nations, General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the*

Manchukuo such as Fengtian and Hsinking at the time were nowhere near the scale of development of modern megalopolises such as London and New York, some parallels can still be made, especially with regards to the lingering impact of the commoditization of housing on urban residents. In March 1940, governmental buildings and old city offices in Fengtian were converted into temporary shelters that hosted over 1,000 homeless families who could not find an affordable place to live. As the shelters were already beyond their capacities, many more families were denied asylum, which often left them no other option but to sleep on the streets even during the coldest weather.¹⁰⁰ During the same month, teachers from Shuntian elementary school in Hsinking were reported to have collectively resigned from their jobs for the sole reason that they could not find a place to live in the city.¹⁰¹ Recognizing the issue as “a serious social problem for society” that has “affected the wellbeing of the nation”, Sun Qichang, the Minister of Civil Affairs placed great emphasis on how the acute housing shortages had generated negative impacts on all aspects of the society during a national governor meeting held in Hsinking. With regards to the occurrence of resignations, he stated:

“...It [housing] has become a hot topic in the capital but we never properly addressed it. I know about the hardships that the teachers are facing, but the occurrence of collective withdrawals brought great humiliation to the education sector... Two days ago, during the [school entrance exam] interview, one of the pupils answered that his father was a landlord when asked about his parent’s occupation. The examiner immediately asked the child if his father had a vacant room. On top of this, teachers also began to ask their students during class if any of their parents had spare rooms to rent, this is simply absurd and ridiculous!”¹⁰²

right to non-discrimination in this context, A/HRC/34/51 (18 January 2017), available from undocs.org/A/HRC/34/51.

¹⁰⁰ *SJSB*, 11 March 1940.

¹⁰¹ *SJSB*, 29 March 1940.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Indeed, being a landlord in Manchukuo was not only perceived as a well-respected full-time occupation, it was also a fearful one. Most often, tenants applying for an accommodation were required to present a lump sum of more than a full year's rent at once for their housing application to even be considered by the landlords. In order to remain in the property quarrel-free, a good amount of "royalty payments (*quan yi jin*)" usually had to be compensated to the landlords to make up for the low rent prices as regulated by the government.¹⁰³ In contrast to the ways in which influential individuals maintained a certain network of "friendships" with ration shop owners to obtain general goods, no amount of personal connections or power were sufficient to secure housing without having to pay the premium fees to the landlords. This was mainly due to the mechanism of personal connections, which functioned on the basis of acquiring continuous access to goods under the shortage of supplies. Although the Manchukuo government implemented rent regulations in the hope of keeping rent prices affordable, the root cause of the housing issue was the market's inability to respond to the growing demand. And even though the result was the same, the housing crisis began because of the overwhelming demands of an extraordinary surge of urban population prompted by rapid modernization.

On the other hand, the Manchukuo authorities announced new construction plans that were to be swiftly put into action to provide more residential building in the cities in the midst of the urban crisis. In an effort to alleviate housing pressures, a new design of "secure housing (*an quan zhu zhai*)" was brought forward and adopted by the government to be the new norm of state-owned affordable housing for all major cities in the regime. With a total living space of 15 square meters, the "secure housing" was designed to house up to six people, and featured a basic brick-heated bedroom and a shared bathroom.¹⁰⁴ For most eager potential tenants,

¹⁰³ Manzhou diguo xiehe hui, *Di shier hui quanguo lianhe xieyihui ti chu yian wenshu shuoming hui* (The 12th National Joint Council Briefing seminar on proposed motions) (Hsinking: Xiehe hui, 1944), p. 60.

¹⁰⁴ *SJSB*, 8 May 1939.

the concept of “secure housing” had a certain charm to it, as it provided a sharp contrast to the miserable living conditions and overcrowding of the common tenement yards, and perhaps most importantly, reasonable rent prices. But the reality differed from the promises made by the authorities as even during the planning stage, there was no explanation of how such ambitious projects could be achieved in face of the ongoing shortages.

Even so, a total of 10,000 secure housing was nonetheless announced for Hsinking and anticipated to be completed by the end of 1940, with a ratio of 7,000 housing to be allocated to government officials and 3,000 allocated to city residents.¹⁰⁵ The way the government imagined it to work was simple. In a fashion similar to today’s council housing, eligible citizens were required to apply and join a waiting list once the construction was done. However, despite the promises made to the public, the project was challenged before it had even started, due to the unavailability of civil construction materials, mainly because they were prioritized to support the needs of the war. Concrete pipes were thus replaced by wooden tubes and cement was replaced by low-quality plaster, a necessary compromise to meet the pre-established targets set by the government.¹⁰⁶ Despite the controversies and overall scepticism over the government’s decision to focus on quantity instead of quality, only 1,726 out of the initial plan to construct 10,000 houses were completed in time by 31 August 1940 due to the lack of materials. Predictably, the new housing were to be distributed in priority to members of 45 different government agencies and institutions in the city: 196 were allocated to the South Manchuria Railway Company, 200 to the Manchurian Colonization Corporation (*Manshu takushoku kosha*), 100 to the Daily Necessities Company (*Sheng huo bi xu pin hui she*) and the remaining ones to various other departments, leaving none for the disillusioned public applicants.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, with more than 40,000 families, the equivalent of approximately 200,000 citizens in the city were

¹⁰⁵ *SJSB*, 13 March 1940.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Hsinking Special Issue, *SJSB*, 31 August 1940.

unable to obtain any kind of housing in the beginning of December 1940, when the winter season was in full force. For this reason, government officials reluctantly admitted that the construction projects achieved thus far only represented “a drop in the bucket”, and that the people would “need to keep faith during such extraordinary circumstances and believe that the hardships [would] eventually end”.¹⁰⁸ Overall, it can be said that the concept of “secure housing” was the Manchukuo government’s response to its failing regulatory laws over the staggering rent prices in its urban areas. At the same time, it was not surprising for the authorities to prioritize such housing to accommodate their own personnel in the government, for no one in Manchukuo was spared from the constant pressures and restlessness generated by housing shortages.

¹⁰⁸ *SJSB*, 1 December 1940.

4.5. Conclusion

All in all, it can be said that the ordinary people's sense of "homelessness" was largely neglected by the authorities throughout the existence of the regime. The housing crisis first began to soar following the abnormal flow of asylum seekers from the countryside attempting to escape from the social turmoil and banditry issues in the early years of the puppet state. The Manchukuo government reorganized the countryside into clusters of defensive collective villages, supposedly to offer safer homes to peasants. Even though they were unwilling to abandon their native villages, the authorities left no choice to villagers but to follow their directives and to adjust to a new life of discomfort in housing that could hardly be called homes, all in the name of security. Indeed, for the peasants, life in the collective villages meant having to start over from scratch, with living standards being miserable for most. Albeit the government eventually got rid of banditry and restored security in the countryside, it was not to save peasants from the bandits' persecutions. Rather, the authorities were driven by the need to legitimize the regime, but also by the necessity to alleviate the burden of the cities being overcrowded by floods of rural migrants attempting to flee from bandits. In a way, peasants were comparable to pawns in the government's game – puppets that were passive receivers of mandatory change. And even though they did not wish for change and wanted instead to live their normal lives, peasants were forced into adapting to promises that did not always follow through.

On the other hand, "image" projects to showcase Manchukuo's achievements began to spring up all over the urban regions. Under the vision of urban planners, the old and disorganized cityscapes underwent a complete transformation, and were replaced by breath-taking governmental, financial and commercial buildings as well as boulevards and plazas that were considered to be magnificent works of art. However, as the metropolitan areas continued to expand,

the exceptional growth generated a boom in the regime's urban population, which resulted in a significant deficit of urban housing capacity that confined urban dwellers into cramped and miserable living environments. Ordinary urban Manchukuoans' quality of life can thus be said to have been rather low, as they had to live their everyday lives within uncomfortably confined and overcrowded spaces. Their situation contrasted sharply with the grand image of modernization that gave birth to spacious and imposing buildings decorating the cities. The appalling living conditions combined with the inadequate housing capacity eventually led the Manchukuo government to intervene in 1939 by regulating rent prices in every city across the state. However, in fear of losing a big portion of income, the authorities' direct intervention caused landlords to treat their properties as valuable commodities, which exacerbated the existing shortages as time went by. As such, urban residents whose housing depended on greedy landlords, witnessed a shift in their daily lives that incrementally became characterized by disruptions and relocations, with the only constant being the inability to settle down safely in a place to call home.

Finally, despite being achieved at the expense of its people, the authorities' enormous investments to modernize Manchukuo did have some positive effects. In the short run, it served the propaganda purpose that presented a positive image of the regime to fend off foreign scepticism. In the longer run, it laid down the foundation of development for many more years to come. With hindsight, it is difficult to ignore Manchukuo's phenomenal urban achievements and the long vision that urban planners had for the future. In today's Changchun (formerly Hsinking), Manchukuo-era boulevards and avenues continue to function as major traffic points, whereas the administrative and public architectural structures later transformed into hospitals and universities still emit a sense of awe compared to the Soviet-style buildings constructed in the subsequent years. Once the major trading port of the old Empire, Dairen became the model city of new China, providing valuable experiences of development for the tottering communist

leadership after the liberation.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, the industrial base in South Manchuria served as the People's Republic of China's economic powerhouse for several more decades, with some of the factories still operating to this day. However, while the impact of these positive legacies is undeniable, the ordinary experiences of Manchukuoans discussed in this chapter also pointed out that Japan's "developmental imperialism" in Manchuria was far from being an exceptional case. Despite the infrastructural and industrial efforts deployed in Manchukuo, the level of development achieved was in fact far less remarkable than that of the Japanese accomplishments in Taiwan.¹¹⁰ Indeed, historians and theorists have long argued that colonial development largely occurred to meet the needs of the colonising power rather than for the benefit of the colonised subjects. The example of ordinary Manchukuoans in this chapter, who at the time found themselves in a constant struggle to keep a roof above their heads, supports the idea that this was indeed the case in Japanese imperialism in Manchukuo.

¹⁰⁹ Christian A. Hess, "From colonial port to socialist metropolis: imperialist legacies and the making of 'New Dalian'", *Urban History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2011), pp. 373-390.

¹¹⁰ For a comparison between Japanese colonies see Anne Booth and Kent Deng, "Japanese Colonialism in Comparative Perspective", *Journal of World History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2017), pp. 61-98.

Chapter Five – Health and Hygiene

5.1. Introduction

When addressing issues related to health and hygiene in the colonies, historians of medicine have argued over the fact that although colonial agents brought public health measures into the colonies, they mainly brought new types of diseases. Previous scholarship also discussed how biomedicine and westernized health systems were often imposed upon indigenous societies without taking their existing health structures and cultural values into account.¹ In a way, both critiques can be applied to the case of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria. In spite of the ongoing debate regarding the Japanese military's association with the various epidemic outbreaks during wartime, the notorious deployment of biological weapons by Unit 731 under the guise of epidemic prevention in Harbin pointed towards the undeniable fact that atrocities were committed with the use of scientific biomedicine.² On the other hand, the colonial agents' dismissive view of indigenous practices of traditional medicine contributed to a conflictual relationship between the two. This often resulted in the colonized population being dismissed as "backwards" and "uncivilized" in the midst of Western medicine's claims of absolute superiority, which is at the core of this chapter.

¹ Andrew Cunningham and Bridie Andrews, "Introduction", in *Western medicine as contested knowledge*, eds., Andrew Cunningham and Bridie Andrews (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 2.

² For literature regarding Unit 731 see for example Peter Williams and David Wallace, *Unit 731: Japanese Army's Secret of Secrets* (London: Grafton, 1990); Sheldon Harris, *Factories of Death: Japanese Biological Warfare 1932-45 and the American cover-up* (London: Routledge, 1994).

It is therefore essential to look into the forceful implementation of westernized health concepts in Manchukuo, and how these impacted on ordinary people's everyday life. Since the ways in which the Japanese management of diseases within the Kwantung leased territory was of key importance to the formation of health concepts after the establishment of Manchukuo, this chapter begins with a brief overview of the outbreak of the Plague in 1910, and the various efforts adopted by the Japanese in efforts to contain it. This chapter then moves on to examine the various sanitation and disease control measures put forward by the Manchukuo authorities, highlighting the role of public health interventions and their effects on the everyday life of ordinary people. Next, this chapter turns to look at the formation of a modernized medical system that primarily aimed to drive out the prevalent practices of traditional Chinese medicine in the regime, a process that met with resistance from the people and ultimately resulted in a compromise. Lastly, this chapter examines the pathological abuse of opium in Manchukuo, focusing particularly on how the authorities' negligence of the people's well-being led to a sharp increase in the number of drug addicts, who, in turn, were further exploited by the regime. In essence, this chapter shows how the Manchukuo authorities repeatedly implemented changes in the name of progress, promising benefits for the people, while in reality, the ordinary masses were far from benefiting from the supposedly modernized public health system. On the contrary, these further disrupted the people's everyday lives, and reinforced the existing discriminatory practices by ostracizing ordinary Manchukuoans even more. The overall negative experiences of the ordinary people demonstrated how the Manchukuo authorities used the development of its health policies to pursue control over the daily lives of its subjects. Furthermore, this also enables us to have a better understanding of the effects of colonial modernisation with regard to public health.

5.2. The Outbreak of the Manchurian Plague

Manchuria was sparsely populated and under-developed for more than 200 years until the banning order³ was completely abolished by the Qing government in the late nineteenth century following the introduction of the Open Door Policy brought forward by the United States. With the influx of immigrants from China proper, Manchuria dramatically shifted from being a no man's land to a melting pot where various powers rubbed shoulders and competed for the region's rich resources and strategic interests in the Far East. Consequently, successive wars and spates of occupation followed, which also brought about the scourge of diseases to the peoples of the land. Five years after the Russo-Japanese War, the sudden outbreak of the Plague in Northern Manchuria in October 1910 took the region by surprise once again when it had barely recovered from the ruins of war. In the absence of the most basic knowledge about modern public sanitation and disease control, the Plague rapidly swept through the entire region as panicked civilians rushed to flee southwards along the railway lines. By May 1911, it was estimated that over 40,000 people had lost their lives to the pandemic.⁴ Despite the Qing government's efforts to manage the containment of the disease by appointing the young Cambridge educated Dr. Wu Lein-teh to take charge,⁵ the prevention means were still met with great resistance and hostility from the people who deemed methods such as cremation and other Western treatment methods to be too offensive to the traditional local customs.

³ Regarding Manchuria as "the land of the Dragon rising", the region was placed under strict reservation for the Manchurians (man zu) after the Qing conquered China and banned Han Chinese from accessing the lands. These banning policies later resulted in an effortless occupation by the Japanese forces during the First Sino-Japanese War that also generated sovereignty disputes between Qing and various powers, which eventually prompted the Qing government to completely lift the banning policy for the protection of its own interests.

⁴ "Zhongguo Dashiji [China Memorabilia]", *Dongfang Zazhi*, 1911, 8(1): 15.

⁵ Birdie Andrews, *The Making of Modern Chinese Medicine, 1850-1960* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), p. 1.

During the International Plague Conference held in Fengtian, the Qing government's inexperience and overall lack of preparedness in preventing the outbreak of the pandemic drew much criticism of its inability to contain the spread of the disease. In addition to lacking proper modern medical knowledge, the Qing officials' stubbornness in refusing to cooperate or even to receive any form of assistance was also heavily condemned by the Japanese. Pointing out the extent of their exasperation towards the officials' inflexibility, the Japanese criticized the Chinese government for "showing no sincerity and [for] severely obstructing the processes of prevention and management of the epidemic" in the region.⁶ Somehow, the Qing bureaucrats' reluctance to respond to the Japanese's demands can be understood as the Qing officials' expression of reservations about the potential further spread of Japanese influence into Northeast China. Such geopolitical considerations were evident as the Korean peninsula had just been annexed after a series of events involving the Japanese just two months prior to the outbreak of the Plague in Manchuria. These pessimistic views were not uncommon. In May 1910, Roger Sherman Greene, then acting as the Consul General of the United States in Harbin, wrote a letter in which he warns that the general panic provoked by the Plague could "easily become an excuse for Japanese and Russian aggression".⁷ Furthermore, in view of the recent acquisition of Port Arthur, Dairen, and the surrounding areas as trophies from the Russo-Japanese War, it was apparent that the Chinese administration was not fully confident regarding the future sovereignty of Manchuria.

⁶ Man shihui, *Manzhou kaifa sishinian shi* (40 Years of Development in Manchuria) Vol.2 (Yingkou: Internal release, 1988), p. 489; See also Bu Liping, *Public Health and the Modernization of China, 1865-2015* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 47-49.

⁷ Wang Xueliang, "1910 nian dongbei fasheng shuyi shi zhongmei yu ri'ejian de zhengzhi douzheng (The political struggle between China, United States and Japan during the 1910 Plague)", *Shehui kexue zhanxian*, Vol. 3 (1992), pp. 216-222.

Politics aside, the eradication of epidemics and preventive operations to contain contagious diseases had always been a lingering issue to tackle for the South Manchuria Railway Company (SMR), ever since its establishment in 1906. Even though the SMR's founding aspirations were to introduce a more advanced civilization to the people of Manchuria, early on, the Company was confronted with the task of protecting the health of tens of thousands of Japanese militia stationed nearby, as well as guaranteeing the well-being of pioneers and technical personnel flooding into the region from Japan. Eager to prove to the world that Japan was capable of governing colonies like its Western counterparts, the SMR began to invest significant resources into the development of modern medical and public sanitation systems in the leased territory despite the absence of profit and funding.⁸ In contrast to the Kwantung Army's initial proposal to manage the colony with brute force, inaugural SMR Director Goto Shinpei emphasized the necessity to construct modern hospitals, clinics, as well as medical research institutions. Coming from a similar Western educated background as Dr. Wu and drawing on his previous experiences as the Head of Civil Affairs in Taiwan, Goto was well aware of the importance of improving the well-being of the colonial subjects in order to justify the Japanese presence and influence in Northern China. Hence, led by long-term planning, SMR conducted a comprehensive survey recording the health profile of the population in the region. For the first time in history under its sanitation division, thorough investigations were conducted to learn about the endemic diseases, dietary habits, nutrition and physical fitness of the people.⁹ On top of that, various welfare and health relief programs were carried out, even in more remote areas. Benefits and free treatments were provided to the masses who suffered from poverty, unemployment, and disease.¹⁰ Moreover, numerous hospitals and sanitation facilities were established in major urban areas and along railway lines, including the new South Manchuria Railway hospital in Dairen, deemed to be "the

⁸ Gong Ruibo, "Ribei qinlue Zhongguo dongbei de weisheng zhimin jigou luekao (Research in Japan invading Northeast China's Health Colonial Institutions)", *Riben qinhua shi yanjiu*, Vol. 4 (2014), pp. 61-68.

⁹ Man shihui, *Manzhou kaifa sishinian shi* (40 Years of Development in Manchuria), 486.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 507.

best [medical facility] in East Asia”, that was supplied with a unparalleled variety of Western pharmaceuticals directly by the Japanese Army.¹¹ As such, it was estimated that by 1907, the 28 largest hospitals established by the SMR had reached a reception capacity for both inpatients and outpatients of approximately one to two million per year.¹² The deployment of these then advanced methods proved to be successful in preventing and controlling large-scale disease during the full outbreak of the Plague in the following years.

As soon as the pneumonic Plague emerged in 1910, emergency teams were immediately put together to treat patients and to prevent further spread of the disease.¹³ Pest control teams were established and dispatched into the streets wherein monitoring outposts were scattered all over to ensure the blockade of any individual, vehicle or goods from entering the leased territory.¹⁴ Despite the remonstrance of Chinese officials over the leadership of public health services, SMR hospital personnel and medical teams in Manchuria were assigned to adjacent neighbourhoods to disinfect and conduct regular check-ups and diagnoses. As the epidemic subsided in 1911, it was estimated that, including a direct donation of 155 thousand yen to the Chinese government, a total expenditure of 860 thousand yen was invested by the SMR in the region for the elimination of the Plague.¹⁵ These financial efforts were eventually reflected in the drop of recorded cases: compared to the over 50,000 cases discovered in the entire region, only 228 confirmed cases were reported in the leased territory.¹⁶ The SMR’s success in the case of the Plague not only contributed to containing the contagious disease, preventing further

¹¹ Ibid., p. 142.

¹² Shunsuke Tsurumi, *Goto Shinpei* (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 2005) p. 259.

¹³ Wang, “1910 nian dongbei fasheng shuyi shi zhongmei yu ri’ejian de zhengzhi douzheng (The political struggle between China, United States and Japan during the 1910 Plague)”, 216-222.

¹⁴ Wang Yuqin, “Ribei zhiminshiqi de dongbei yixue tongzhi (Medical control in Northeast China under Japanese colonization)”, *Shehui kexue zhanxian*, Vol. 8 (2015), pp. 114-119.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

ravages of the people's lives; it also became a placard directly promoting the modernization of health care services in Manchuria. Under Goto's doctrine of "cultural armament", a considerable amount of progress was accomplished towards the compartmentalization and initialization of various sanitation institutions as the natives' inherent concepts of health care also gradually shifted from being a personalized life-preserving and nourishment service¹⁷ only for elites, to public health and hygiene services that were available to all. As time went by, all such efforts proved to have laid the foundations for the modern medical and health services of Manchukuo.

¹⁷ The term "health" in the traditional Chinese concept refers to "yangsheng (nourishment)" and "baojian (longevity)", which differs from the western concept of health and hygiene.

5.3. Sanitation and Disease Control

After the establishment of Manchukuo, the Central Government and the Kwantung Army were immediately confronted with a series of major challenges regarding the matter of public health. Regardless of the success of the Japanese's management experiences of the relatively monophonic climate and circumstances of the Kwantung leased territory, such were certainly far too limited to be replicated in Manchuria, which was incomparably vast and far more populated. Realizing the magnitude of the task ahead from the beginning, the government attached importance to the development of a comprehensive healthcare system and to the implementation of corresponding policies. To promote new concepts advocating public health, the Manchukuo government used propaganda and education channels, introducing numerous measures to overturn the Manchukuoan masses' lack of hygienic habits and ways of living.

Without a doubt, constant chaos instigated by perennial wars prior to the Mukden incident caused the people of Manchuria to accumulate unhygienic habits, ingraining unsanitariness into the daily activities of the people. Such habits, along with the limited access to clean resources, squalid food staples, and unclean water inevitably developed into different infectious diseases that spread like wildfire among the people. The two most prominent illnesses were dysentery and typhoid fever, both of which were mainly transmitted through unclean food and beverages in urban regions.¹⁸ As the Manchukuo police depart summed up, "Before the founding of the nation, the rulers did not care about the people's health at all. Most of the Manchukuoans are illiterate to begin with, and they do not possess any knowledge or understanding regarding the importance of health care.... Especially

¹⁸ Wang Luo, *Jianming fangyixue* (Concise Epidemiology) (Hsinking: Manchuria Health Briefing Committee, 1942), p. 47, p. 126.

towards the purchase and sale of crudely made food staples.”¹⁹ Indeed, the association and the emphasis on the need for sanitation in the traditional diet of the people suggested a fundamentally different approach to the concept of health between the warlord regime and the Manchukuo authorities.

Affiliated to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Health Department swiftly proposed a number of suggestions to remedy the situation. In 1932, all local police authorities across the regime were called to enforce a new edict to be implemented in the name of epidemic prevention. As such, as soon as the summer season arrived, all vegetables and fruits internally produced and circulating within the region underwent compulsory disinfection and sterilization before they were allowed for consumption.²⁰ In the city of Yingkou, limited selling permits were issued daily to greengrocery vendors in marketplaces. At the same time, shoppers were encouraged to report any peddlers operating without a disinfection license to the local police department for investigation and punishments.²¹ On the other hand, Jilin Province, then the political centre of Manchukuo, issued a comprehensive ban to prohibit the sale of sorbet and of decaying fruits during the entire season because of the high humidity and frequent heatwaves.²² Expectedly, all such measures suddenly attempting to transform the Manchukuoans’ deeply ingrained dietary customs – regardless of how unhealthy these were – immediately met with opposition. Owing to the bad sanitary conditions and the general lack of economic capacity, shoddy and substandard food staples were often the only reliable source of food available to ordinary people during such times of martial law and curfews due to the political turmoil. The imposed disinfection regulations inevitably generated price rises, which was unacceptable for the already famished population of the regime.

¹⁹ Manzhouguo zhi’anbu jingwusi, *Manzhouguo Jingchashi* (The History of Manchukuo Police), 412.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *SJSB*, 6 July 1932.

²² *SJSB*, 26 July 1932.

As a consequence, the strong stance taken by the government towards the sterilization of food staples did not directly result in gaining effective controls of the spread of various infectious diseases in the state. On 25 June 1940, it was reported that in the city of Harbin alone, out of the total of 300 inpatients who were diagnosed with contagious diseases during the month, more than two-thirds had been infected due to being in contact with contaminated food staples or water.²³ In the city of Hsinking where disinfection routines were the strictest, 618 patients out of the total of 858 confirmed cases in 1938 were found to have been infected because of impurities found in various foods.²⁴ Evidently, the generally dirty and disorderly cooking spaces in kitchens and restaurants exacerbated the spread of diseases among the people. Ernst Cordes, a German journalist who visited Manchukuo in the 1930s, documented in detail one of his dining experiences with a hand rickshaw puller in Fengtian, wherein he wrote:

“[We went to an] extremely simple and shabby small wooden shed, I would imagine that the people who went there to eat were among the poorest in the city.... It was even hard to stand straight or to breathe properly inside. The restaurant was full of exhausted coolies who covered themselves in greasy and dirty rags. In front of them were wobbly wooden tables that shook and quavered whenever it was being used... I sat down on a crude wooden bench that was about 70cm in length and 20cm wide, with no arm or backrest, it was difficult to even keep balance while sitting on it.”²⁵

Despite the strong urge to leave, Cordes managed to overcome his nausea caused by the sordid surroundings and decided to stay. “I convinced myself that if four hundred million Chinese people can live, work and grow up in a smelly and dirty place like this, because this was a real living environment, why couldn’t I stay for a

²³ *SJSB*, 25 June 1940.

²⁴ Hsinking Public Office, *Xinjing tebieshi tongji nianbao* (Hsinking Statistical Yearly Report) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1938), p. 10.

²⁵ Cordes, *Das jüngste Kaiserreich*, 119.

few hours?”²⁶ As Cordes and his companion settled down at their table, he looked around in the restaurant, and noted:

“There was no electricity there, only a small oil lamp that was hung on the wall. There was no wallpaper or any flooring either. As a matter of fact, the floor consisted of hardened soil and rubbish stomped out by people over the years. Making loud noises, spitting on the ground, and even urinating along the walls was not taboo there, and it did not seem to affect the appetite of the others around. A large iron wok that was being used for cooking stood on top of a primitive clay stove that was built in the corner of the shed. One person was in charge of putting small twigs, wooden blocks and some small black, almost peanut-like mud balls into the fire while another was working the wok and serving food to the customers. Their off-putting appearances made me lose my appetite immediately, their dirtiness was like they had never taken a shower ever since the Great Wall of China was built.”²⁷

Despite having to hire a European doctor to cure his gastrointestinal discomfort the following day, Cordes nonetheless acknowledged that such an exclusive cultural episode became for him an eye-opening experience allowing him to grasp a sense of the reality of the life of the working poor in the city.

However, bad sanitation conditions were not only limited to small food stalls and makeshift diners. Even the most prestigious restaurants were not spared from criticism targeting the repugnance of the food cooked in insalubrious conditions. Tiancheng restaurant, a well-established fine diner located in Tomihisamachi, Dairen was frequently denounced by its customers for its “uneven” quality of dishes. Despite being critically acclaimed and enjoying the reputation of being “second to none in the city”, it was revealed that the food served to customers was cooked in abject conditions, with bugs and flies infesting the kitchen so frequently that even

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

cooks were no longer surprised at the sight of those pests. “Whenever the chefs were cooking, it was always a battle between them and the insects. It was all too common to find bugs mixed in dishes and plates”. As it was exposed, customers would sometimes find dead roaches in their food. Some other times, they would find that pork dishes were tainted with rice-like spots that looked like parasitic ovum. “It is just striking that the restaurant can still maintain their business like this.”²⁸ Without a doubt, if even Tiancheng, a supposedly high-end restaurant located in one of the most prosperous areas of the city, wherein the pool of consumers were mostly Japanese, managed to operate normally under such unsanitary conditions, more modest kitchens and restaurants were also certainly at least as insalubrious as Tiancheng.

As such, according to a survey conducted in 1944 that assessed the sanitation situation and living customs among the average Manchukuoan household across the regime, only 10 percent of all the families surveyed met the minimum hygiene standards.²⁹ To put it into context, the so-called “hygiene standards”, as specified by the health department, referred more precisely to the most basic requirements of cleanness in each household. These were measured by the amount of peculiar odours, as well as by evaluating the level of air circulation and brightness indoors. However, due to the climate, most households in Manchuria were designed with the intention to preserve heat in order to withstand the harsh winter season. Additionally, since the residents habitually kept the windows and doors shut at all times to prevent heat loss but also to ward off burglaries, the air inside the rooms was often pervaded with stenches that were blended with the smell of body odours, cigarette smoke and wall paint coatings.³⁰ The pungent smell trapped within closed doors, along with the overall bad sanitary

²⁸ Dairen Special Issue, *SJSB*, 6 October 1940.

²⁹ Liu Zuyin, *Manzhou nongye jingji gailun* (Introduction to Agricultural Economy of Manchuria) (Hsinking: Founding Nation Printing House, 1943), p. 463.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 466; See also Manchuria Situation and Information Office, *Manzhou Kuailan* (Quick Facts of Manchuria) (Hsinking: Manchuria Situation and Information Office, 1939), p. 29.

habits had raised serious concerns among the health personnel that participated in the survey, who argued that this could potentially cause permanent damage of eye irritation and even parasitic diseases for people living in such environments, and was particularly risky for infants and young children. Their worries were indeed well founded inasmuch as statistical reports published after the collapse of Manchukuo have shown that the incidence of intestinal ascariasis among Manchukuoan children and teenagers was over 40 percent on average. Cases of trachoma on the other hand, were found to be as high as 85 percent among the same groups.³¹

Beyond the insalubrious conditions of the bedrooms and the living room, it was also discovered that the cooking space – which was not always a separate kitchen area – was the most squalid of all the spaces in the average Manchukuoan's home. Indeed, during the investigation, it was found that cooking spaces that were damp and moist accounted for 28 percent while the ones without sufficient light or ventilation made up 64 percent of all the homes surveyed. Kitchens evaluated as dirty and infested with insects respectively accounted for 62 and 69 percent, whereas the casual disposal of sewage and kitchen waste composed over 72 percent of all the household surveyed.³² All such foul unhygienic habits accumulated over the decades were so strongly ingrained in the people's ways of living that their dirtiness and insalubrity had become their everyday normal. This was not only reflected in the people's unawareness of their own filth and states of living in untidy homes, it was also translated into the putrid use of latrines pits and toilets within households.

³¹ Heilongjiang Provincial Chronicle Compilation Committee, *Heilongjiang shengzhi weishengzhi* (Heilongjiang Chronicle, Health Chronicle) Vol.47 (Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1996), p. 99.

³² Liu, *Manzhou nongye jingji gailun* (Introduction to Agricultural Economy of Manchuria), 468.

It is interesting to note that despite its unprecedented comprehensiveness, the state-wide survey failed to provide a precise figure on the usage habits of lavatories among Manchukuo subjects. As the observers discovered during the investigation, this was primarily due to the fact that the vast majority of households in the regime were not even equipped with any proper toilets. Indeed, for over 92 percent of the surveyed households, outhouses with no fence or walls for privacy served as lavatories. And since only less than 20 percent of these were disinfected on a regular basis, the survey failed to find any toilets free from swarming maggots and flies. "In the countryside, it was quite frequent to see people discharge their feces in front or in the back of their houses," noted the report. "It does not end there; in every city that we came to visit, we would see ignorant people defecating along the streets, making the already dirty roads excessively filthy."³³ Perhaps the most detailed description of the living environment of the Manchukuoans came from the diary of Dugald Christie, a Scottish missionary who resided in Fengtian for more than thirty years before the Mukden incident:

"The houses of the common people defy all our laws of sanitation. The floors are either of earth or brick, and are on much the same level as the ground outside, or even lower... At one end of the room a small kitchen is partly partitioned off; here is the millet-stalk furnace, under a large pot, and the flues of the chimney pass back and forward inside the *kang* (brick bed), raising its surface to a comfortable heat which lasts for hours. If liberally fired twice or thrice a day when cooking the food, the warmth will linger in the bricks all the rest of the time; but the smoke of the millet-stalk fuel fills the apartment, making the eyes water and the throat smart. No attempt is made at keeping the whole place clean, nor at sweeping behind cupboards or in corners; it is considered sufficient if the *kang* is clean, and a great many houses are unspeakably dirty. The windows have paper instead of glass, allowing very insufficient light to penetrate. Few rooms have proper ceilings, and the dust and cobwebs of years hang about the roof-beams. The number of people living, eating, and sleeping in one room is excessive, and all these expectorate freely on the floor. The surroundings of the houses are also dirty and insanitary. Stagnant water is allowed to

³³ Ibid., p. 469.

accumulate and every kind of garbage and filth, dogs and pigs being the only scavengers.”³⁴

The Manchukuo government on the other hand, was no stranger to the unsanitary habits of its subjects. In the Daowai district of Harbin, it was reported in 1942 that excrement and general waste that had accumulated over the winter overflowed entire streets as the waste melted down to liquid in the spring season, which subsequently produced “tangy stench that assailed the nostrils”.³⁵ Such phenomena were not unique to the city of Harbin and stretched far across the regime. Similar instances were reported in major cities throughout the state, as feces and urines disposed on the streets were often described as “piling up to the height of a small mountain”, which would also constantly flutter and pollute the ambient air with horrendous smells that soon became synonyms to describe Manchukuoan residential areas.³⁶ However, despite the government’s efforts to maintain a high profile by implementing a series of pervasive economic policies that covered and impacted almost all aspects of the people’s daily lives over the years, the issue of personal hygiene and concepts of social morals and ethics were always an unsettled grey area pending the authorities’ regulation. This is not to say that the Manchukuoans were given a great amount of privacy regarding the way they chose to live their personal lives, but the widespread apathy and lethargy among the authorities indicated that such occurrences in Manchukuoan residential quarters did not need to be solved in an urgent manner, as long as it was controlled and did not spread beyond these very Manchukuoan residential quarters.

Indeed, it is arguable that the clear hygiene boundaries drawn by the authorities could be interpreted as an “enclavist” approach similar to the measures

³⁴ Dugald Christie, *Thirty Years in Moukden, 1883-1913 – Being the Experiences and Recollections of Dugald Christie, C.M.G.* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1914), p. 44.

³⁵ *SJSB*, 28 March 1942.

³⁶ *Heilongjiang Minbao*, 4 June 1942.

adopted in the concessions in Chinese treaty-ports to prioritize the protection of health and well-being of their own.³⁷ It was also evident that the Manchukuo government had clearly recognized how the formation of its public health policies would invite opposition and resentment given its intrusive nature into the everyday life of its population. To be sure, despite the need for disease control, a forceful implementation of high personal hygiene standards onto the population would not only have been impractical, it would have also hindered the influence of public health measures and the exercise of power over the people.³⁸ Essentially, the unsanitary images of the Manchukuoans were utilized by the Manchukuo government as a justifiable cause to intervene in the private matters of the ordinary people.

Historians have long argued about the ways in which the enforcement of modern colonial health policies were often, if not always, accompanied by mobilization and physical coercion.³⁹ In the case of Manchukuo, this could be seen through the implementation of regular spring and autumn wholesale cleansing campaigns in all urban neighbourhoods. Posing as voluntary to appeal to the public, the binary cleaning activities were in fact mandatory and required the participation and contribution of all urban Manchukuoan residents. For the majority, the cleaning events were initiated before the beginning of each spring and autumn seasons and were led by local police authorities in their respective jurisdictions. As the name suggests, the practice of spring cleaning usually consisted of a series of

³⁷ Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 254-284; Hu Cheng, "'bu weisheng' de huaren xingxiang: zhongwai jian de butong jiangshu – yi shanghai gonggong weisheng wei zhongxin de guan cha (1860-1911) (The Image of the "Unsanitary Chinese": Differing Narratives of Foreigners and Chinese – Observations Based on Hygiene in Shanghai, 1860-1911)", *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica*, vol. 56 (2007), pp. 1-43.

³⁸ H.W. Hill, "Personal vs. Public Hygiene", *American Journal of Public Hygiene*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (November 1908), pp. 382-384; See also David Arnold ed., *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

³⁹ Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*, 192.

cleaning activities ranging from the removal of general waste, dirt, and filth from the streets, sweeping homes, getting rid of excess construction materials, and every household was also compelled to purchase garbage and waste bins. Overall, these “voluntary” cleaning events mobilized all Manchukuoan residents for an average duration of seven days, often referred to as “the week-long event (*zhou jian*)”, wherein they were subdivided into cleaning units under the enforcement and supervision of the health police.⁴⁰

The concept of the health police was formed during the early days of the establishment of Manchukuo. With joint supervision and management from provincial governors, police chiefs, mayors and county magistrates, the health police division was established with the intention of disseminating and popularizing health concepts, the prevention of infectious diseases as well as the control and suppression of opium and illegal drugs in Manchukuo.⁴¹ Intrinsicly, the blurred and inexplicit affiliation to various government agencies resulted in a shirking of responsibility and a lack of funding dedicated to the maintenance of day to day operations, which eventually led to the restructuring of the entire division to the sole leadership of the Health Department, under the Ministry of Civil Affairs in January 1939.⁴² Ironically, during its existence, the health police was well known for its lethargy as well as for being untidy and unkempt. Short of funding even to supply officers with the most basic uniforms, health policers were left to wear dishevelled personal clothing with no formal tag or sign to display their identity or any indicator to prove their authority. As a result, much of the financial remediation came from the day to day extortions and bribes taken from the ordinary people. Such practices were particularly blatant during cleaning activities.

⁴⁰ Manzhouguo zhi'anbu jingwusi, *Manzhouguo Jingchashi* (The History of Manchukuo Police), 407.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

In general, extortions were executed by the health police nit-picking over minor faults during examinations. As a result, complaints were frequently formulated to denounce health police officers' abuse of authority and for coming up with excuses to fail the hygiene inspections in anticipation of bribery, if not for hefty penalties. "They [the health police] visited me one day and said that my home was not clean enough," stated a dejected citizen, "I made sure to clean to the best that I could, but when they came back again they found a strand of hair on the floor and declared that my home was dirty because of that, they were just cavilling at anything they could find."⁴³ And even though the people's patience was put to the test, all such captious nit-picking was largely tolerated by the government, insofar as the methods employed by the health police officers remained well within the boundaries of the vaguely expressed indications given by the local authorities. Indeed, with ambiguous descriptive terms such as "excessive" and "effluence" were adopted to describe the amount of mess or dirt tolerated along with the levels of cleanliness to be achieved, such inspection methods almost seemed to have been formulated intentionally by the decision makers to be equivocal.

However, the underlying reasons for such behaviour were rather straightforward. Due to the limited budget, the authorities saw the routine cleaning events as a great incentive to generate and promote the efficient functionalities of its own department to reach the set objectives. Since corruption was rampant in the government, receiving bribes in order to have work done almost became an unwritten norm. Furthermore, regardless of the actual hygiene and living conditions of the Manchukuoans, it was also crucial for the Japanese to prioritize state-wide safety and prevent any potential spreads of pandemics in the region. Indeed, the daily life of the Japanese living in Manchukuo, as well as their needs for everyday necessities, were inevitably highly dependent on the services of the people of Manchukuo. The frequent daily contacts and interactions made it unavoidable for

⁴³ Sun Shuqi, "weidalu kexueyuan gongzuo de huiyi (Memories of working in the continental academy of sciences)," in *Weiman wenhua* (Culture in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 685.

the potential spread of fatal infectious diseases such as cholera and tuberculosis, common within the Manchukuoan communities.

This was especially evident when it was found that the sickness rate among Japanese immigrants in Manchukuo was at least seven times higher compared to the Japanese living in mainland Japan. More precisely, the mortality rate among children was two times higher, and incidences of tuberculosis, dysentery, typhoid fever, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and smallpox were respectively 4 times, 19 times, 7 times, 5 times, 53 times and 120 times higher than in Japan. With the addition of immigrants who were forced to return to Japan because of illnesses or for being unable to adapt to the conditions that had caused the deaths of thousands more annually, it was deemed by Japanese medical professionals that tuberculosis and pneumonia, along with other various types of respiratory and infectious diseases, were “the most horrible maladies that [had] caused Manchuria to bear the stigma of being a land of filth and insalubrity.”⁴⁴ And yet, the number of Manchukuoans affected and perishing from all such diseases was far higher. On 24 June 1942, a random screening of sputum on the streets of Dairen was conducted by the Kwantung Army doctors, which revealed that over 14 percent of the total sample assayed contained *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* in areas with a higher concentration of Manchukuoans.⁴⁵ Furthermore, another study conducted in 1944 by physician Zhou Zikui later confirmed the prevalence of infectious diseases in the region. Using the Mantoux Test (PPD), Zhou was able to discover that 100 percent of the Manchukuoans living in the region were exposed to *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* at some point in their lives. “Some have advocated that the primary reason for the rampant spread of diseases is due to the extraordinary geographic location and climate [of Manchukuo] ... but that is not true,” concluded Zhou in his research, “The main reason still lays in the bad hygienic habits of the people. What is more, the local residents lack basic knowledge regarding the prevention of diseases. As a result, most of them are unable to take appropriate measures and

⁴⁴ *Dongfang Zazhi*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1935), p. 6.

⁴⁵ *SJSB*, 24 June 1942.

actions if a patient was discovered.”⁴⁶ Indeed, Manchukuoans had long been living unaware of their own filth, and the arrival of the Japanese hustled their routinely unsanitary way of living.

In spite of both the Manchukuo and the Japanese governments’ alarmist comments regarding the overall incidences among the Manchukuo people, it is worth noting that no exact figures or statistics, but only estimations of the number of patients were officially produced, largely due to false reports, unclear diagnoses, and concealments. Generally speaking, as a direct result of the bad sanitary habits and conditions, the demography of Manchukuo always maintained a reproduction profile with high birth and death rates, and low natural growth rate overall. In the province of Jilin for example, the death rate peaked at 20.6 percent during the establishment of the regime, reaching an average of 18.9 percent over the time period between 1932 to 1939.⁴⁷ Similarly, in Liaoning province, the crude death rate settled at 19.88 percent in 1936, with the County of Tieling alone registering a decimating mortality rate of 74.2 percent caused by an outbreak of multiple consecutive diseases, simultaneously surpassing its own population growth rate (74 percent) for the first time in the county’s history.⁴⁸ In comparison to the annual death rates of major countries in 1935, the corresponding death rate in Manchukuo was conspicuously high compared to the United States (10.9 percent), England and Wales (11.7 percent), Australia (9.5 percent), Germany (11.8 percent), Japan (12.5 percent), Italy (13.9 percent) which at the time was in the midst of the Second Italo-

⁴⁶ Zhou Zikui, “Jiehe zai manzhou (Tuberculosis in Manchuria)”, *Jiankang manzhou*, Vol. 7 (1944), p. 22.

⁴⁷ Jilin sheng difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui ed., *Jilin shengzhi renkou zhi* (Jilin Chronicle Population Chronicle) (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1992), vol. 5, p. 111.

⁴⁸ Liaoning sheng difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui ed., *Liaoning shengzhi renkou zhi* (Liaoning Chronicle Population Chronicle) (Shenyang: Liaoning minzu chubanshe, 2005), pp. 30, 45.

Ethiopian War,⁴⁹ and even the city of Shanghai in 1951 (14.2 percent) when its corresponding death rate was at its highest in decades.⁵⁰ Admittedly, regional improvements and progress were achieved, for Manchuria used to suffer from a much higher mortality rate of over 20 percent during the 1910s and 1920s. However, with the mortality rates still high, Japan's insistence on defining and presenting Manchukuo as an established regime that should be "one of the role models of East Asia" lacked in credibility.

Regardless, no one was more critical and aware of the need for epidemic prevention other than the Manchukuo government itself. More specifically, regular publicity campaigns and propaganda emphasizing the importance of pandemic prevention were conducted to raise awareness among the Manchukuoans, especially during the warmer seasons. In Hsinking, comprehensive teachings and information drills about how to perform seemingly basic daily household cleaning tasks were communicated and disseminated by the City Office, including how-tos on washing and cleaning clothing to regular reminders to shower daily.⁵¹ In addition to these, the authorities declared the first week of every month as the "rodent control week", during which citizens would be rewarded three *jiao* and a lottery ticket to win up to 1,000 yuan for every mouse corpse submitted to the authorities. "It does not matter what method is used to kill the mouse, or if it is dead or alive," as the city officials advertised, "we will not ask for any personal information, and we encourage everyone to participate."⁵² Driven by material rewards, such activities contributed greatly to the reduction of infectious diseases, as it was

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Bureau of the Census, Mortality Statistics 1935, Thirty-Sixth Annual Report* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), p. 4.

⁵⁰ Christian Henriot, *Scythe and the City: A Social History of Death in Shanghai* (California: Stanford University Press, 2016), p. 20.

⁵¹ *SJSB*, 11 July 1932.

⁵² *SJSB*, 2 April 1942.

reported that over 5,000 mice corpses had been brought to the local police stations in Fengtian in just under five days' time.⁵³

In rural areas, villagers were forced to watch health propaganda films wherein rats and flies were depicted as “the Yama from hell” and “the messengers of diseases”.⁵⁴ Village leaders were required to report any suspected cases of illnesses and deaths to their superiors in real time, and instructions on disease awareness were cleverly compiled into rhythmic jingles and songs.⁵⁵ Furthermore, routine medical treatment teams dispatched by the Manshu Medical University also coordinated voluntary check-ups and examinations for people living in more remote areas in the countryside during the summertime. With tempting posters and slogans offering “free treatments” and displaying catchphrases to “bring the dead back to life”, the self-funded treatment teams were well known among the villagers as free medicine was always issued to every patient, even if they were perfectly healthy.⁵⁶

All such efforts in attempting to contain the disease and avoid further spreading eventually paid off. All in all, only a few major epidemics were recorded to have taken the regime during its entire existence. The occurrence of the Plague each year from 1932 to 1937 only resulted in a mere 2,698 deaths in total, a number that was considered to be very low compared to the outbreak of the Plague in 1910.⁵⁷ As a matter of fact, the total incidence of all legal communicable diseases recognized by the government was all kept within a reasonable amount,

⁵³ *SJSB*, 23 August 1940.

⁵⁴ *Dairen Special Issue, SJSB*, 18 June 1937.

⁵⁵ Binjiang sheng bayan xian gongshu, *Jiazhang bidu* (Must read documents for Jiazhang) (Bayan: Bayan xian gongshu zongwuke, 1935), p. 32.

⁵⁶ Wang Yuqin, “‘Manzhou yike daxue’ zai neimenggu xunhui zhenliao jiqi shizhi (The reality of Manchuria Medical University touring medical teams in Inner Mongolia)”, *Dongbei Shidi*, Vol. 5 (2013), pp. 75-78.

⁵⁷ Manzhou diguo minsheng bu, *Minsheng nianjian* (Civil affairs yearbook) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1938), p. 97.

with only 192 cases of cholera, 4,459 cases of typhoid fever, 1,679 cases of smallpox, 4,583 cases of dysentery, 312 cases of diphtheria, 1,484 cases of scarlet fever and 426 cases of epidemic meningitis reported in 1935.⁵⁸ It is worth noting that the outbreak of the various infectious diseases over the years were strongly regional by nature, with the majority of cases recorded occurring in villages and counties with only a few incidences in cities nesting a much denser population.

As a matter of fact, only one confirmed case of the bubonic plague was ever reported in Hsinking from 1932 to 1937. The successful preventions could only be accredited to the efficacious measures adopted by the government in the face of the successive outbreaks. By dint of the authorities' intervention, cities nesting a population larger than 50,000 people were all well-equipped with disinfection and quarantine facilities staffed by trained personnel.⁵⁹ Often executed by force, urban residents were vaccinated in prevention against legally-recognized communicable diseases, under the supervision of local police forces. The authorities' vigorous efforts would also multiply whenever a new suspected case was discovered. In parallel, traffic control and regulations were conducted frequently and travellers who failed to provide proof of vaccination would often be denied from boarding public transportation or to enter or leave certain regions. Indeed, with the emphases on investigation, segregation, and disinfection, the prevention methods practised by the Japanese were acclaimed to be at least "on par with those implemented in most civilized countries".⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Guowuyuan minzheng bu, *Disanci minzheng nianbao* (Third annual report of civil affairs) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1937), p. 299.

⁵⁹ Manzhou diguo minsheng bu, *Minsheng nianjian* (Civil affairs yearbook) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1938), p. 97.

⁶⁰ A.R. Wellington, *Report on Conditions met with during the tour of the League of Nations Interchange of Health Officers* (Kuala Lumpur: Federated Malay States Government Printing Office, 1927), p. 52.

Predictably, such a remarkable track record was achieved at the detriment of Manchukuoan people who suffered in the process of the making of the new health system. Strict enforcement methods caused a rise of vigilance and more cautious attitudes often resulted in the wrongful segregation of patients, for the sake of precaution. “The mentioning of the epidemic prevention team alone was enough to make people nervous,” recalled by Cao Binghuan, “They would throw people into the quarantine wards regardless of the type of disease, even healthy people who only had cupping therapy marks on their heads and necks that looked like disease symptoms.”⁶¹ During the panic of the pneumonic plague outbreak in Siping in 1941 that resulted in the death of a merchant whose last name was Ma on Daodong street, resident Cao remembered the fear and disorder that followed:

“Specialists affiliated to the city department of health were dispatched to evaluate the situation. The majority of them were Japanese, with a few Manchukuoan medical graduates... One day a worker at the dye house on Daoli 5th street caught a minor ailment and was resting on the brick bed. Three of his co-workers were taking a nap as well, and one other was in a different room making lunch. The epidemic prevention team broke into the house and stubbornly insisted that the four workers on the bed were all plague patients, and the one that was cooking was inevitably infected and in the latent period. They were all sent to the quarantine zone [in Yaozhan]. As the isolation unit paid no regards to the life and death of the patients inside, four of the workers tried to escape by prying through the windows and jumping over the walls. Two of them got caught in the process by the Japanese and were beaten to death. The remaining two feared for their lives and did not dare to go back to the dye house and returned to Siping when the plague alarm was lifted the following year. Even though the one with illness did not have the plague, he still died in the quarantine unit as no one was there to treat or look after him.”⁶²

⁶¹ Cao Binghuan, “Siping shuyi liuxing yu fangyi (The spread and prevention of the plague in Siping),” in *Siping wenshi ziliao* (Cultural and Historical Data of Siping), ed., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi siping shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuan hui (Siping: Internal Release, 1988), p. 91.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

To be sure, the epidemic prevention team's suspicions were not completely unfounded but justified by the fact that the location of the dye house was close to the source where the Plague originated in Daoli. However, ironically, the brutal enforcement of the health department that generated a large number of unnecessary arrests and deaths often made the people view the prevention teams as "the bringers of plague (*wen shen*)" themselves.⁶³ Quarantine zones rapidly became a synonym for death row and often, the families of patients who did suffer from the Plague would rather conceal the truth than to send their beloved one to face certain death.

Equally violent and inhumane was the forced vaccinations activities each year. "The inoculations were supposed to be a good thing," protested Cao, "but it was conducted forcefully on the crossroads where the medical staff would pull people off the streets for injections. [Sometimes] no proof or registration [of the shots] were given and if you were unlucky enough you could get caught at the next checkpoint and be forced to take the shot again. They did not care about your health status, whether you were pregnant or disabled, or whether that would cause potential miscarriages or any future problems."⁶⁴ Such oppressive enforcement surely fed the ever-present fear and wariness of the people towards disease prevention as the years went by. Unlike how the Japanese managed the outbreak of the Plague in its Tianjin concession by "sanitizing" the Chinese,⁶⁵ it can be said that the public health measures implemented by the Manchukuo authorities were largely mismatched with the needs of the masses. The blind sanitizing that did not take account of the Manchukuoans as people with individual needs but as a broad sick ensemble to purify also shows that the government only extended its interests to the people when the well-being of its own was in jeopardy. Nevertheless, the prevention of pandemics proved to be successful, producing low incidence rates, which was more than enough to add to any government officials' political

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

⁶⁵ Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*, 267.

transcripts to advance in their careers, while in contrast, actually caring about the peoples' wellbeing was hardly convincing to even pass as an achievement.

5.4. Doctors, Charlatans and Treatments

On the administrative level, proactive measures to kick-start the region's non-functional medical system was added to the official agenda as early as 9 March 1932, along with the announcement of the bureaucratic system of the State Council. Under the authority of the Director of the Central Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Health Department was formally established and subdivided into the Healthcare Branch, Medical Treatment Branch, and Epidemic Prevention Branch. In the wake of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937, the medical system was further centralized and unified under the leadership of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. In addition, the Healthcare Branch was separated into the Education, Community and Health Sections in January 1940, while the additional Epidemic Prevention Division and Medical Equipment Division were established under the Health Section in August. In March 1945, the medical system of Manchukuo was expanded for the last time with the new establishments of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Branch, Public Welfare Branch, Nursing Branch and the Sanitation and Healthcare Branch.⁶⁶ Undeniably, the deteriorating effects of war were the main cause leading to frequent radical reforms to the system. However, the continued centralization of administrative power over the health system indicated more than just the strengthening of control over strategic materials.

The introduction of the medical system in Manchukuo was largely driven by previous experiences acquired from both the management of the Kwantung leased territory, and from the development of the health system in Japan. Influenced by Western systems, Japan had progressively adopted the system of private medical practitioners during the Meiji Restoration period. However, the overwhelming demand for logistics and usable manpower during the first Sino-Japanese War and

⁶⁶ Wang Yuqin, "Weimanzhouguo yiliao tongzhi yanjiu (A study on the medical control in bogus Manchukuo)", *Lantai shijie*, Vol. 4 (2015), pp. 34-35.

Russo-Japanese War rapidly made the Japanese government realize the drawbacks of its health system in the time of need. Indeed, as the availability of manpower within the population was largely determined by physical fitness, the relatively expensive healthcare prices stipulated by the Japanese medical association undoubtedly failed to meet the governments' needs for the overall improvement of the wellbeing of its people.

Meiji Japan's statist approach on national development was therefore revamped and reshaped into the "Nationalized Health (*guo jia wei sheng*)" in Manchuria through the SMR under Goto's leadership. For the Japanese reformers, Manchukuo was the perfect experimental field to put their ideas into practice without the obstruction of powerful opposing vested interest groups. Reflecting on the various shortcomings of the health system in Japan, a public health system was officially established in Manchukuo by 1933.⁶⁷ Contrary to the health system in Japan, the public health system of Manchukuo emphasized the popularization of non-profit state-owned medical institutions around the state. In order to achieve the goal of having at least "one public practitioner in each county", doctors appointed by the government were dispatched to each province with the approval of provincial governors. Under the supervision of local magistrates, public doctors not only had the responsibility to treat patients, they were also in charge of providing guidance and assistance to the health police to improve the overall local sanitation conditions. Being subsidized by the government, the prices charged to patients for treatment, surgery, and medicine were all strictly monitored and regulated by the local administrations to keep the expenditure as low as possible.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Narita Kazushi, "manzhouguo yiliao zhidu weilai de dongxiang (The future of the health system in Manchukuo)", *Minsei*, Vol. 1 (1938), p. 1.

⁶⁸ Manzhouguo minsheng bu, *Manzhouguo weisheng gaiyao* (An overview of Sanitation in Manchukuo) (Hsinking: Xingya yinshu guan, 1944), p. 10.

Even though reformers considered such progress to be an important achievement, the implementation of the new health system did not come without its own set of obstacles. Indeed, for a long time, the practice of traditional Chinese medicine had been a well-anchored norm for the people of Manchukuo to turn to when they needed to cure ailments and treat illnesses. Private traditional clinics were prevalent and established in both the countryside and in urban areas. Doctors would normally receive patients for a consultation and apply treatments, or even visit patients directly at their homes to deliver remedies. Since reformers were advocating for the generalization of Western medicine, traditional Chinese medicine practitioners in Manchukuo were inevitably looked down upon by Japanese physicians. Such disdain worsened as traditional Chinese medicine was widely criticized as it proved to be inefficient during the outbreak of the Plague in 1910. Not only were the treatments prescribed by Chinese medicine practitioners ineffective, they were also believed to have aggravated the spread of the disease and for being responsible for a mortality rate of over 90%.⁶⁹ Certainly, compared to the undeniable success in containing the spread of the Plague in the Kwantung leased territory through modern methods, the authorities perceived the practice of traditional medicine as an inferior medical system impeding on the progress of Manchuria. But for the people, on top of being treated as ignorant and backwards, the brutal plague-combating measures adopted by the Japanese and the focus on treating the disease rather than the patient often meant that they were forced to give up their loved ones to epidemic isolation centres and incinerate the deceased instead of burying their remains, without being given the chance to even bid farewell or to pay their respects.⁷⁰ As Mark Gamsa later argued, the Japanese efforts to control the Plague outbreak in North Manchuria “ranks among the most intrusive of Western-managed epidemics”, for which the scientific methods used in the process “would have been inconceivable [on a similar scale] in late tsarist Russia,

⁶⁹ Zhongguo yixue kexue yuan liuxing bingxue weishengwu xue yanjiu suo, *Zhongguo shuyi liuxing shi* (History of the Plague in China) (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chu ban she, 1973), p. 1680.

⁷⁰ Sean Hsiang-Lin Lei, *Neither Donkey nor Horse: Medicine in the Struggle over China's Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 43.

not to mention Western Europe.”⁷¹ This explains why the people of Manchuria did not waver in their faith in traditional Chinese medicine as the epidemics subsided. The Japanese, on the other hand, were equally adamant in seeking their utopian conception of the ideal health system for Manchukuo.

The government’s plan to reform the health system was clearly announced to the public when the authorities first attempted to formally abolish the practice of traditional medicine in the regime. On 27 June 1932, the first official proclamation to outlaw the practice of “superstitious treatments” and “witch doctors (*wu yi*)” was issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs under Health Order No. 313, which was carried out by the Fengtian City government, under Civil Order No. 67. “[The witch doctor’s] evil nature is fuelled by the bad habits of the ignorant and benighted people,” as the order stated. “When people get sick, they would rather put their faith in witch doctors instead of in the good medicine that will cure their diseases, which also caused the unfortunately high number of deaths.”⁷² Fostering its own saviour image to the people, the government vouched for the responsibility of eradicating both the bad habits of the people and the false practices of traditional medicine.

Certainly, the authorities’ ambiguous description of “witch doctors” could be interpreted in many different ways. Although superstition was often associated with conventional medicine in one way or another, traditional treatment methods carried out by Chinese doctors were largely based on theories of herbal therapy and acupuncture, which most people were more familiar with at the time. Regardless, to the authorities, traditional medicine was deemed to have no logical and scientific mechanism of action, and was not so different to the ones waving spades, singing and dancing, and believing that they are possessed by the god's power to treat

⁷¹ Mark Gamsa, “The Epidemics of Pneumonic Plague in Manchuria 1910-1911”, *Past and Present*, Vol. 190, No. 1 (2006), pp. 147-183.

⁷² *SJSB*, 29 June 1932.

people. Consequently, in 1932, the government of Manchukuo announced to the public that medical licenses would no longer be issued, and only those who already held a license were allowed to practice traditional Chinese medicine, though temporarily.⁷³ From that moment on began the purge of traditional Chinese medicine in the region. Following the prohibition of medical licenses, Chinese medicine was forced to change its appellation into “Han medicine”, whereas practitioners were to address themselves only as “Han doctors (*han yi*)” as instructed by the government in 1934.⁷⁴ It can be said that in doing so, the authorities attempted to downplay the influence of traditional medicine by devaluing it as a narrow “ethnic tradition” rather than a state-wide practice. On the other hand, designations such as “charlatans” or “quacks” were openly used by the officials when addressing Chinese physicians as an everyday reminder of their derogatory status to ensure the boundaries were clear between what was considered as “advanced” as opposed to what was “dragging back”.

Singling out traditional Chinese medicine practitioners did not end with only the use of discriminating slurs. To further bring their reputation down, Chinese physicians were typically depicted as “charlatans”, publicly presented and shamed ignorant deceivers with limited or no medical knowledge, barely literate frauds who feigned empathy only to make a fortune out of other people’s tragedy. “Homicide by quackery” was the dark humour preferred by the regime’s propaganda machine to refer to those who blindly put their lives into the hands of traditional Chinese doctors.⁷⁵ Cautionary stories of traditional medicine malpractice were disseminated to the people in a vivid manner. In Heilongjiang, Lü Shaoting’s wife, Lü Cheng suffered from sudden abdominal pain and requested Doctor Han Lishun from nearby Sanligangzi to come for treatment. The doctor insisted Lü to be treated with acupuncture instead of medicine. As the anxious couple agreed, Han inserted

⁷³ Tokutomi Masataka, *Manzhou jianguo duben* (Readings on the Foundings of Manchukuo) (Hsinking: manzhouguo tongxun she, 1940), p. 54.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ See for example, *Binjiang Special Issue, SJSB*, 3 July 1935.

several needles into Lü's abdomen, one of which unexpectedly broke in half with one half buried deep in Lü's stomach. After the doctor nervously tried to remove the needle from Lü's body, the poor woman was rushed to the SMR hospital where she received a small open surgery to locate the needle.⁷⁶ Similarly, in the nearby West street, Miss Zhao, who suffered from yellow sores was found to vomit blood after taking a dose of medicine prescribed to her by a traditional physician located in the north street of Lisandian. After a short battle with the illness, Miss Zhao passed away the same day whereas her husband insisted that the physician was responsible for her death by giving the wrong dose of medicine. The two parties of the dispute took their respective arguments to the police station, where the traditional physician was deemed to be guilty and was demanded by the police to cover the burial expenses as requested by the husband.⁷⁷ In the city of Yimianpo, Tofu shop owner Mr. Wang visited Liu Guiqin, the in-house physician of the local prestigious traditional pharmacy Tianfuhe to prescribe medicine for his three month old son who was suffering from diarrhoea. However, Wang's son soon started twitching uncontrollably after taking the medicine and died early in the next morning with his entire body covered in purple rashes. The supposedly prestigious doctor was later discovered to be an illiterate camel keeper who had somehow made his way into becoming a physician thanks to his eloquence and talent for deception.⁷⁸

What was intriguing about these stories was not only the focus on exploiting the "backwardness" of the traditional physicians under the description of the authorities, but also their similar traits to avoid responsibilities and their general lack of medical ethics. The sympathetic tone of the tales showed more than just focusing on the dominant features of "unscientific medicine" and the consequences as well as the sufferings of the ignorant people who choose to believe in such treatments, it also highlighted how even minor illnesses could be potentially life-

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *SJSB*, 21 June 1935.

threatening if they were to be put in the wrong hands. Indeed, as many of the Manchukuoan readers at the time would surely have realized, the conclusion was made to emphasize the superiority of western medicine, which if the protagonists in such stories had chosen, they would have a much happier ending.

The denouncing traditional Chinese medicine and the slandering of the practitioners reached its climax following the introduction of the Chinese Medicine Law (*Han yi fa*) in 1936. The newly established law further regulated the Chinese doctors' activity in the regime, stipulating that all traditional medicine practitioners were required to have studied Chinese medicine under official approval and to have passed the Chinese medical examinations organized by the local ministers in charge. Practitioners who failed to meet the regulations were subjected to a sentence of up to six months of imprisonment, or to a fine of up to 500 yuan.⁷⁹ Additionally, those who still practised medicine after the revocation of their licenses incurred a potential penalty of up to 300 yuan as well.⁸⁰ The introduction of the new law inevitably set off a new wave of finger pointing and accusations, as the paranoid atmosphere generated was becoming more and more evident.

The planned "purging" process achieved considerable success in Harbin in January 1937, with more than 27 traditional medicine practitioners being labelled as "charlatans" from the first day of the implementation of the Chinese Medicine Law, accounting for approximately ten percent of the total Chinese doctors operating in the city.⁸¹ Regardless of the mechanisms behind the selective process of determining who consisted of a "charlatan" and who was not, a sharp and rapid decline of doctors in the city eventually led to further overwork of the already strained health services. Consequently, with a ratio of 1 to 3143, the city of Harbin was already affected by the deficit of doctors to potential patients, which resulted

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ *Binjiang Special Issue, SJSB*, 13 January 1937.

⁸¹ *Binjiang Special Issue, SJSB*, 27 January 1937.

in an average of 6,000 deaths reported annually. By June, the mortality rate in the city almost tripled, recording 15,550 deaths annually, officially marking Harbin the city with the highest death rate in the world followed by Tokyo, New York, London, and Berlin.⁸²

The impact of the new law was equally devastating in the countryside, if not worse. The movement to eradicate “charlatans” drastically affected the social structure and interactions in the countryside, where most rural traditional doctors were farmers by nature and treated patients during idle seasons. Looking back at his life in the village, Gaochengzhai resident Liang Qibin recalled vivid memories of his father, a physician working to help the local people. Serving as his apprentice, Liang remembered the peaceful interactions his father had with the villagers.

“My father learned how to practice medicine from his father when he was 18 or 19 years old. There was no school, it was all passed down to us. He opened a pharmacy [in the village], and there was always a lot of people who came to him. Barely anyone paid him with money, the villagers always paid with grain, either right away or during the following harvesting season... It was silly to ask for money anyways; the people in the village did not possess much knowledge. When they caught a cold they would come to my father for help, and my father would tell them to drink more water, or to make some pepper and ginger soup and they will be fine. Sometimes my father will give some yellow lotus, wolfberry or peony that he harvested [in the nearby mountains] as anti-inflammatory medicine to them to treat their illnesses. There was no point in charging money for it, the villagers always gave my father some grain or food during festivals as a way to thank him, and it was enough.”⁸³

The widespread habit to barter goods for services in the countryside can be interpreted as one of the main obstacles to the promotion of the new concept of

⁸² *Binjiang Special Issue, SJSB*, 9 June 1937.

⁸³ Liang, Qibin. Personal Interview with Qiunan Li. Benxi, 1 November 2015.

public doctors to the vast rural population. However, even with the absence of traditional practitioners, many villagers still sustained their faith in folk prescriptions and remedies when they fell ill. Liang Guangshan, a villager in Liangjiacun, was one of them, and he recalled:

“[After 1936] there was no Chinese medicine and no Western medicine. If people got a serious illness, the only thing that they could do was to wait for it to heal by itself, if not then they could only die. There was no money [to go see public doctors] for treatments. Minor illnesses are easy to tend to. To treat a cut, we would use metal scraps from the burning boilers to apply to the wound. If we had a boil, we would go to the wood workshop to find some iron leaves to use as cuppings, and then slap the boil until it is soft. After that, we would use potato skins to apply on the boil to get rid of the toxins. To treat a stomach ache, we would heat up the tobacco leaves with the tobacco pipe and roll it very thin and wipe it in the belly button.”⁸⁴

Regardless of how ineffective or unscientific the remedies Liang used to overcome his illnesses were, never once had he or his fellow villagers considered the option to go see a public doctor. In addition, even though the medical expenses remained low and regulated to be as affordable as possible, most villagers regarded the expense as excessive. The average outpatient fee of one to two yuan was considered to be of better use purchasing the equivalent of 3.5 to 7 meters of fabric, or one to two *dou* of sorghum rice. With the average peasant in Manchukuo earning an average of four yuan per month, the costs involved to treat a minor illness at the public doctor’s represented too large a portion of their monthly income.⁸⁵ On the other hand, the negative response of the rural population can also be understood as form of resistance vis-à-vis the forceful replacement of their indigenous medical practices by Western medicine. In her case study of North India, Helen Lambert pointed out that the natives’ refusal to use beneficial biomedicine

⁸⁴ Liang, Guangshan. Personal Interview with Qiunan Li. Benxi, 28 October 2015.

⁸⁵ Zhang Zhanfu, “Wo suo liaojie de weiman jiutai yiwujie gaikuang (The situation of medical professions in Jiutai),” in *Weiman wenhua* (Culture in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 747.

could mainly be attributed to the claim of its absolute supremacy over indigenous treatment methods.⁸⁶ Similarly, it can be said that the exclusive status of Western medicine as the only form of treatment in Manchukuo provided an important illustration of how the authorities neglected the real needs of its people. Indeed, the rural population was satisfied with the practice of traditional medicine, which was both economical and easily accessible. However, the authorities thought otherwise.

Out of the countryside, the situation was a bit different, but still problematic. The abundance of medical supplies and well-trained personnel in every major city did not necessarily guarantee the systematic supplying of proper medical treatment to the Manchukuoans. Reflecting the hierarchical nature prevalent in all spheres of the Manchukuo society, hospitals were adept at drawing boundaries and giving privileges to the right people. The issue of ethnicity was essential in determining what kind of treatment one could receive, and whether they were to receive any at all. Fan Zuopeng, a graduate from the South Manchuria Railway Medical University, revealed his experience as an employee of the first municipal hospital in Hsinking.

“... The hospital was basically a Japanese hospital, the doctors were Japanese, nurses were Japanese and most of the patients who came here were all Japanese. Manchukuoan patients were unwelcome and looked down upon, so they would rather go to a private [traditional medicine] clinic than to come here, the ones who did come were usually the ones with severe illnesses that could not be treated anywhere else. Among them, the most undesired ones were the dirty and smelly coolies. The Japanese doctors would start frowning and wear their masks as soon as they entered the room. Dr. Hashimoto from internal medicine was a good example. Whenever he needed to diagnose a coolie he would stand far away from the patient and quickly use his stethoscope to complete his job. Afterwards he would always say to us ‘He had lice! Did you see that? It would be really bad to catch typhoid fever from him.’

⁸⁶ Helen Lambert, “Plural traditions? Folk therapeutics and ‘English’ medicine in Rajasthan” in *Western medicine as contested knowledge*, eds., Andrew Cunningham and Bridie Andrews, 191-211.

Sometimes he would even come to me and ask why all Manchukuoans had lice and wondered if I had lice as well.”⁸⁷

Since no Japanese doctors were willing to treat Manchukuoan patients, the hospital was forced to set up a special “Manchukuoan treatment room” fixed up with worn out furniture and equipment. And even though a Manchukuoan doctor was specifically hired as a replacement, nurses remained problematic, as the only official language used among the medical personnel was Japanese. “When they called out the names they would use the Japanese pronunciations, and nobody would know that they were being called” Fan stated, “when the patients collected their medicine, they were often clueless on how to take them as well because the personnel in charge of the dispensary was also Japanese.”⁸⁸ However, there was more. Due to “hygiene concerns”, no bedding was ever provided to inpatients staying in the Manchukuoan wards. And not only were they compelled to bring their own bedding, they were also in charge of maintaining the cleanliness of the wards. Bearing some resemblance to prison cells, Manchukuoan patient wards were generally overcrowded with 20 or more bunk beds, or two rows of slab beds, occupied at all times. A long table was placed at the centre of the room with two large basins on both ends to serve food.⁸⁹ Fan Yulin, a railway maintenance worker in Liaoyuan, had the first-hand experience of being hospitalized in Xi’an following a car accident while he was working on the tracks. Covered in blood and unconscious, Fan’s fellow workers rushed him to the nearby hospital when they saw that he was still breathing.

⁸⁷ Fan Zuopeng, “Cong weiman ‘xinjing’ yikedaxue fushuyiyuan kan weiman yiliao jigou (Viewing the Health System in Manchukuo through the affiliated hospital of Hsinking Medical University),” in *Weiman wenhua* (Culture in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 724.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Yang Qiming, “Manren bingdong (Manchukuoan wards),” in *Liaoyuan wenshiziliao* (Cultural and Historical Data of Liaoyuan), eds., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Liaoyuan shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui (Liaoyuan: Internal Release, 1989), p. 88.

“The wards were not so much different from warehouses. There was only a slab bed with nothing else inside. Helplessly I requested one of the workers to bring some bedding from my home so I could settle down. The room was unreasonably dirty. Used cotton balls from cleaning blood and pulse were spread all over the floor and the smell made me want to vomit.”⁹⁰

This was the first thing Fan recalled after being injected with drugs and waking up in the hospital with a severe head trauma. Shortly after, Fan’s fellow workers brought in surgical doctor Wu to come to attend to his wounds. However, the treatment procedure abruptly came to an end as the impatient doctor became annoyed at Fan’s constant moans and screams due to the pain. “Forget about it, just stay here, your injuries are not serious enough for you to die anyway.” Unable to receive the treatment and medicine he needed, Fan was discharged from the hospital with some wound dressings after a few days of agony. “My wounds did not get any better at the hospital, so I had to resort to a private clinic,” shared Fan, “I did not have a salary anymore so I had to borrow money to treat my injury, but at least I am healed.”⁹¹

Fan’s relatively optimistic attitude following undeniable neglect at the hospital was rather uncommon, as most Manchukuoans who had visited public hospitals generally shared disappointing experiences that resulted in sheer anger and resentment. A popular jingle that circulated among patients was “Hospital is the palace of hell, doctors determine life or death, if you got sick and come here, you will face devastation if not death”.⁹² Although this was an exaggerated

⁹⁰ Fan Yulin, “Yige gongren huanzhe zai yiyuan de zaoyu (Hospital experiences of a worker),” in *Liaoyuan wenshiziliao* (Cultural and Historical Data of Liaoyuan), eds., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Liaoyuan shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, 98.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Yang Qiming, “Manren bingdong (Manchukuoan wards),” in *Liaoyuan wenshiziliao* (Cultural and Historical Data of Liaoyuan), eds., Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Liaoyuan shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, 91;

statement of the various discriminations presented to them, the outburst of dissatisfactions were undoubtedly caused by the empty promises that were left unfulfilled after the introduction of the new medicine law. The government's emphasis on regulated treatment and medicine fees were to ensure the affordability of medical care in the state, which could be considered a success, to a certain extent. However, as the type of treatment or medicine to give to a patient were often determined by public doctors, it was inevitable for Western medicine practitioners to be tempted by the ingrained norms of corruption and personal favours that ran deep in Manchukuo society. As such, a patient's financial means and social status were very often the only "relevant" factors for doctors to determine which treatment to prescribe to the patient. Without material incentives, lower class labourers like Fan, who generally had a low salary, were managed and moved around like livestock by their bosses, and were bound to be dismissed and considered a waste of time.⁹³ On the other hand, the doctors' refusal to provide the proper treatments to the common patients shows how much Japanese doctors were unwilling to associate with the average Manchukuoans, and how far they were willing to go in order to maintain firm boundaries between them as those who they perceived as lower-class peoples. This suggests that although scientific medicine could be seen as the most intrusive element in the colonial society,⁹⁴ it was still "enclavist" by nature, with the primary concern being to provide benefits for the subjugators themselves.

Original Chinese text: 医院是座阎王殿，大夫掌管生死权，工人有病进了院，不死也得把身残。

⁹³ Regarding the treatment of labourers in Manchukuo see David Tucker, "Labor Policy and the Construction Industry in Manchukuo: Systems of Recruitment, Management, and Control," in *Asian Labor in the Wartime Japanese Empire: Unknown Histories*, ed., Paul H. Kratoska (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), pp. 25-60.

⁹⁴ David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 4; See also Sunil S. Amrith, *Decolonizing International Health: India and Southeast Asia, 1930-65* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 8.

One of the few individuals who questioned and challenged the State's decision to focus on quality over quantity was Zhang Jiyou, Chief of the Epidemic Section, operating under the Healthcare Division, who later became the dean of the Fourth Municipal Hospital in Hsinking. "The habitual trust of traditional medicine among the people could be traced back to thousands of years ago and it is wrong to eradicate it completely. [If it is fully banned] more than 20,000 practitioners will lose their jobs, let alone the tens of millions of the Manchukuo people who face the threats of illness with no available doctors there to treat them."⁹⁵ Zhang's statement could be considered to be against the broader anti-traditionalist current and sentiments, and to some extent, represented the unofficial opinions regarding the new law within the bureaucracy. Seldom voiced out loud, the unpredictable waves of purging of traditional doctors made every remaining Chinese medicine practitioner in the regime fear for their livelihoods. Those who managed to fulfil the demanding requirements enumerated by the government were placed under strict surveillance, with records of their personal information, date of birth, address and the date of approval all collected forcefully by local governments.⁹⁶ The idea behind this was simple enough. Even though the authorities heavily relied on denunciation as one of the most effective ways to control and lower the number of traditional physicians in the regime, instilling fear among the peoples and pressuring the traditional practitioners worked wonders in similar ways. Risking jail time and monetary penalties, many practitioners were forced to adopt a prudent attitude towards patients insofar as one small mistake would be enough to end their careers.

Notwithstanding the above, in the case of Manchukuo physicians, things took a turn for the better with the introduction of the Chinese Medicine Examination Order (*Han yi kao shi ling*) and the implementation rules of the Chinese Medicine Examination Order (*Han yi kao shi ling shi xing xi ze*) on 1 August 1941. Serving as

⁹⁵ Zhang Jiyou, "Juezhuan xia jieheyufang (Tuberculosis prevention during wartime)", *Jiankang manzhou*, Vol. 7 (1944), p. 12.

⁹⁶ Qian'an xian gongshu, *Qianan xian yiban zhuangkuang* (The General Situation of Qianan) (Qianan: Internal Release, 1936), p. 242.

an amendment to the Chinese Medicine Law of 1936, the new regulations extended the limitations on traditional practitioners by issuing new medical licenses to include physicians who studied Chinese medicine for at least five years and who passed the Chinese medicine examination organized by the authorities. Accordingly, Chinese medicine workshops were established across the state for a period of six months prior to the examinations to instruct applicants on basic Western medicine and clinical treatment knowledge.⁹⁷ The introduction of the two new laws could be seen as an appeasement policy to mediate the conceptual conflict between traditional and Western medicine in the regime. However, the worsening war in the Asia-Pacific theatre demanded the mobilization of more Western medicine doctors to serve in the frontlines, which inevitably created a bigger deficit of the availability of medical resources in Manchukuo.

However, from the government's perspective, such a compromise was without a doubt carried out reluctantly. This was further reflected in the new outline of the National Healthcare System (*Guo min yi liao zhi du gang yao*) promulgated in 1943 and the Medical Group Law (*Yi liao tuan ti fa*) introduced in 1944. The two laws ensured the integration of traditional practitioners into the State's non-profit public health system framework, which in turn allowed the government to re-shuffle them into publicized services that could be regulated by the State in a unified manner.⁹⁸ After a series of trial and error, the government's recognition of traditional medicine was eventually replaced by the suppression of traditional medicine practitioners' liberty to establish private clinics unless they followed the authorities' guidelines. Technically allowed to exist, the guidelines were so strict that, by 1945, the number of traditional physicians in Liaoning Province still witnessed a gradual decrease to 6,106, which is 1,478 less compared

⁹⁷ Liaoningsheng weisheng zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui ed., *Liaoningsheng weishengzhi* (Health Chronicle of Liaoning Province) (Shenyang: Liaoning guji chubanshe, 1997), p. 216.

⁹⁸ Manzhou diguo minsheng bu, *Minsheng nianjian* (Civil affairs yearbook) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1938), p. 97.

to the number of 7,584 in 1937.⁹⁹ David Arnold argued that the process of introducing biomedicine and normalizing its use in an “alien” society often required taking practical possibilities into consideration.¹⁰⁰ In line with Arnold’s argument, it could be said that the Manchukuo government’s compromise vis-à-vis the practice of traditional medicine after 1941 was mainly due to the ordinary people’s resistance towards the practice of a westernized public health system that was discriminatory by nature. Nevertheless, it is also important to specify that the government’s compromise was only possible because of the progress of the war, which pressured the Manchukuo authorities to lessen their medical commitment to the people.

Overall, as a result of the vigorous efforts of the Manchukuo government, the successful implementation of a comprehensive medical system was achieved for the first time in the region. Modern Western medicine concepts and practices developed tremendously by dint of the nationalization of the hospitals and health services across the regime. The effective deployment of medical personnel and the rational use of resources ensured an adequate health coverage and supply even during times of shortage. And apart from vials and packaging papers, the reserves of medicine in the hospitals in Hsinking were never found to be running out or close to being in short supply.¹⁰¹ Ironically, even though the public health system was reformed with the intention to provide accessible healthcare to all, only the privileged members of the society were able to fully enjoy its benefits. Indeed, comparing the life expectancy of Manchukuoans who merely averaged 36 years old by 1945 with the United States (65.58), United Kingdom (65.75), Japan (48.25),

⁹⁹ Liaoningsheng weisheng zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui ed., *Liaoningsheng weishengzhi* (Health Chronicle of Liaoning Province) (Shenyang: Liaoning guji chuban she, 1997), p. 216.

¹⁰⁰ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 293.

¹⁰¹ Fan Zuopeng, “Cong weiman ‘xinjing’ yikedaxue fushuyiyuan kan weiman yiliao jigou (Viewing the Health System in Manchukuo through the affiliated hospital of Hsinking Medical University),” in *Weiman wenhua* (Culture in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 736.

Taiwan (43.8), Korea (44.89) and China (37),¹⁰² the case of Manchukuo, a relatively peaceful regime that did not participate directly in any warfare,¹⁰³ was strikingly low.¹⁰⁴ Although little data nowadays can be found on the life expectancy of the people of Manchuria during the warlord regime, it is still safe to say that the overall life quality in Manchukuo was in important ways no better after 14 years of Japanese rule than in 1931, and noticeably lower than the formal colonies of Korea and Taiwan, let alone be compared to Japan itself. This would in return suggest that reforms to the public health system, which were placed at the expense of traditional Chinese medicine, had little if any positive impact on the public health situation overall.

¹⁰² United States and United Kingdom figures taken from 1945; Japan figures taken from 1935; Taiwan figures taken from 1940; Korea and China figures taken from 1942.

¹⁰³ With the noticeable exception of the Battle of Lake Khasan (Changkufeng incident) in 1938 between the Soviet Union and the Manchukuo and Japanese army. See Alvin D. Coox, *The Anatomy of a Small War: The Soviet-Japanese Struggle for Changkufeng/Khasan, 1938* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977).

¹⁰⁴ Roser, Max, "Life Expectancy." Ourworldindata.org. <https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy> (last accessed 30 March 2018).

5.5. Opium

In Manchukuo, opium was infamous for multiple reasons. Although nowadays, opium is understood as a devastating drug that led to the decline of the Qing dynasty, at that time, such considerations were relegated to the back of ordinary Manchukuoans' minds. Highly sought after in the region, opium made its way to the people through a variety of misleading designations and descriptions. The competition was fierce, and countless labels and brands were created and popularized by opium dens in attempt to attract new customers and retain habitual ones. Opium that was harvested from Jilin Province was most commonly referred to as "pine (*song*)", "bamboo (*zhu*)" and "plum (*mei*)", whereas opium harvested from Rehe Province in the west was -ironically- sold under the names of "blessing (*fu*)", "good fortune (*lu*)" and "longevity (*shou*)".¹⁰⁵ In addition, opium was popularly thought by Manchukuoans to hold medicinal properties able to cure ailments and illnesses. It was thus believed to be especially efficient against common colds, headaches, and to fight abdominal pain. A survey conducted by a health officer in Fengtian in 1942 showed that out of the 1,800 individuals surveyed, only 170 used opium as a recreational drug whilst the remaining were all motivated by its therapeutic efficacies.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, despite being held as an efficacious medicine by some, it was also commonly viewed as a main cause of death for many. A deprecating joke that circulated among drug addicts pointed out to the three benefits of being a drug user, "get poor faster, die faster and coffin bearers walk faster."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Gao Zuozhi, "Riwei fanyun dupin duhai haicheng renmin jishi (The reality of Japanese drug trafficking in Haicheng that inflicted harm to the people)," in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 438.

¹⁰⁶ *Jinzhou Special Issue, SJSB*, 15 July 1942.

¹⁰⁷ Wang Ying, "Shuangcheng dayangguan (Opium dens in Shuangcheng)," in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 455.

The Japanese and Manchukuo authorities did attempt to solve the opium problem, in which they were eventually successful to a certain degree. As one of the 12 signatory countries that took part in the International Opium Conventions in The Hague in 1912, 1925, and 1931, the Japanese government took a stance on the drug problem in Asia and vowed to contribute towards drug prohibition to the best of its abilities. Therefore, in the early years of the state, the entirety of Manchukuo indulging in opium represented a tarnished image the Japanese could not proudly showcase in front of the League of Nations. Naturally, following the seizure of Manchuria came the condemnation of the previous warlord administration policy on opium that resulted in the number of drug addicts in the region.¹⁰⁸ Even though the warlord administration in Manchuria did operate on a prohibition policy, its efficacy was limited as the region was torn by war. Indeed, drugs were instrumentalized as a form of political and economic capital, and were regarded as a form of hard currency the value of which was even more stable than the various monetary currencies issued in the region over the years.¹⁰⁹ Under such concerns, many attempts were made under the successive governments of both Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Xueliang. However, despite these efforts, only the partial suppression of the cultivation and usage of opium were reached in some provinces, such as in Jilin.¹¹⁰ Without a doubt, eradicating opium usage in Manchuria was far from being in the warlord government's priorities. The partial restriction on opium achieved little success in bringing down the total number of addicts in the region.¹¹¹ Although poppy fields and opium dens could be eradicated in one area, nothing really stopped drug addicts from travelling to the next one.

¹⁰⁸ Yi Zhengping, "'Zui'e zhi hua' zai dongbei ('The flower of sin' in the Northeast)", *Tuanjie*, Vol. 3 (2001), pp. 36-38.

¹⁰⁹ Lu Shouxin, "haerbin de yapian yandu (Opium in Harbin)," in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 445.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ John M. Jennings, *The Opium Empire: Japanese Imperialism and Drug Trafficking in Asia, 1895-1945* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), p. 79.

With tremendous success and experience in controlling the drug problem in Taiwan, the Japanese brought about a new plan for opium and drug regulation in Manchuria under the Opium Act (*Ya pian fa*) introduced in September 1932.¹¹² Under the law passed during the 53rd State Council meeting held in Hsinking, it was dictated under Article 3 that the purchase and production of opium and medicinal opium were to be executed by the State only, while the cultivation of the poppy without governmental approval was strictly prohibited.¹¹³ The semi-legal status of opium in the state granted by the government was followed by a brief explanation given by the officials.

“The policy, unlike the unsuccessful attempts of the former administration, does not completely prohibit smoking, as past experiences have shown that such an attempt only aggravates the situation, instead of affording any remedy. The government, therefore realizes that careful and gradual eradication of the practice are essential. This will naturally be a slow and painstaking process, but it provides the only realistic and practical solution to the opium problem.”¹¹⁴

The approbation of the authorities brought a new wave of poppy cultivation in the countryside. Driven by the huge potential profits of opium, during harvest seasons, poppy fields attracted tens of thousands of fortune seekers from nearby towns to partake in the rush for revenue. In Raohe County alone, more than 60,000 individuals were attracted to the “black gold rush” each year. During the harvesting times, addicts scrambled to barter commodities with the local farmers for opium, opening up temporary gambling houses, performing acrobatics and resorting to prostitution to get their hands on what they were craving for.¹¹⁵ In cities, opium

¹¹² Smith, *Intoxicating Manchuria*, 19; Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 22-5;

¹¹³ Manzhou diguo minsheng bu, *Minsheng nianjian* (Civil affairs yearbook) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1938), p. 100.

¹¹⁴ *Manchurian Monthly*, 20 February 1934.

¹¹⁵ Yang Chaohui and An Linhai, “Weiman shiqi de raohe yapian (Opium in Raohe during the bogus Manchukuo era),” in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 427.

circulated in a much more civilized and sophisticated manner. Euphemistically described as “blossom cloud houses (*hua yan guan*)”, private opium dens were operated under the approval of the authorities at the price of a small business license fee of 500 yuan to be remitted annually.¹¹⁶ Semi-finished opium was issued by the local monopoly bureaus and was processed and packaged carefully into small delicate bags categorized by their place of origin in the dens. The art of opium smoking was perfected to the extreme. Dens were known for their elegant designs and the fastidious use of various smoking tools. Swan lamps with silver shades, famous paintings, exquisite tables and chairs made out of alluring wood were the usual decorations preferred by the dens owners. Interiors were generally divided into common rooms and private single rooms, each staffed with experienced employees, or young and attractive waitresses for an extra fee, to help with the preparation of the opium paste prior to smoking. During evenings and holidays, the dens would witness a constant stream of customers, for not only the regular addicts, but also people who wanted to entertain their guests or to host informal business meetings.¹¹⁷

The bustling opium scene generated so much competition that it had become increasingly difficult to make a profit at all due to the number of competitors. By 1933, a total of 245 government-approved opium dens were founded in Dandong, a dramatic increase compared to the mere 20 dens that were in operation in 1931. Approximately 400 to 500 were registered in the city of Yingkou, and more than 750 were found in the downtown area alone in Fengtian.¹¹⁸ Produced in bulk by State-invested opium paste factories, the opium issued by the government was not

¹¹⁶ Yi, “Zui’e zhi hua” zai dongbei (“The flower of sin” in the Northeast)”, 36-38.

¹¹⁷ Meyer, *Life and Death in the Garden*, 145; For the history of the usage of opium see Peter Lee, *Opium Culture: The Art and Ritual of the Chinese Tradition* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 2006).

¹¹⁸ Li Sihan, *Zhanshi riben fandu yu ‘sanguang zuozhan’ yanjiu* (A study on Japan’s Drug Trafficking and the Three Alls policy during wartime) (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chuban she, 1999), p. 27.

reputed for its taste and quality. Indeed, the ways in which opium was processed in the drug dens were crucial to stand out from competition.

Adulterating opium with shredded tobacco leaves from cigarettes was one of the most common and economical way to boost the efficacy of the drug. After processing, the tobacco leaves were known to induce a special whiff of incense that would also increase the paste by size, giving a much smoother overall sensation for the users. Another popular method was to mix opium together with spirits to enhance the calm and sedated state, despite the dangers of causing respiratory arrest potentially leading to death. The most infamous method preferred by the users was the blending of heroin or morphine into the opium paste that could give a much bigger boost, which was described as “gold inside silver”.¹¹⁹

In order to purchase opium, addicts were required to be registered with the local police, and strict rules were set to determine how much drugs one could buy per diem. Without a doubt, there were still issues within the new model of opium regulation. Legally, government officials, teachers, doctors and students were not allowed to apply for a smoker’s permit, but it was common practice for the dens’ employees to set aside some of the rations to deal with unlicensed addicts or to sell on the black market, for extra money. By the end of 1935, a total number of 217,069 drug users were licensed and registered by the police. However, a conservative estimation of the total amount of drug addicts in the state reached over 1.11 million, accounting for approximately four percent of the entire population.¹²⁰ On the streets of Manchukuo, typical drug addicts could be easily identified by the dull and absent look on their faces, their pale skin and thin frame, the constant yawning, watery eyes and running noses. To support their overhead habits, pawning, thieving, begging and even selling their children were considered

¹¹⁹ Meyer, *Life and Death in the Garden*, 152.

¹²⁰ Guowuyuan minzheng bu, *Disanci minzheng nianbao* (Third annual report of civil affairs) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1937), p. 288.

as options. For 7.5 kilograms of crude opium, Tuanshanzi resident Jiang sold off his wife and daughters to a trafficker. Xie, an addict from the same town, forced his 15 years old daughter to become a prostitute to support his cravings. A drug abuser named Cui on the other hand, rented out his own wife to others for three years for the price of 1.5 kilograms of opium paste.¹²¹ Often unimaginable in today's society, such absurdities almost became a second nature among drug addicts. The uncontrollable desire for drugs not only led to the scattering of families, but often led to the addicts' own death as well.

“Where is Wang? How come he is not here today?”, “Wang has quit smoking.”, “Well, if he is not dead already he will eventually be back.”¹²² Such were the sarcastic yet casual conversations between an opium den owner and one of his regular customers in Haicheng. Apart from the steady supply of legalized drugs, the government provided little help towards addicts who were fighting their addictions. Despite the set objectives to gradually reduce the numbers over time, too few detoxification centres (*guan yan suo*) were established in the regime, and all of those had the capacity to accommodate around 4,000 to 5,000 addicts in total only.¹²³ The authorities' indifference towards the well-being of drug addicts eventually resulted in disintegrated scenes filled with putrid corpses adorning the streets and alleyways of the cityscape.

In the city of Harbin, 2,193 dead bodies devitalized by opium, heroin and morphine overdoses were found on the streets in the year of 1935 alone, averaging

¹²¹ Yang Chaohui and An Linhai, “Weiman shiqi de raohe yapian (Opium in Raohe during the bogus Manchukuo era),” in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 428.

¹²² Gao Zuozhi, “Riwei fanyun dupin duhai haicheng renmin jishi (The reality of Japanese drug trafficking in Haicheng that inflicted harm to the people),” in *Weiman shehui* (The Society in Bogus Manchukuo), ed., Sun Bang, 440.

¹²³ Guowuyuan Minzheng bu, *Disanci minzheng nianbao* (Third annual report of civil affairs) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1937), p. 288.

in around 200 deaths per month or five to six deaths daily.¹²⁴ In Dairen, deaths related to the use of recreational drugs accounted for 60 percent of the total annual death toll of approximately 19,000, for which it was discovered that heroin laced with lead powder was one of the main causes of deaths in the streets.¹²⁵ In the capital city, the municipal administration was forced to dispatch police officers to patrol the streets regularly in order to remove the increasing number of dead bodies in a timely manner. With only 474 corpses found in 1934, the number doubled in 1935 and reached almost 1,000 by November 1937. “The implementation of the Opium Law caused a good number of weak-willed citizens to covet to such temporary reliefs,” documented a worried Hsinking official, “an average of at least three corpses can be found on the streets daily, in all honesty, this has now become a major social issue.”¹²⁶

The lack of specific regulatory actions determined by the Manchukuo authorities took a sudden turn in 1937. A new policy prohibiting opium (*Duan jin ya pian fang ce yao gang*) was put into effect to replace the old Opium Act, limiting the cultivation of poppy fields to Rehe and Xing’an Province only. Correspondingly, with the intention to gradually eliminate the use of opium by 1946, the government also pledged to cure the addictions of all drug users in the state within ten years’ time.¹²⁷ The abrupt change in the regime’s stance towards opium could be attributed to the introduction of the Five-Year Industrial Development Plan in the same year. Indeed, even though the Manchukuo government was enjoying an annual income of approximately 10 million yuan gained from the semi-legalization of opium, the enormous number of insatiable drug addicts in the regime led the authorities to estimate that more than 180-million-yuan worth of opium were

¹²⁴ *SJSB*, 17 January 1937.

¹²⁵ *Dairen Special Issue, SJSB*, 14 January 1937.

¹²⁶ *Hsinking Special Issue, SJSB*, 25 January 1937.

¹²⁷ Manzhou chanye diaocha hui, *Manzhou guozheng zhidao zonghe* (Manchukuo Administration Guide) (Hsinking: Manzhou chanye diaocha hui, 1944), p. 22; See also Manzhou diguo minsheng bu, *Minsheng nianjian* (Civil affairs yearbook) (Hsinking: Internal Release, 1938), p. 101.

consumed.¹²⁸ The hefty sum invested into the industrial development plan suggested a high demand for available labourers within the regime, whereas the common drug addicts that were weak in their physical fitness, did not fit the required standards.

As a result, the number of opium dens in the state was slowly brought down by the authorities, with the ones that still remained in business nationalized by the government under the new monopoly system. On par with the policy promoting “one public practitioner in each county”, a similar “one rehabilitation centre in each county” was proposed and put into practice. Previous detoxification centres and relief shelters were reorganized into Recovery Living Institutions (*kang sheng yuan*), a primitive version of today’s drug rehabilitation clinics. However, unlike more contemporary drug rehabilitation clinics, such institutions operated in ways similar to labour camps and prisons. To begin with, unlicensed drug addicts were no longer tolerated by the State, and often faced compulsory detoxification once discovered by the police. Recovery Living Institutions were known for their harsh rules and punishments. “I felt like I was in jail, not allowed to talk, move, or to contact outside people or meet with family members.”, stated a former detained addict, “If any of the rules were broken, they [the staff] would beat us and curse at us, and not give us food nor allow us to sleep at night.”¹²⁹ In addition, a type of detoxification jab named “Eastern Light (*dong guang ji*) were forcibly given to the addicts, which was considered by the authorities as the “detox panacea” that could cure the addicts within a week of regular injections.

¹²⁸ Manchoukuo Yearbook Company, *The Manchoukuo Yearbook 1942* (Hsinking: The Manchoukuo Yearbook Company, 1942), p. 701; See also Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 87.

¹²⁹ Zhao Lang, “Ribei zai liaoning yapien zhengce yanjiu (1905-1945) (A study on the Japanese opium policy in Liaoning province (1905-1945))”, *Shehui kexue jikan*, Vol. 4 (2009), pp. 132-137.

More precisely, under the joint development of pharmacist Yamaguchi Kazuichi and Harbin Medical University researcher Shozan Masaru, the “Eastern Light” injection was advertised to have significant efficiency, with a treatment success rate of over 98 percent. Deemed as the latest and most innovative drug treatment medicine of the new era, the injection was further exported in large quantities to various Japanese occupied regions in China proper. “I know a lot of addicts are sitting on the fence and having doubts about the new medicine, but there is nothing to fear for.” stated Guan Tiantao, the former director of a rehabilitation clinic during a promotional speech in Tangshan, “Last year, the Northern China Drug Control Bureau requested 200 samples from Manchukuo for testing, and all participated patients came back with good results. This is the medicine that will bring addicts out of the darkness and into the light again.”¹³⁰ Slogans stressing on the harmfulness of drugs were displayed on the streets of Manchukuo, whereas propaganda events advocating the need to ban drugs were held regularly by the local administrations.¹³¹ Official letters were sent to schools to raise awareness among students, along with candy boxes printed with the images of smoking pipes being destroyed.¹³² Arguably, over 370,000 addicts in Manchukuo were reported to be “cured” between 1940 and 1941, and most of them with the ability to work were organized into labour teams to work in construction, factories and mines.¹³³

With regards to the Eastern Light injection pharmacological effects and chemical composition, little can be found nowadays to inform or even justify the reports and statements on the numbers of addicts officially claimed to have been “cured” by it. Both Norman Smith and Mark Driscoll have suggested that the key

¹³⁰ Ma Mozhen, *Zhongguo jindushi ziliao* (The History of Drug Control in China) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chuban she, 1998), p. 520.

¹³¹ *SJSB*, 10 March 1942.

¹³² *SJSB*, 27 March 1942; See also *SJSB*, 22 August 1942.

¹³³ “Jin Mingshi jianju Zhang Jinghui shixing yapian duhai zhengce de cailiao (Jin Mingshi’s report on Zhang Jinghui’s poisonous opium policies),” in *Weimanzhouguo de tongzhi yu neimu* (The inside Rule of Manchukuo), ed., Zhongyang dang’an guan, 62.

component in the injection consisted of amphetamine, a synthetic stimulant that was known for its short-term energy enhancing effects that allowed its users to combat fatigue.¹³⁴ Indeed, whether drug users, especially the ones who were addicted to opiates, could actually become highly functional physical labourers remains debatable, and it is without a doubt that the Manchukuoan addicts were devalued by the Japanese into what Driscoll defined as “disposable robots”.¹³⁵ Historians of medicine have argued how the development of biomedicine in colonies was usually driven by concerns about the well-being of the colonized subjects, mostly as a way to preserve, or to ensure the continuous reproduction of usable labourers.¹³⁶ On the other hand, it should be noted that Manchukuo’s opium policies bear strong resemblance to the ones adopted by the Kuomintang government throughout the 1920s. Both Manchukuo and Kuomintang governments heavily depended on the monopolization of the opium trade to generate an essential portion of their financial income, and both vowed to accomplish eradication targets that were unrealistic politically and economically.¹³⁷ But for the drug users in Manchukuo, who were not only denied by the authorities to receive the proper treatments and detoxification medicine to overcome their addictions, but instead were forced to be injected with another powerful and addictive drug to temporarily boost their efficiency to work as manual labourers, shed new light on the forceful and exploitative nature of the modernized public health system of Manchukuo, leaving the ordinary people’s fates at the mercy of their colonial masters.

¹³⁴ Smith, *Intoxicating Manchuria*, 148; Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque*, 303.

¹³⁵ Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque*, 309.

¹³⁶ Amrith, *Decolonizing International Health*, 8.

¹³⁷ Edward R. Slack, Jr., *Opium, State, and Society: China’s Narco-Economy and the Guomindang, 1924-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), pp. 63-85.

5.6. Conclusion

All in all, this chapter suggests that to some extent, the Manchukuo authorities instrumentalized the ordinary people's pressing issues and needs with regards to health and hygiene, not only because of the necessity to control the spread of diseases in the region, but also as an effective "tool of the empire". To begin with, that the authorities deployed relentless efforts to regulate public sanitation and resources to force vaccinations highlights how miserable the private hygiene standards of the ordinary people were. At the same time, the government's deliberate attempts to concentrate "unhealthy activities" within the Manchukuoan living environments falls in line with what Ruth Rogaski described as the creation of things that could "neither be seen nor smelled."¹³⁸ Although during its existence, the regime saw relatively few large epidemics, the average Manchukuoan barely witnessed any improvements to their health standards given the overall high death rate and low life expectancy. This further shows how public health measures were implemented with the intention to fulfil the sanitation needs of both the Manchukuo and Japanese authorities while barely extending its benefits to the ordinary people.

The introduction of a modern public health system came at the cost of well-established traditional Chinese medicine practices that had been dominant in the region for hundreds of years, which became the holy grail for denunciation and discrimination by the advocates of advanced Western medicine. In the process of transforming the images of "spade waving illiterate witch doctors" into "needle waving white-coated physicians" in the regime, traditional doctors were subjected to numerous incriminations, and the number of practitioners was strictly controlled and monitored by the Manchukuo government. However, the development of a scientific health system was met with both resistance and indifference from the

¹³⁸ Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*, 193.

people, who often found themselves denied any healthcare services altogether due to the sharp decrease of traditional physicians and the discriminating attitudes of public doctors.

The “war on drugs” on the other hand, was a completely different story. Despite being perceived as a notorious drug known for its devastating effects, opium was partially legalized by the Manchukuo authorities who were not shy in taking advantage of its value. As a direct consequence, the regime witnessed a sharp increase in the total number of drug addicts while at the same time, the government enjoyed a high income from taxing the drug. Following the introduction of the Five-Year Plan in 1937, the Manchukuo authorities took measures to control the growing drug addiction within the regime. Drug addicts were forcefully rushed into detoxification centres, injected with performance-enhancing substances, and transformed into disposable hard labourers. This effectively showcased how, within the context of modernized healthcare, the well-being of the ordinary people of Manchukuo was not only neglected to an exceptional degree, but also exploited to great lengths by the colonial authorities.

The ways in which health developments unfolded in Manchukuo add another layer of complexity to the understanding of Japanese imperialism. On the one hand, the clear hygienic boundaries drawn by the authorities to prioritise the well-beings of the colonisers, the lack of consideration to indigenous cultural practices, and the exploitation of its subjects discussed in this chapter were common features of colonial societies at the time. However, the role of the puppet state as testing grounds to experiment progressive health reforms to eventually implement in Japan’s home islands, along with the prevalent establishment of state-of-the-art healthcare institutions across Manchukuo on the other hand, were not features shared in other comparable colonial regimes. While the needs and well-beings of ordinary Manchukuoans were undoubtedly ignored to a great length, the few

outbreaks of major epidemics and a relatively low mortality rate can be considered as a noticeable achievement, especially with the backdrop of high crime rates and shortage issues that plagued the regime during its entire existence. It could indeed be said that there was some exceptionality to Japanese imperialism in Manchuria through the lenses of public health developments. The massive structural investments made to the development of a new public health system in Manchukuo suggest that the Japanese had a long-term vision for the puppet state, which hints to the fact that had it not been for Japan's sudden defeat in 1945, they were most likely intending to see the fruits of their efforts.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

Regardless of the underlying political motives, Manchukuo operated like many other states, with its own legal system accompanied by various governmental agencies that kept the regime's motor running until the final days of its existence. The ordinary people of the puppet state, who constantly found themselves navigating in a grey zone between compliance and resistance in order to survive, were harder to pass a verdict on. Incentives to accept the new state varied from one individual to the next. People who were in a position to exercise power that collaborated were generally motivated by either the pursuit of personal political or economic achievements, regardless of their actions being supportive or against the regime.¹ In contrast, the ordinary masses' everyday lives were filled with onerous chores and work the only purpose of which was to keep food on their tables and roofs over their heads. In their case, collaborating or not was far less of a concern insofar as they were mostly preoccupied by their own worries of daily survival.² Indeed, this thesis started with a series of questions in mind: In what ways did the specific political framework of Manchukuo have impact on ordinary people's daily lives? Did their living standards improve at all? Or perhaps the most important question in retrospect, was it all worth it in the end?

To answer these questions, this thesis thus explored and discussed various elements and aspects of the everyday life of ordinary people during the existence of Manchukuo. First and foremost, life in Manchukuo was filled with unpredictable events and predicaments that never permitted the people of Manchukuo to be in

¹ Dryburgh, "Rewriting Collaboration: China, Japan and the Self in the Diaries of Bai Jianwu," 689-714; See also Brook, *Collaboration*, 9; A good example in the case of Manchuria is Ma Zhanshan, a prominent resistance icon who surrendered himself to the Japanese but later on rebelled and fought against the Japanese in various regions in China.

² Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 226.

full control of their own fate. The early years of the regime were full of turbulences and circumstances that forced the authorities to make dramatic political manoeuvres to respond to the Japanese's eagerness to present the puppet state as an independent sovereign power to its international audience rather than just a titular one. Surely, the necessity for Japan to deploy such efforts in order to justify its presence in Manchukuo could be contested, which would indicate that the occupation of Manchuria aimed to accomplish a situation of autarky in anticipation of total war. Although this is indeed accurate, solely resorting to sheer force never really sufficed to sustain dominance, as even the most despotic and oppressive regimes need to rely on the cooperation of their subjects.³

Undoubtedly, rallying the Manchukuoans to adopt visions of Pan-Asianism and of a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere was essential to create hordes of willing collaborators. The youths of Manchukuo were thus one of the most vulnerable and malleable puppets the authorities chose to mold. Considerable efforts were put into establishing and fostering a new national consciousness. Carefully selected knowledge and information were instilled in the students in a sophisticated manner, stressing in the importance of Japan as the saviour of East Asians, and as the irreplaceable ally of Manchukuo. With hopes of the new generation becoming faithful and devoted servants to aid in Japan's cause, the youths were bestowed with a certain amount of social privileges. High school uniforms served as a symbol of social status, a visual representation to indicate superiority above others within Manchukuo society. In return, the authorities demanded absolute obedience from the youths, as any offensive behaviour that did not comply with their requirements was met with severe punishments.

However, this outward obedience did not mean that the youths held the Japanese in high regard. Much like the rest of the society, the youths were

³ Brook, *Collaboration*, 11.

generally passive in face of the repressive demands of the authorities, but yet were active in voicing their dissatisfaction in a subtle manner. Such resistance took shape in cleverly formed jingles, name calling, and truancy as the education system gradually revealed its militaristic nature that emphasized labouring activities. This thesis hence uncovers the making of the youths' "public selves" and "private selves" through this process and the parallels of their two different types of interchangeable behaviour. One that was sycophantic towards the Japanese, adopted as a necessity for survival, and another that came into play as time went by, that demonstrated the youths' resistance of and dissatisfaction with the Japanese.

Even though the schools overlooked the repeatedly voiced discontentment triggered by unequal treatment between the Manchukuoan students and their Japanese counterparts, venting political dissatisfaction, on the other hand, was absolutely not tolerated, and the Japanese authorities did not hesitate to demonstrate their will to punish anyone even remotely suspected of partaking in political opposition. The process of generating a new national consciousness meant that the old one had to be extirpated, and the authorities made sure that the boundaries were clear. The youths were therefore stripped of their identity as they were forced to take on new identities. At the same time, any mention of "being Chinese" and any association with their old identity resulted in criminal charges on the basis of being "Anti-Manchukuo and Japan". However, imposing new identities onto the youths only produced more insecurities, and forceful assimilation through the implementation of the Bushido spirit led to the creation of a new generation of bewildered students, an effort that was inevitably met with failure as the youths were worn down by the regime. By exploring the everyday life of the Manchukuo youths, this thesis showed why the Japanese ultimately failed to anchor a long-lasting sense of loyalty in the youths, which also served as a significant comparison to the cases of Korea and Taiwan that were then both part of Japan's formal empire.

On the other hand, the various economic problems that weighed down the daily lives of the people were undoubtedly the main concerns that increased dissatisfaction towards the regime, challenging its legitimacy and governance during its fourteen years of existence. Querulous yet cautious and relatively passive students were problematic, but manageable. However, the realities of severe shortages and famine were lingering issues that the Manchukuo government had to deal with head on. In a nutshell, people were living poorly, and in too many cases, far more poorly than before the Mukden incident. Along with the creation of Manchukuo came the growth of banditry in the countryside, which caused a great deficit in the supply of grain in the regime, since fearful peasants and farmers fled to cities. People were hungry, and the soaring prices affected all food staples, gradually becoming unaffordable for the masses, which largely worsened the already tense socio-economic situation.

Worse again, the disrupted social order generated further chaos in the fragile monetary system carried over from the warlord administration, forcing countless merchants throughout the state to go out of business. Since basic commodities were hard to come by, desperate Manchukuoans began acting out in consequence. It was not uncommon for the most obedient and submissive citizens to become radical risk takers and opportunists. Stealing, looting, robbing and committing fraud became essential survival skills that an increasing number of people developed and acquired regardless of the constant possibility of being caught and punished by law enforcers.

After a series of governmental reforms, the chaotic situation improved for a brief period, as businesses showed signs of being sustainable once again. However, the short age of economical rejuvenation was abruptly interrupted by the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, which shattered the ordinary people's hopes and dreams of future abundance. With the introduction of the rationing system, the

government urged its citizens to economize the limited resources at hand with promises of a more stable life in the future. The Manchukuoans, however, had already become familiar with the regime's official rhetorical discourse, and knew that the rationing of goods was in fact related to the ongoing shortages that had been plaguing the regime.

The everyday life of the Manchukuoan people was characterized by the constant entanglement and pressure to have access and to obtain goods, an overwhelming concern that weighed down the lives of the people continually until the collapse of the regime. And if scarcities were synonymous with hardships for the larger part of the Manchukuoans, for some others, shortages were seized as chances to build a fortune. State monopolization was met with more and more opportunists who were often individuals with the same risk-taking mentality that was honed from previous struggles. To be sure, since the rationing system introduced by the government could barely keep up to its own promises, no one was capable of surviving without bending or breaking at least a few rules.

The Manchukuo government attributed the flaws of its distribution and rationing systems to the "backwardness" of its subjects, condemning hoarders, speculators, and their customers altogether. However, for the majority of the Manchukuoans, personal favours, connections, and privileges had become so closely linked together with the distribution of rations that little room was left for them to obtain goods through the official channels. By examining the behaviour of the ordinary people during times of shortage, this thesis has shown the ways in which resistance were deployed as a tactic for the people to fulfil their most basic needs.

On top of dealing with shortages, the sense of being homeless was also an essential factor that contributed to the misery of life in Manchukuo. The raging issue of banditry in the countryside resulted in the forceful relocation of a considerable proportion of the rural population. Stressing the imperative to separate the peasants from the bandits, thousands of villagers were forced out of their native homes and placed into defensive collective villages in the name of safety. With the priority of withstanding any possible attacks from bandits, the defensive collective villages were designed to look and perform like fortresses, with strict surveillance and regulations put into effect to insulate the villagers from any “unnecessary” outside communications. Needless to say, life inside the collective villages was grim. Not only were the residents forced to build the fortresses, even the most basic construction materials were ill supplied causing the impoverished residents to have no choice but to live in primitive huts made out of straw, mud, and scraps of material left over from the construction of the gates and fences.

Such primitive sheds meant that most inhabitants often had to put up with dark, damp, cramped, and overall uncomfortable living spaces. Privacy, or any type of personal space was a luxury few could enjoy. Having to cook, eat or even sleep in common areas was not uncommon as the simply built shelters barely had enough space to accommodate an entire household. Amenities such as electricity and running water were non-existent in such facilities and due to the lack of heating and insulation, cold seasons were the hardest to endure.

Ironically, one way for the Manchukuo government to show off its glorious achievements to the citizens as well as to international audiences was through the extensive display of the newly constructed infrastructure and buildings ornamenting the roads of the capital while elsewhere, Manchukuoans were living in poor sheds. Indeed, the Manchukuo government presented itself as a modern, advanced and progressive entity with nation-building as its centrepiece. Starting

with Hsinking, the capital city, and Fengtian, the region's financial centre, the Manchukuo government transformed the chaotic cityscape by replacing old and disorganized structures by sublime high rise architecture, boulevards and public parks. Urban areas enjoyed phenomenal industrial development, which remains as one of the few substantial legacies of Manchukuo that are still visible in northeast China today.

Nevertheless, the rapid expansion was achieved at the expense of urban dwellers. Demolition projects in the old districts compelled the neighbourhoods' residents to relocate with limited or no compensation. Development in the cities increased the number of job opportunities, which attracted thousands of migrants from all over the region in hope of a better wage and life quality. Consequently, the growth of residents led to the over-saturation of urban housing capacities, often leaving the new arrivals at a loss with no place to stay.

Due to the shortage of housing, flats and houses were rearranged into multiple confined corners with paper thin walls to lodge as many tenants as possible, leaving tenants with no choice but to live in small spaces that were excessively crowded or noisy. The practice of converting communal areas into private spaces was common, and it often brought out quarrels and conflicts between neighbours that sometimes escalated gravely. The stressfulness of urban living was also exacerbated by various hazards that resulted from the high density in the residential quarters. Fire disasters repeatedly occurred owing to accidents and overall negligence, which often resulted in the burning down of entire streets and neighbourhoods considering the lack of modern sewer facilities.

In addition, a variety of scams and frauds were practiced by landlords in the metropolises. Tenants were required to pay rents at unreasonable prices on top of

unjustified but skyrocketing premium fees and tips. Moreover, despite the progress of modernization since the mid-1930s, new housing construction programs were considered to be utterly inadequate. With the priority to fuel Japan's war, the number of state-led housing construction projects were insignificant compared to the enormous urban housing needs. Rather than exploring homelessness *per se* in Manchukuo, this thesis looked into a new sense of "homelessness" that existed among the Manchukuoans who had no place to call home, since they were always on the move. This thesis emphasizes how the modernization of the regime came at the cost of its people, which resulted in a decrease of their living standards.

To some extent, it can be said that diseases were the only scourge that affected all strata of the population indiscriminately. As the region had already been heavily battered by the spreads of epidemics in the past, the Manchukuo authorities quickly realized the importance of public health and disease control. The government's urgency and commitment to improving the health system and preventing large scale outbreaks and spreads were reflected in the implementation of multiple measures, aiming to improve the regime's overall urban sanitation conditions. This was especially clear in the authorities' attempt to reduce the amount of filth on the streets within Manchukuoan quarters. In addition, urban dwellers were also mobilized to partake in mandatory cleaning events under the supervision of the police department. The uneasiness associated with the likely consequences of potential pandemic outbreaks kept the government on its toes, which resulted in the wrongful segregation and mistreatment of suspected patients. However, even though it came at the cost of ordinary people, the authorities' extreme methods to reform the public health system were eventually fruitful. With epidemics consistently kept under control, significant improvements were achieved for the first time in the history of Manchuria.

For a long time, Manchuria has been regarded as the ideal testing ground for Japanese policymakers to try out various socio-political ideas and experiments.⁴ The successful implementation and management of a new modernized public health system in Manchukuo was crucial for the Japanese reformers who lacked the political capital to promote amendments to the healthcare system in Japan. For the Manchukuo authorities, this meant having to start from scratch, which necessitated getting rid of the old system.

Traditional Chinese medicine practitioners were among the first to bear the brunt of the reforms that promoted progress and modernization. Due to their poor performance during previous epidemic outbreaks, it was not difficult for the Japanese authorities to justify a *casus bello* against traditional medicine. They were firm believers in Western medicine, so traditional medicine physicians in the state were demonized by the Manchukuo government. Denunciations were made via official statements. Cases of malpractice related to traditional doctors were highlighted in magazines and newspapers, often with a contemptuous tone that reflected the authorities' stance. Laws to restrict Chinese medicine were eventually introduced in 1936, which consequently brought the total number down as the state-organized terror became unbearable for traditional practitioners all over the regime.

Shifting to a Westernized medical system was met with great resistance from the people. At the same time, the decrease of accessible medical services led many to revert to relying on folk remedies and prescriptions. Contrary to the utopian vision of the government, the prohibition of traditional medicine did not necessarily make Western medicine more appealing to its citizens. Although regulated by the state, medical resources and fees under the nationalized health system were in reality often determined by privilege and social hierarchy. Prejudice

⁴ Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 183.

and animosity were the norm when it came to dealing with the average Manchukuoan patient. Indeed, few doctors were willing to waste their time and resources to diagnose a treatment or prescribe medicine that patients would not be able to afford.

On the other hand, the popular use of opium in the regime was considered to be a moral issue to the Japanese, but a common supplement to the Manchukuoans. The Manchukuo authorities took the situation to its advantage by partially legalizing the use of opium as a way to increase its revenue, resulting in opium dens around the regime flourishing under the acquiescence of the puppet state's rulers.

The art of smoking was perfected. Mass produced opium paste was supplied at a steady rate from Japanese factories on a daily basis. And even though addicts were required to apply for a smoking permit to obtain their fix, it also became common practice for opium dens to deal under the table with unregistered addicts, which in turn contributed to the sharp growth of drug addicts in the regime. By the mid to late 1930s, drug-related issues had become more serious than they had ever been in Manchukuo society, accounting for more street deaths in total than the authorities were willing to acknowledge.

Eventually, the tolerance of opium and drug use was put to a halt following the introduction of the Five-Year Industrial Development Plan in 1937 that called for a high supply of workers. Subsequently, drug addicts were arrested in large numbers and placed in newly established detoxification centres throughout the regime. Without being given the proper treatments to overcome their addictions, drug addicts were instead forcefully injected with stimulants and transformed into physical labourers to meet the regime's demands. The analysis of the overall

impacts of the numerous measures implemented by the Manchukuo government reveals the exploitative nature of colonial healthcare.

All in all, this thesis demonstrated that life in Manchukuo was full of uncertainties, of seemingly arbitrary yet disastrous events, state-organized violence, and punishments. These contextual elements stimulated the passivity in the mindsets of the ordinary people of Manchukuo in face of the changes that were imposed upon them. For a regime that appointed itself to be in charge of education, the dislocation and relocation of people, as the sole distributor of commodities, rations, materials, services, medical resources, and served as the region's biggest drug dealer, it is hard for the ordinary people not to become the compliant citizens that the regime wanted them to be. Passivity generated obedience, not active resistance against the authoritarian power that had the ability to determine the fates of the people it dominated. Superficially complying with the regime's agenda did not lead to an improvement in life quality for ordinary Manchukuoans, but their passive mentalities of "waiting things out" and believing that "this would pass" certainly did not make the everyday life in Manchukuo any worse than it already was.

One way to conceptualize the "caretaker" role of the Manchukuo government towards its subjects is through Sheila Fitzpatrick's illustration of Stalin's Russia in the 1930s.⁵ In essence, the Manchukuo society could be viewed as a penitentiary, an enclosed environment with its own set of disciplinary rules. The behaviours of the Manchukuoans, or prisoners of the institution, mirrored their fear of the authorities. An uncrossable line separated the privileged and the ordinary people, marking the difference between the rulers and their subjects, or in this metaphor, the prison guards and the prisoners. Constantly being on the receiving end of punishments and repeated sufferings inevitably caused discontentment and

⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 226.

animosity among the prisoners. At the same time, prisoners could be tempted to fall for the illusion that it was only logical for them to succumb to the system instead of attempting to fight against it actively.

In contrast with the ordinary people's passive stance vis-à-vis the various implementation of social policies and guidelines that were forced onto them by the regime, the masses were seldom passive when expressing resistance whenever the government failed to properly assume its role as a "caretaker". As was suggested in this thesis, the ordinary people's resistance emerged as an alternative tactic, a last resort when normal means to comply with the regime failed to make ends meet. This could also be seen as a way for the powerless ordinary people to gain some leverage when renegotiating their terms for compliance with the Manchukuo government. Indeed, historians have long argued that the needs of individual survival could be perceived as a justifiable cause for one to accommodate the enemy.⁶ Through the examination of the everyday lives of the ordinary people of Manchukuo, this thesis shed light on the complexity of ordinary life under occupation, and showed how choices could be made when no choices were given. It also uncovers the ways in which the voices of dissatisfaction, which projected an unignorable amount of power, could make their way to the government's ears, even though the authorities considered its subjects to be voiceless.

In the end, to evaluate whether compliance or resistance was worth the effort for the ordinary people, it is essential to refer back to the primary reasons why the people adjusted their behaviours when they first encountered foreign invading powers that took over their everyday routines. In fact, the ordinary people were mainly driven by their will to survive, which translated into appreciating and rebelling against the education system, obtaining goods legally and illegally,

⁶ Lo Jiu-Jung, "Survival as Justification for Collaboration, 1937-1945," in *Chinese Collaboration with Japan, 1932-1945: The Limits of Accommodation*, eds., David P. Barrett and Larry N. Shyu (California: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 116- 134.

sustaining through hardships, overcoming shortages, taking risks, deceiving the authorities, self-protecting and more. The everyday life of the ordinary people in Manchukuo was anything but ordinary. During its existence, the regime was punctuated with numerous crises that regularly disrupted the everyday life of its colonial subjects until its ultimate downfall in 1945. But perhaps most importantly, Manchukuo collapsed, and the people survived.

Whilst this thesis addressed a series of issues that addressed the gaps in the current literature regarding the colonial experience of the people in Manchukuo, a number of limitations were identified during the course of this research project. First of all, the availability of primary sources placed great constraints on the direction and development of the case studies presented in this thesis. More precisely, it was discovered during fieldwork that provincial archives in Northeast China (Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang) immensely restrict the number of archival materials from late Qing, the Republic of China (pre-1945) and the Manchukuo period, making it nearly impossible to obtain and collect any exploitable data. The Liaoning provincial library and Jilin provincial library on the other hand, were respectively in the process of relocating and under renovation during my time of visit in 2015, thus making their collections unavailable for access. Limited success was achieved in municipal archives in second-tier cities (namely Benxi) that were more relaxed towards the sensitivity of the primary materials, although it was subsequently discovered that their collections were inadequate both in terms of quantity and quality. As a result, alternative measures were adopted towards the collection of data. A great number of primary materials used in this thesis were obtained from vintage bookstores, antique markets, private collectors in the Northeastern provinces as well as from the National Library of China in Beijing, which proved to hold a good variety of primary sources in the form of microfilms.⁷

⁷ A wide variety of primary sources regarding Manchuria in general (government reports, statistics, monographs, etc.) in Chinese, Japanese and English could also be

Furthermore, this thesis looked at a sample of 12 interviews in total, predominantly residents in Liaoning province, with one who lived in Heilongjiang province during the Manchukuo era. Although interviews were used to supplement the primary sources in this thesis, the number of interviews conducted by no means could be considered to be sufficient to represent the experiences of the entire population in Manchukuo. With the majority of interviewees concentrated in Liaoning province, residents of other provinces in the time of Manchukuo might find little to relate to their personal experiences given the difference in economic and social developments between the provinces. In addition, information obtained from recollections might deviate from the actual facts due to objective factors such as memory loss, exaggerations, personal emotions and considerations, hence making the outcomes variable.

Although this thesis focused on exploring the passive acts of the ordinary people to resist and comply with the regime, it is not to say that the puppet state was without any support at all from its subjects. In other words, the emphasis on the sufferings of the people of Manchukuo and the brutality of the authorities created a tendency to downplay the role and experiences of beneficiaries and favoured individuals of certain policies among the ordinary population. To be sure, propaganda played an essential role in the Manchukuo society, and it consequently generated a number of “role model ordinary citizens” that assimilated Manchukuo values and actively collaborated with the regime. The examination of the influence of this particular social group in the society might contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the everyday life in Manchukuo.

found outside China. See Ronald Suleski, *The Modernization of Manchuria: An Annotated Bibliography* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1994).

Nevertheless, all of the factors mentioned above, and the limitations observed in this thesis do not nullify the findings. Instead, they can serve as lenses to provide directions and recommendations for future research related to the understandings of the everyday life of colonized subjects. Utilizing this thesis to examine the mindsets and experiences of ordinary people could contribute towards placing the topic of wartime China in a comparative perspective. The understanding of the lives of ordinary people under occupation should not be limited by physical borders and boundaries. Exploring the similarities and disparities of the lives of colonial subjects under different regimes might significantly enhance the studies of collaboration under the theme of colonialism during the war.

Finally, studies focusing on the reverse influence of the colonies would also be a welcome addition to future research. More specifically, it would be interesting to explore the impacts that colonial subjects could generate through the medium of poems, novels, travelogues and motion pictures on occupiers. An examination of the positive or negative influences under the scope of empire-building might provide an excellent opportunity to analyze the opposite perceptions of colonialism and how imperial citizens perceive the sufferings of the colonized people.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: List of interviewees

	Name	Date of Interview	Place of residence in Manchukuo	Sex	Age ¹	Appeared in the thesis
1	Anonymous ²	11/11/2015	Fengtian	M	80	
2	Anonymous ²	30/10/2015	Benxihu	F	83	
3	He, Shanshui	29/10/2015	Tongbei	M	87	Chapter Three
4	He, Yonggui	05/01/2017	Fengtian	M	90	Chapter Four
5	He ³	29/10/2015	Caohekou	M	84	
6	Liang, Guangshan	28/10/2015	Liangjiacun	M	88	Chapter Three; Chapter Five
7	Liang, Qibin	01/11/2015	Gaochengzhai	M	87	Chapter Five
8	Lin ³	29/10/2015	Fengtian	F	85	
9	Liu ³	29/10/2015	Benxihu	M	84	
10	Lu, Bingxiang	27/09/2015 31/01/2016	Fengcheng	M	88	
11	Shao, Jutian	24/09/2015	Fengtian	M	87	Chapter Four
12	Zhang ³	29/10/2015	Benxihu	F	81	

¹ Age at the time of the interview.

² Name was not given.

³ Only surname was given.

Appendix 2: Qing qiushu (Request Letter)



