

Constructing Empire

The Japanese in Changchun, 1905–45

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Contents

List of Illustrations / vii

Preface / ix

List of Abbreviations / xv

Introduction / 9

1 City Planning / 37

2 Imperialist and Imperial Facades / 64

3 Economic Development/ 107

4 Colonial Society / 131

Conclusion / 174

Notes / 198

Bibliography / 257

Index / 283

Introduction

The city of Changchun, capital of the landlocked northeastern province of Jilin, might seem an odd place in which to explore Japan's pre-war empire. Just over fifteen hundred kilometres from Tokyo, Changchun is not quite as far away as the Okinawan capital, Naha, but lies inland more than six hundred kilometres north of Dalian and Seoul and five hundred kilometres west of Vladivostok. Cooler and drier than Japan, its continental climate compounds its remoteness by making it, for Japanese, a different kind of place. Changchun, moreover, has rarely graced international headlines in recent years, given Jilin's economic development's lagging behind the coastal provinces, though the city did host the 2007 Asian Winter Games. In the twentieth century's first half, however, Changchun figured prominently. The Russo-Japanese War resulted in its becoming the boundary between the Russian and Japanese spheres of influence in northeast China and a transfer point for travel between Europe and Asia. The terminus of the broad-gauge Russian railroad track required a physical transfer to different trains, and, before 1917, a twenty-three-minute difference between Harbin and Dalian time zones required travellers to reset their watches.¹ Following Japan's seizure of Manchuria, Changchun, renamed Xinjing, became the capital of the puppet state of Manchukuo, recognized by the Axis powers and a partner in Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. In 1945, Manchukuo bore the brunt of the Soviet assault on Japan, with its capital a primary objective, and following Japan's surrender Soviet troops remained. Upon their withdrawal, forces of the Chinese Nationalist (Guomindang) and Chinese Communist Parties contested the city, resulting in its changing hands several times.

In addition to soldiers and diplomats, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and other civilians sought to inscribe Manchurian territory as theirs, either directly through claiming land and building structures or indirectly through work and daily affairs in communities with others of similar linguistic and social backgrounds. Constructing empire was a mundane and popularly

imagined affair as well as a diplomatic, political, and military one. Studies often focus on elite decisions or actions, but the popular dimension must also be considered to grasp fully empire's nature. A growing body of scholars of Manchuria recognizes this.² Using chiefly Japanese materials, this study explores aspects of the Japanese experience in Changchun/Xinjing to examine civilian contributions to empire. No single motivation is apparent, as some Japanese embraced imperial expansion as a patriotic cause while others saw different idealistic or personal opportunities. Some were motivated by a desire to facilitate change in Japan, while others acted in response to several motives simultaneously. For many, if not most, their actions were no passing fancy – Manchuria posed peril as well as opportunity.

Contextualizing Japanese activities in Changchun, this introductory chapter sketches Manchuria's geostrategic significance to indicate the region's importance for Japanese. The chapter then considers the Japanese administrative and corporate presence in Manchuria with which civilians interacted, and provides an overview of Changchun's history to which later chapters relate.

Japan's Northeast Asian Cauldron

Founded in 1869, Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine enshrines the spirits of almost two and a half million war dead, most perishing in the Asia-Pacific War. Of the eleven conflicts recognized at Yasukuni as including active duty – required for eligibility for enshrining – four witnessed fighting in Manchuria: the First Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, the Manchurian Incident (also known as the September 18th, Mukden, or Liutiaohu Incident), and the Asia-Pacific War. Three of the eleven conflicts occurred in Japan and Taiwan between 1868 and 1877, but the remaining four were fought near Manchuria and were not unconnected with the region's fate: the Boxer Expedition, the First World War (including what Japanese call the Japan-Germany War, fought on China's Shandong Peninsula), the Jinan Incident, and the Second Sino-Japanese War. Recurring strife in Manchuria ensured Japanese attention and was reinforced by continuing speculation about other potential conflicts in the region given that Manchurian issues contributed to broader tensions. These were exacerbated by Manchukuo's founding, as it represented a possible launch pad for a Japanese invasion of the Soviet Union.

Manchuria's significance for the imperial Japanese state developed inadvertently yet inexorably. Following the 1868 Meiji Restoration, officials sought control of nearby islands; only after their consolidation did they seek hegemony over one part of the mainland – Korea. This meant removing Chinese

influence from that country, which was achieved in the first Sino-Japanese War. In the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, which ended that war, China not only recognized Korean autonomy but also ceded to Japan in perpetuity Manchuria's Liaodong Peninsula, where some of the fighting took place, including everything south of a line extending from Yingkou (Niuzhuang) to Haicheng, fifty kilometres northeast, to the Anping River, fifty kilometres northeast of Andong. Acquiring this region would have buffered Korea and secured Japanese access to north China and central Manchuria, but the governments of Russia, Germany, and France immediately demanded a Japanese retrocession. Japan acquiesced – in exchange for a larger indemnity – but Japanese generally perceived this “Triple Intervention” as a national insult.³

Imperialist competition over Manchuria intensified in the following decade, resulting initially in Russian hegemony – unsurprising, given long-standing Russian interest. Although forcibly excluded from that territory by a 1689 treaty signed in Nerchinsk, Russia, following the Crimean War, compelled a weakened Qing Dynasty to cede lands north of the Amur and east of the Ussuri by treaties signed at Aigun (1858) and Beijing (1860), as well as to allow a Russian presence south of these areas (Map 1). Responding to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Russia provided loans to the Qing, acquired the right to build a trans-Manchurian railway from Manzhouli to Vladivostok with a southern spur to Lüshun – the China Eastern Railway (CER) – and leased the southern tip of the Liaodong Peninsula, the Guandong Leased Territory.⁴ Protecting these investments, Russian troops occupied Manchuria during the 1900–1 Boxer War, which followed the 1897–99 “scramble for concessions,” when many thought China was about to be divided by the Great Powers. Americans responded by calling for an “Open Door” in China to preserve trade opportunities, but Russia's unwillingness to withdraw from Manchuria prompted Japan to launch what became the Russo-Japanese War. When that war ended, with the September 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth, Russia recognized Japanese predominance in Korea and in Manchuria south of Changchun. The Qing acknowledged this by the Treaty of Beijing that December, agreeing also not to build any parallel lines that might compete with the now Japanese railway. In November, Japanese officials compelled Korean acceptance of protectorate status, although Korean resistance resulted in annexation in 1910. The Japanese government-general in Korea thereafter pursued Korean guerrillas into eastern Manchuria, where Korean migrants had established communities, and the Japanese Foreign Ministry insisted on Chinese cooperation in subduing them.⁵

Dominating Korea initially drew Japanese into Manchuria, but opportunities and new rivalries turned securing southern Manchuria into a fixation. The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) designated a garrison force, the Kantōgun, to defend Japan's new sphere of influence.⁶ Many anticipated a Russian war of revenge for losses suffered in 1905, but Japanese and Russian diplomats proved able to mend fences and establish a working relationship by the start of the First World War. In a series of treaties beginning in 1907, diplomats agreed not only to respective Russian and Japanese spheres in northern and southern Manchuria, but also western and eastern spheres in Inner Mongolia, divided at the Beijing meridian. Just prior to the Russian Revolution, the tsarist government even agreed to sell to Japan the rail line connecting Changchun and Harbin.⁷ Spurring this reconciliation was a new rival – the United States. Along with issues of race and immigration, newfound American interests in Manchuria after 1905 led to a rapid deterioration in American relations with Japan, sparking alarm in both countries.⁸ The First World War pushed this enmity aside, and in 1917 US Secretary of State Robert Lansing acknowledged that “Japan has special interests in China, particularly in the part to which her possessions are contiguous,” which the United States would respect as long as China's territorial sovereignty was not threatened. Seeking to restrain Japan's expansion, the United States abrogated Lansing's recognition in 1923, but that did not prevent some Japanese officials from using the agreement in the meantime to imply American support in compelling the acquiescence of Chinese officials in Manchuria to local demands.⁹

Improved relations with the United States helped stabilize Japan's sphere of influence in southern Manchuria, but the Russian Revolution destabilized the north. While the Kerensky government recognized the railway sale, the Bolsheviks did not. Concerned also for war supplies warehoused in Vladivostok and the potential for a rival's seizing eastern Siberia, troops from Japan, the United States, Canada, and other powers occupied that city as well as railways in eastern Siberia in 1918. This provoked dissent in Japan. Japanese troops did not withdraw when the allies did in 1920, although, having also occupied railways in northern Manchuria, the government did cancel plans to reinforce its presence there. Eventually, the Red Army compelled the capitulation of anti-Bolshevik forces in the region. Withdrawing in September 1922 – from northern Sakhalin in 1925 – Japan managed to salvage only fishing, oil, and other rights in recompense for the loss of life and tsarist debts when it grudgingly recognized the Soviet Union in 1925.¹⁰

In claiming Siberia, Soviet forces not only established a Communist presence on the Korean border but also installed a Mongolian client regime to Manchuria's west in 1921. The solidifying Soviet grasp contrasted with developments to the south. Disorganized after the 1911 revolution, China was vulnerable to Japanese pressure. In 1915, Japanese diplomats presented a list of "Twenty-One Demands" to the Chinese Republic; among the fifteen ultimately accepted were seven expanding Japanese privileges in Manchuria. In 1917, Nishihara Kamezō organized a series of loans on Tokyo's behalf that sought to secure Japanese financial hegemony in Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, and China while expanding Korean industry and the reach of the Bank of Korea. A military agreement signed the following year was in support of the Siberian intervention, but also aimed to expand Japanese influence in China.¹¹

These schemes not only ultimately failed, but they provoked suspicions among Japan's wartime allies and contributed to China's continuing dissolution into warlordism, prompting further intervention and frustration. As warlordism in China developed, all imperialist powers had to make arrangements with local strongmen to retain influence, but these men used foreign connections to further their own ambitions. Attracted to modern weaponry and systems, these warlords built rapacious regional administrations that, in vying for power, painfully disrupted Chinese society while experimenting with new modes of civic organization. In Manchuria, Zhang Zuolin achieved hegemony with modernizing civic officials and Japanese aid. Yet he proved an uncertain collaborator for both, more committed to solidifying his authority and developing a national role than to narrowly managing Manchuria as his advisers prescribed, although his occupying north China may have been an effort to become more fiscally autonomous. Japanese defended Zhang from rivals, but Kantōgun officers, acting on their own authority, assassinated him in 1928.¹² Zhang's son and successor, Zhang Xueliang, however, also proved a challenge to Japan; by the end of that year, he had agreed to cooperate with the Nationalist government established in Nanjing by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927. His decision was, in part, a consequence of regime insecurity, but he also sought to develop Manchuria and achieve greater autonomy from Japan.¹³ He supported building rival railways and attempted to reclaim the CER from the USSR in 1929, provoking a Soviet military incursion.¹⁴ His government also orchestrated an effort to weaken Japanese influence in Manchuria by trying to "drive the yen out of circulation" in the first half of 1931, an effort that followed "a decade of stagnation for Japanese commerce in Manchuria."¹⁵ In June of that year, his troops executed a Captain Nakamura Shintarō in western Manchuria, causing

Kantōgun concerns to flare. Although Nakamura had been on a covert reconnaissance mission, his death infuriated Japanese officers and weakened Japanese Foreign Ministry efforts at negotiation.¹⁶

Japanese diplomacy endeavoured to separate Manchuria from China south of the Great Wall to assure the region's peaceful development with Japanese assistance. Yet, in addition to flying the Nationalist flag in Manchuria, Zhang intervened in support of the Nationalists – against Japanese advice – when warlord allies rebelled in 1930.¹⁷ Edgar Snow reported that Zhang even tried to compel Japanese diplomats to discuss Manchurian matters with the Nationalist government.¹⁸ Nationalist connections were unacceptable to Japanese, given the former's anti-imperialist agenda and efforts to end China's "unequal" treaty relationship with the Great Powers. Indeed, many Japanese dismissed the Nationalists as leftists in league with the Soviet Union, which also remained a threat to Japanese.¹⁹ That the Nationalists were engaged in a civil war with Chinese Communists did not dispel this view, and the latter's arrival in Yan'an in 1936 only increased concerns for communism's threat to North China and Manchuria.

Chinese civilians in Manchuria were also of concern to Japanese. The anti-imperialist May Fourth and May Thirtieth Incidents of 1919 and 1925 were not without repercussions in Manchuria.²⁰ In addition, Chinese merchants posed economic challenges to Japanese interests. As well as participating in boycotts of Japanese goods, many competed favourably with Japanese merchants, forcing some Japanese firms in Dalian to close in the 1920s.²¹ That same decade, Chinese-made cotton cloth challenged the Japanese monopoly.²² In 1919, a foreign observer noted that Chinese were "a greater competitor to fear than the European or American":

The wealthy merchants down to the humble peasants, have also cast covetous eyes upon Manchuria, and it will be hard indeed for Japan to keep them out of that country or to best them in the struggle for the trade or the rich soil itself. The success of European enterprise in China has largely been due to the fact that the merchants have combined or co-operated with the Chinese; but the Japanese seem to be following the plan of competing with them. The result will be that they will fail, as to a large extent they have already, in their big undertakings. One has only to glance at Lüshun (Port Arthur) and Dalian to see that they are a long way from being as prosperous as such a treaty port as Tianjin is, or even as they were themselves when held by the Russians.²³

Encouraged by the Zhang regime, Chinese immigration was substantial, surpassing one million each year between 1927 and 1929.²⁴ Japanese Foreign Ministry officials sought to counter this by encouraging Korean immigration into the region, which, in effect, expanded Japanese influence, as the annexation of Korea had transformed all Koreans into Japanese subjects. Korean immigration was not to the liking of Kantōgun officers, however, and also provoked Chinese protests. Sino-Korean antagonisms boiled over near Changchun at Wanbaoshan in the summer of 1931, when Chinese vigilantes contested water rights with Korean farmers. Anti-Korean – by implication, anti-Japanese – riots spread quickly, and Koreans responded with anti-Chinese riots in Korea. These were not the first such incidents – feuding had occurred previously near Andong – nor were they the last. Chinese troops assaulted Korean civilians across Manchuria following the Manchurian Incident.²⁵ Nor was this the only recurring violence – plaguing all was China’s swelling banditry. Japanese estimated that there were fifty thousand bandits in Manchuria in 1930 and expended ¥20 million annually on soldiers and police in the railway zone, although the accuracy of their estimate is questionable, given that inflated numbers could have been used to justify a stronger military presence.²⁶

Officers of the Kantōgun launched what became known as the Manchurian Incident on 18 September 1931. Driving them to execute the takeover of Manchuria on their own initiative were the concerns identified above and the view that the Japanese government could not address them. Quickly reinforced with support from Korea – in violation of proper chain of command – the Kantōgun pushed Zhang’s forces into north China and later detached the province of Rehe, strategically useful for further expansion into Inner or Outer Mongolia or North China.²⁷ Busy with a fourth anti-Communist campaign in southern China, the Nationalists had little choice but to acquiesce and agree to a truce negotiated at Tanggu in 1933, delineating the border at the Great Wall, agreeing to an unarmed neutral zone immediately south, and eventually re-establishing rail and postal connections.²⁸ Nationalist China did not officially recognize Manchukuo – established 1 March 1932 and recognized by Japan in September – but the Kantōgun and other Japanese went about constructing it as a modern yet dependent client state, developing Manchurian resources in preparation for a future conflict. Aware of concerns in Japan about their actions, Kantōgun officers engaged in a media campaign defending themselves, intimating the kind of society they would build – one excluding exploitative capitalists and

“degenerate” politicians.²⁹ Recruiting local Chinese elites and inventing new national symbols, Manchukuo officials presented the state to Japanese as an ally, as well as a solution to China’s and Japan’s ills, giving cause for Japanese to believe the empire was reaching out to disaffected Asian brethren.

Many Japanese viewed the Manchurian Incident and the creation of Manchukuo favourably from the start. Japanese immigrants in Davao, in the southern Philippines, began referring to their community as “Dabao-kuo,” and Manchukuo later served as a model for new wartime governments in the Philippines and Burma.³⁰ Many condemned the League of Nations’ censure of Japan for the incident.³¹ Contemporary observers reported activities like Japanese civilians buying warplanes for the services through public subscription, while some ten thousand Japanese marching in Shenyang protested “League interference.”³² When Japan withdrew from the league in 1933, it seemed to many in that country that Japan had acted to preserve hard-won privileges in a vital region. This was an enduring perspective – a decade later the editor of the *Mainichi Shinbun* identified China as Japan’s “Near West,” asserting Japanese actions there were not unlike European actions in the Near East.³³

The Manchurian Incident was of enormous consequence. It emboldened Japanese officers to make similar efforts in north China and Inner Mongolia, despite provoking rifts within the army. Such actions ultimately led to conflict: in the summer of 1937, Japan became enmeshed in a war with China that proved impossible to conclude swiftly.³⁴ The incident also galvanized Chinese, especially given continuing Japanese encroachment.³⁵ In exposing the League of Nations’ limitations, the incident also encouraged German and Italian unilateralism. Japan’s subsequent tilting toward the Axis states in signing the 1936 Anti-Comintern Pact reflected diplomatic *realpolitik* as well as growing interest in revising the international order by all three governments and pundits in each country.³⁶ Although Germany did not do so until 1938, fourteen countries and the Vatican eventually recognized Manchukuo, heralding a new era for those seeking a Fascist International.³⁷

The incident proved a boon to Soviet diplomats, enabling them to end their country’s isolation by obtaining recognition from Nationalist China in 1932 and the United States in 1933 as well as admittance to the League of Nations on 18 September 1934. Given previous Japanese interest in acquiring the CER, in March 1935 Soviet officials agreed to sell the railway to Manchukuo, averting any potential incident. The Red Army then reinforced its eastern flank, more than doubling troops in the region over the 1930s, adding long-range bombers that could reach Tokyo, and briefly occupying

Xinjiang, in western China, to forestall any Japanese advance there. The government also double-tracked the Trans-Siberian Railway and promoted settlement, building the new industrial city of Komsomolsk on the Amur River.³⁸ To this growing infrastructure, Soviet officials added an active defence – leading to border conflicts with the Kantōgun at Zhanggufeng in 1938 and Nomonhan in 1939 – and began shipping arms to China after signing a non-aggression pact less than seven weeks after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident inaugurated the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Unable to match the Soviet buildup, Manchukuo resorted to fortifying the border with Maginot Line-type defences, though the Kantōgun continued planning to attack the Soviet Union.³⁹

The United States responded to the Manchurian Incident by edging closer to the countries threatened by Japan, electing even to participate for the first time in a League of Nations council session. With the extension of hostilities between China and Japan to Shanghai in 1932, moreover, Secretary of State Henry Stimson mused publicly about Japan's possibly having violated treaties signed in Washington in 1922, which meant that the United States might not consider itself bound by concurrent naval arms limitations. In reality, economic difficulties constrained options, especially because Manchuria was not critical to the American economy. Although the Americans, British, and French continued to consider opportunities in Manchukuo, American policy could but pointedly refused to recognize the new state.⁴⁰ A US consulate in Shenyang, opened in 1904, remained, but relations continued to be tense, intensifying as the Second Sino-Japanese War erupted, and Japanese operations expanded to compel China's capitulation. American policy inclined increasingly toward support of China, and, with Japanese and American negotiators unable to find any common ground, Japanese forces launched the attacks of 7–8 December 1941. Still a thorn in Japanese-American relations, Manchuria may have played a small role in Japanese supporting the decision for the Asia-Pacific War: some – not Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki – interpreted Secretary of State Cordell Hull's 26 November 1941 note to Japan as demanding a withdrawal from the region as well as from China south of the Great Wall.⁴¹

Imperial Infrastructure and Incentives

Tensions surrounding Manchuria were enduring – in forwarding a consular report in 1928, the British envoy in Beijing warned London's Foreign Office that a railway issue had reached a point where it “appeared likely that Japan was about to take strong measures and possibly utilize the incident in order

to bring to a head the various railway and other questions outstanding in her relations with Manchuria.”⁴² Earlier that year, the British consul general in Shenyang reasoned that, given Japanese economic interests in Manchuria, Chinese efforts to assert sovereignty over the region, and fears that Chinese military confrontations could extend to Manchuria, “Japan may find herself committed to action which may involve the occupation by Japanese troops of the territory.”⁴³ That same year an American political scientist labelled Manchuria “one of the danger spots in the Far East,” as Japanese sought to maintain their position in the region while Chinese feared losing sovereignty.⁴⁴ Noting that Japanese railway investments in Manchuria exceeded ¥1.5 billion (more than US\$750 million), a Columbia University professor warned in 1930 that “the security of Japanese industry could be assured only with the occupation of Manchuria by Japan and the annexation of the territory as part of the Empire.”⁴⁵ Following the Manchurian Incident, an American commerce official observed that Manchurian resources represented “the difference between the present order tenuously sustained by the trade and resources of Manchuria, and a possible chaos superinduced by the famine that would result from their relinquishment.” He concluded that “for Japan there is no military or diplomatic retreat, because there is no economic retreat.”⁴⁶ Nor did foreigners universally denounce Japan for its ambitions in Manchuria. In 1932, George Woodhead – a British journalist and founding editor of the *China Year Book* (a journal often thought to be favourable toward Japan) – reported the takeover “was not unexpected by the foreign communities [in Manchuria] nor was it viewed with disfavor ... [even if they were] skeptical as to the exact pretexts used to justify the occupation of Shenyang and the extension of Japanese military activities to other parts of Manchuria.”⁴⁷ For their own reasons, British Shanghailanders supported Japan’s takeover.⁴⁸ British historian Zara Steiner notes that even the UK “Foreign Office believed that Japan had a strong case in Manchuria.”⁴⁹ The Manchurian Incident was more than a simple land grab.

Manchuria’s significance for Japanese involved more than opportunity, China’s disorganization, and geographic proximity. In the years prior to the Manchurian Incident, many Japanese had taken to calling Manchuria a “life-line” (*seimeisen*), a view that was understandable given Japan’s battering by economic and social uncertainties, beginning with the 1927 failure of the Bank of Taiwan even before the global depression.⁵⁰ Manchurian resources were valuable to Japan’s industrializing society, and Manchurian fields promised opportunity for settlers: the region was not densely inhabited and

its area was larger than the entire empire's – four times larger than Japan's main islands. Despite long-standing connections, moreover, Manchuria was not continuously integrated with China south of the Great Wall, although expanding trade and migration in the twentieth century meant the region was becoming more linked.⁵¹ Although southern Manchuria often lay within imperial Chinese jurisdiction, and Chinese settlement expanded during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the Qing limited migration beyond that by erecting a fence, the Willow Palisade. This was to preserve their ancestral homeland, though after about 1750 the palisade's functioning as a barrier deteriorated.⁵² Nineteenth-century imperialist threats also prodded the court to reverse this policy and encourage Chinese immigration in order to retain sovereignty, and Japan's arrival prompted a 1907 administrative reorganization to enhance Manchu authority. This included incorporating Changchun into China's telegraphy network by the end of 1906.⁵³ Nevertheless, the region remained relatively sparsely populated at the dawn of the twentieth century, enabling images of an uninhabited Manchuria to figure prominently in Japanese media.⁵⁴

The Japanese presence in Manchuria is often considered an example of “informal empire,” meaning that Japanese had limited rights and needed to respect Chinese sovereignty and the interests of other nations with treaty privileges in China. Japan was only one of the foreign states participating in the “unequal” treaty system, gaining privileges through military conflict or other forms of pressure. As a result, China as a whole was not colonized, but Chinese resentment toward foreign influence and the piecemeal colonization of their country understandably grew. After joining this system in 1895 and expanding the scope of privileges shared by all, Japanese rationalized growing tensions as well as their growing presence with an array of self-serving justifications.⁵⁵

Given its wartime foundation, the Japanese presence in Manchuria was initially under military authority. Accepting the transfer of Russian privileges to Japan in a December 1905 treaty signed in Beijing, China acknowledged Japanese authority over all Russian leases in southern Manchuria. This included the 3,400-square-kilometre Guandong (Kwantung) Leased Territory – about 13 percent of the roughly 26,000 square kilometres Japan won briefly in 1895 – and the 700-kilometre railway running between Dalian and Changchun. Also included was a 233-square-kilometre railway zone of “attached lands” (Ch, *fushudi*; Jp, *fuzokuchi*) consisting of the rail line, a thirty-metre strip along either of side of it, and town concessions. In addition, China

accepted a 275-kilometre railway connecting Andong with Shenyang built by Japanese during the war, new Shenyang–Xinmintun and Changchun–Jilin City branch lines, and Japan’s stationing up to fifteen railway guards for every kilometre of track.⁵⁶ With peace, the military retained authority over the Guandong Leased Territory, and Foreign Ministry officials assumed responsibility elsewhere, a problematic situation should the two differ over current or future visions. A third entity added in 1919, the Guandong Government-General, responsible to the Ministry of Colonial Affairs in Tokyo, took over civilian administration on the leased territory. Even though the Foreign Ministry endeavoured generally to work within the international treaty system, its officials also pressed to expand Japanese interests and deter imperialist rivals.⁵⁷

To see to mundane matters in the Guandong Leasehold and railway zone, in 1906 the Japanese government created the South Manchuria Railway Company, abbreviated in Japanese as Mantetsu. A private corporation in which the government owned 51 percent of the stock and appointed senior officials, Mantetsu represented a compromise between the IJA, the Foreign Ministry, and other government arms.⁵⁸ Despite contradictory pulls, Mantetsu developed into Japan’s largest pre-war corporation in terms of paid-in capital, orchestrating much of the Manchurian economy. After replacing the broad Russian railway gauge with standard gauge and double tracking the entire line, Mantetsu shifted to not only hauling passengers and freight but also developing and managing ports, coal mines, power-generation facilities, factories, experimental farms, and railway-zone towns, initially with personnel with experience in Taiwan. Collecting taxes, Mantetsu saw to municipal administration in Japan’s railway towns. It was also committed to technological innovation and efficient administration, establishing a research arm and publishing house exploring issues in Manchuria and beyond. Mantetsu recruited from Japan’s top universities and celebrated Manchurian achievements prominently in Japan. The company marked Japan’s twentieth year in Manchuria, for example, with a public exhibition in Tokyo.⁵⁹ Befitting its modern image, Mantetsu built sleek new headquarters in 1936 athwart the southern entrance to Tokyo’s Kasumigaseki district, the heart of Japan’s national bureaucracy. Yasui Takeo, a 1910 Tōdai (Tokyo Imperial University) graduate who later accepted positions at Waseda and Kyoto Imperial Universities, designed the stepped silhouette of the Mantetsu Biru. The building was built by Ōkura, one of the smaller *zaibatsu* (financial combines) but one with a strong presence in Manchuria and Korea, particularly in coal mining

and iron manufacturing.⁶⁰ Another landmark connected with Mantetsu was Tokyo Station (1914). Designed by Tatsuno Kingo, one of Japan's first modern architects, the station sold tickets to destinations across the empire, including Manchuria, and beyond. Travel from Tokyo to Paris in 1940 via Mantetsu took just sixteen days.

Although Mantetsu was a means of exploiting Manchuria, Japanese justified it because of the benefit it also brought non-Japanese. Seki Hajime, for example, noted how Mantetsu contributed to the "collective economic interest," benefiting Chinese too. In dominating Manchurian trade, however, Mantetsu used its growing assets to discourage rivals, making it difficult for new Chinese railways to emerge. Through discounts, Mantetsu also ensured Manchurian commodities' export through Japanese-dominated Dalian or Korea, rather than Russian Harbin and Vladivostok or Yingkou, opened by the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin and home to British and other merchants.⁶¹ Yet Mantetsu was only one component of the Japanese presence in Manchuria. Financing investments were institutions like the Yokohama Specie Bank (founded 1880) and Mitsui Bussan. Having opened branches in Chinese coastal regions prior to the Russo-Japanese War, each soon opened inland branches in Manchurian railway towns. The Bank of Korea (1910) followed, collaborating in Manchuria with the Bank of Taiwan (1897) and the Industrial Bank of Japan (1902).⁶² The Bank of Korea replaced the Yokohama Specie Bank – which had helped fund Mantetsu's early development – as the main Japanese bank in Manchuria in December 1917, the same year the Oriental Development (Colonization) Company (Tōyō takushoku or Tōtaku), founded in 1908, extended operations from Korea into Manchuria.⁶³

Manchurian resources, including coal, timber, fish, and arable land, enticed these ventures. Soybeans proved especially valuable, as a food source, fertilizer, and oilseed for industry. Fifty-two percent of the value of Manchuria's exports in 1930 consisted of soybeans, soybean cake, and soybean oil, followed distantly by millet, sorghum, and other cereals.⁶⁴ The dominance of soy and its derivatives did not change until the onset of military-enforced industrialization.⁶⁵ Long exported by Chinese from Yingkou, soybeans had garnered increased attention during the Russo-Japanese War. By 1909, Manchurian soybeans constituted 90 percent of the global market, and Japanese experimental farms investigated varieties. In 1931, the region still produced about 75 percent of the global total, with another 12 percent in Korea and Japan. Not only did a rapidly urbanizing Japanese population grow dependent upon soy, but so did Japanese shipping and, to some extent, industry.⁶⁶

Manchuria beckoned also because of popular Japanese concerns about a presumed “surplus” population, especially because Korea and other colonies could not accommodate large numbers of Japanese, and immigration restrictions had emerged in Australia, Canada, the United States, and eventually Brazil. However, while both Mantetsu and Manchukuo encouraged rural immigration, efforts never succeeded to the extent Japanese officials hoped. Instead, most Japanese in Manchuria were urbanites, typically literate and organized. Mark Peattie noted that “most [Japanese in China] arrived not as despairing tenant farmers, impoverished laborers, or racially suspect immigrants, but as members of an ambitious, profit-seeking, and generally privileged class.” They formed self-governing local residents’ associations, linked to local consuls.⁶⁷ This inclination was more than a by-product of empire; Kamishima Jirō reported that such local organizing was common in Japan, noting that transplanted Japanese were able to cooperate as a new village within new urban locales.⁶⁸ Underscoring both observations is Sandra Wilson’s that Japan’s emerging Great Power discourse “was a resolutely urban-centred one.”⁶⁹

A sense of shared proprietorship over southern Manchuria quickly emerged among resident Japanese. In the early years, zealous police, railway employees, military authorities, and postal officers, for example, allegedly engaged in surveillance and harassment of rival imperialists in Manchuria, opening mail and losing or damaging goods. Although the decline in American exports was due to natural fluctuations, Mantetsu and the IJA were also accused of obstructing trade.⁷⁰ Japanese officials denied it, yet Tokyo ordered restraint.⁷¹ Hayashi Tadasu, foreign minister in the first Saionji cabinet, acknowledged that “boastful and aggressive” Japanese troops alienated Chinese, Europeans, and Americans, although he suggested that American trade declined more because of superior Japanese trading methods.⁷² Toyokichi Iyenaga, a University of Chicago professor of political science, exemplified attitudes by acknowledging some discrimination under the military administration, chiefly due to language and cultural differences, and that government rebate practices to corporations amounted to unfair trading practices. He suggested, however, that Americans benefited from high tariff walls at home and concluded that Japan was naturally concerned of being “deprived of the fruits of war secured at such enormous cost,” and that “an American commercial campaign in Manchuria” was politically motivated and thus “neither wise nor just.”⁷³

Empire proved popular in Japan, engendering nationalism and imbuing Japanese with a sense of greatness. The sense of inferiority often present in

the early Meiji period diminished as Japanese came to see themselves as citizens of a great nation, one of the Great Powers, defined in civilizational as well as military terms.⁷⁴ Apparent in the First Sino-Japanese War, this perspective intensified during the Russo-Japanese War as Japan became the first non-European state to defeat a major European military.⁷⁵ Anger at the Liaodong retrocession paled against the rioting over the Portsmouth Treaty. Many deemed Japan insufficiently rewarded, and the anger eventually toppled the wartime government of Katsura Tarō.⁷⁶ Since the war with Russia resulted in one hundred thousand casualties (including wounded) and cost ¥2 billion, many opined that Japan should never abandon anything won so dearly. Ironically, the Japanese press vilified Japan's chief negotiator at Portsmouth, Foreign Minister Komura Jutarō, even though he sought more than the government demanded. Fearing for his safety, the government assigned extra security upon his unpublicized return to Japan.⁷⁷ Views explicitly citing the losses in 1904–5 re-emerged in the 1930s.⁷⁸

Celebrating Japan's military, the media published photographic collections and organized postwar tours of battlegrounds – another activity with echoes in the 1930s – and Mantetsu arranged for artists and writers to tour Manchuria.⁷⁹ Individuals gained public recognition for wartime actions. Some held high rank, such as Fukushima Yasumasa, who, in addition to serving in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars and carrying out individual reconnaissance missions in peacetime, was also the first to oversee the military administration of Manchurian cities under Japanese control. He was elevated to the peerage, and his name remained public posthumously: a stone monument dedicated to the faithful who died in battle (*chūkōnhi*) in his calligraphy can be found at Yamanashioka Shrine, Fuefuki City, in Yamanashi, and his ashes are buried near those of other famous people in Tokyo's Aoyama Cemetery, a new kind of commemorative site.⁸⁰ More humble Japanese were also celebrated, such as the courageous soldiers lauded as “human bullets” (*nikudan*), a term coined in the battle for Lüshun.⁸¹ Following the Manchurian Incident, the media fanned the flames of war fever again.⁸² Although it is impossible to know what consumers of popular media thought, that this orientation was broadly shared indicates that editors deemed such views would be readily consumed. Japanese “red journalism” functioned much like American “yellow journalism.”

More was involved than simple jingoism: the media often justified such views with civilizational rhetoric. The victories of 1894–95 and 1904–5 provided opportunities to assert a sense of equality with the major powers and,

in the 1930s, a sense of superiority over these states. This was evident in many venues, including even innocuous events like beauty pageants.⁸³ Many Japanese thought it was their presence that stabilized Manchuria under the capricious rule of Zhang Zuolin.⁸⁴ Such views were not government-mandated; the state did not attempt to “radically” mobilize the media until after war’s outbreak in 1937, having “no power to compel” media support in the early 1930s.⁸⁵ Government censors instead tended to limit inflammatory views of the Manchurian Incident rather than suppress criticism of the government, as the incident “both reinforced and extended some exclusivist types of Japanese nationalism.” As was apparent during the late Meiji, “the strongest views – the hard line – often came from outside the government.”⁸⁶ And militancy was also apparent among some favouring cooperation with the “West.”⁸⁷

Noting that this war fever waned, Sandra Wilson contends that the Manchurian Incident was a “discrete episode” and not the start of a “Fifteen-Year War” or the inauguration of a decade of militarism.⁸⁸ In contrast, Louise Young notes broader complicity. Building Manchukuo was a modern act, as “industrial capitalism and other revolutions of the modern age” rendered nineteenth- and twentieth-century empires “multidimensional, mass-mobilizing, and all-encompassing.” Manchukuo became a “total empire” involving all of society, given that it “took more than ministers and generals to make an empire.”⁸⁹ Following Young’s and Barak Kushner’s distinction, active “unofficial” propaganda emerged as intellectuals, artists, and academics used the media and new forms of communication to support “official” efforts.⁹⁰ Scientists and engineers too not only contributed to fostering Japanese science and technology but also supported imperial expansion and eventual social renovation in Japan.⁹¹ This was more true for government planners and the engineers and technicians in their employ, but all shared a similar interest in building powerful modern systems at home and overseas. Citing Tak Matsusaka and David Wittner, Daqing Yang notes the role of what can be called “techno-imperialism” in the development of Japan’s empire, and Janis Mimura underscores this inherent modernism among certain bureaucrats by terming their efforts “techno-fascism.”⁹² Indeed, despite their suspicions of the military, Mantetsu research personnel found they could continue their work under military rule, as initially the Kantōgun required Mantetsu assistance in running Manchukuo, and later in north China. The Manchurian Incident resulted in Mantetsu gaining a wealth of new responsibilities, increasing its purview dramatically and expanding civilians’ roles in this corner

of the empire. The outbreak of fighting in China and the Pacific, however, inescapably heightened tensions between the military and civilians in Manchuria, perhaps especially intellectuals.⁹³

This specialist and multifaceted nature of Japanese imperialism was present at the outset. Nishizawa Yasuhiko notes that, in addition to the military means by which Japan began colonial regimes in Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria, Japanese pursued economic programs in these regions as well. These entailed the creation of infrastructure, requiring local construction and banking industries in addition to facilitating the development of organizations like Mantetsu, the Oriental Development Company, and newspapers. Construction projects and the systems they represented thus reflected Japanese dominance. Reinforced with hospitals, schools for Japanese and others (to train non-Japanese to be able to work with Japanese), and public buildings paid by public expense – Mantetsu in effect collected taxes – and administered by graduates of top universities, the Japanese empire proceeded on a broad front.⁹⁴

The views above place the role of empire at the heart of national discourse and identity, something to which Andre Schmid calls attention – in his case for the significance of Korea in pre-war Japanese history.⁹⁵ Perceiving empires this way is akin to history “from below.” Yoshimi Yoshiaki wrote of “grassroots imperialism” in his 1987 study of popular attitudes in the Asia-Pacific War.⁹⁶ Jung-sun Han goes so far as to suggest that “the Japanese populace actively participated in the construction of imperialist ideology and culture. In other words, the creation of Japanese will to empire was facilitated by the cooperation of the populace.”⁹⁷ In part this was because pre-war Japanese typically perceived themselves positively as members of a multi-ethnic empire, as Oguma Eiji reminds us.⁹⁸ Growing Japanese interest in Pan-Asianism functioned as a mobilizing ideology and identity for pre-war Japanese, as Eri Hotta has shown.⁹⁹

Ideological influence is difficult to assess. While many think the state and media influence public opinion, some note the abiding strength of private individuals’ impacts. James Huffman found that, in the Meiji era, “the press may have created a public, but it was that public ... that gave the press its sense of direction.”¹⁰⁰ James Dorsey problematizes the nature of influence by suggesting a “looping” pattern from state to public to state that binds the public to the state ever more closely.¹⁰¹ Charles Taylor has observed that “what the public sphere does is enable the society to come to a common mind, without the mediation of the political sphere, in a discourse of reason outside

power, which nevertheless is normative for power.”¹⁰² However described, Japanese society was more involved in Japan’s imperial project than is often acknowledged. Exploring a colonial enclave, especially one as central to the Japanese imperial project as Manchuria, helps bring this participation to light.

Changchun and Xinjing

Constructing Japan’s informal empire in Manchuria and the puppet state of Manchukuo required civilian participation. Although military, government, and corporate officials outlined policies and organized infrastructure, constructing empire on the ground could not have been done without broader participation. Moreover, even if individual motives differed and did not align with official or even other civilians’ goals, individual Japanese in Manchuria, unless they were actively sabotaging communal efforts, could not help but contribute to constructing empire. Many did so unconsciously by simply relocating and participating in the daily affairs of colonial society, but others did so deliberately by contributing to the creation of something new. This dynamic was equally true in the puppet state of Manchukuo because, as in the decade following the Russo-Japanese War, the 1930s witnessed a surge in popular support for more assertive policies. Both eras also witnessed spikes in Japanese immigration to the region.

Japanese urban planners, architects, bureaucrats, and business people found opportunities in places like Manchuria, initially creating treaty port towns not too different from those of other imperialists in China. This did not reflect simple imitation, but was instead another example of Japanese digesting foreign forms.¹⁰³ The government played a key role in this, seeing embracing foreign disciplines as central to reforming the state after the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Works (Kōbushō), founded in 1870, the ministry’s Imperial College of Engineering (1873) joined with the architectural section of the liberal arts college Kaisei Gakkō (1868) and other schools in 1877 to form Japan’s prestigious first university – Tokyo University, Tokyo Imperial University until 1947 (Tōdai). Planners, architects, and other professionals who trained there and at other emerging institutions served an important bridging function, importing foreign techniques and adapting them to Japanese needs. For example, Japanese considered modern architecture a discipline of engineering, demanding technological competency.¹⁰⁴ In addition to learning to design structures using steel and reinforced concrete, Japanese architects learned also to

adapt foreign construction techniques to meet Japanese realities, including earthquakes.¹⁰⁵

While planners, architects, bureaucrats, and business people shaped and interacted with Changchun's built environment to varying extents, all Japanese present contributed as well. Professionals designed town features, but non-professionals peopled towns and brought them to life. Although individual impacts were small, the influence of organized individuals was larger. When acting in concert, either simultaneously or over time, citizens exemplified broader trends. Henri Lefebvre contends that producing urban or any space reflects capitalism's inherent contradictions and environmental limitations, but others see roles for collective human agency in modifying lived space.¹⁰⁶ At its outset, Japanese society in Changchun naturally reflected its Meiji origins, and later arrivals ensured continuing links with Taishō and early Shōwa Japan. Many Japanese "carried the state with them," in Tamanoi's phrasing, projecting attitudes learned at home upon colonial milieux and peoples.¹⁰⁷ This was true even for some with reputations for pacifism and anti-militarism.¹⁰⁸ Andrew Gordon recommends perceiving Japan's pre-war democracy as a particular kind – an imperial democracy – with particular assumptions.¹⁰⁹ Central was membership in an imperial community, or "family-state" (*kazoku kokka*), even among those more progressively inclined.¹¹⁰ These attitudes and assumptions defined the social imaginary, the "sense of the normal expectations" most Japanese had for one another or "the kind of common understanding" that enabled them to function as a society, even if they included self-serving fictions.¹¹¹ They accompanied Japanese overseas. Emer O'Dwyer has shown imperial attitudes present in Dalian, leading her to advocate a shifting of focus from imperialism to "imperial history."¹¹² It is reasonable to assume similar perceptions were held among Japanese in other railway towns: even if they varied in size and nature, treaty ports were on territories conceded by the Chinese government and thus were predisposed to tensions between natives and imperialists. Marjorie Dryburgh and Joshua Fogel have shown how strategic and cultural tensions affected Japanese settlers' views of Chinese and the Japanese state in Tianjin and Shanghai.¹¹³ Jun Uchida and Todd Henry have identified tensions among Japanese in Korea with regard to Koreans, the colonial government, and colonial Seoul.¹¹⁴ Japanese were also critical of official Japanese policy at times and were not the only colonial settlers in China so affected. Robert Bickers has shown that British Shanghailanders also developed distinct and multi-layered identities, sometimes disagreeing vehemently with official policy,

such as officials' willingness to return unequal privileges to the Nationalist government.¹¹⁵ Chinese also experienced tensions in appropriating some of the urban forms and practices of imperialist societies, whether they resided in cities with concessions or not.¹¹⁶ Even if not overtly imperialist, Japanese in Changchun through their presence and daily affairs were complicit in the imperialist project and furthering these kinds of tensions and more – some of which became manifest in the built environment. Any Japanese returning to Japan, moreover, would have done so with acquired experiences and attitudes, in effect carrying the empire with them home, to paraphrase Tamanoi.

Chinese constructed Changchun's first cityscape on grassland originally belonging to the Mongolian Front Gorlos Banner. In 1791, the banner headman became the first to rent Mongolian land to Chinese settlers in defiance of Qing prohibitions, later petitioning the throne to accept the tenants' presence. The Qing acceded, likely because the Jilin garrison commander reported in 1799 that the Changchun walled village (*pao*) on the right bank of the Yitong River exceeded 3,330 households farming forty thousand acres. Given that there were too many settlers to remove forcibly – and that Chinese domination of Manchurian towns was already becoming the norm – the Qing attempted to confine them the following year by establishing Changchun sub-prefecture (*ting*), outside of which farming was forbidden. The court also placed Changchun under the jurisdiction of the Manchu military governor of Jilin, shifting provincial boundaries.¹¹⁷ In 1825, Qing officials transferred from the Changchun Gate in the Willow Palisade brought imperial authority and a new name to the town that until then had been called Kuanchengzi.¹¹⁸

Changchun prospered with continued immigration, trade supplementing farming, and became recognizably Chinese. In 1825, the sub-prefectural offices moved west across the river, and the district as a whole shifted north. In 1864, in response to bandit raids but without official permission, residents dug a moat and raised sixteen-foot-high brick walls stretching twenty *li* (about ten kilometres), although a British visitor in December 1886 described the works as no more than “a ditch and a low mud wall, with a rusty gun on a worm-eaten carriage mounted at each gateway.” He also reported that, like just about all Manchurian towns, the city had a regular grid plan with a main north-south street running almost three miles. Although most buildings were single-storey and brick, the main street was “really a splendid thoroughfare – a bewildering vista of sign-posts, and obelisks, and gilt inscriptions, and lamps. The four cross streets are also prettily decorated.” The Guanyin Temple near the East Gate was impressive, “the only piece of modern ecclesiastical

architecture we noticed worth looking at in Manchuria.” He concluded his description by noting he expected to find Mongolians but was “disappointed. It is a Chinese town, pure and simple.” The Willow Palisade between Changchun and Jilin City, moreover, “had so utterly disappeared that we did not even notice it.”¹¹⁹ Growth and foreign encroachment prodded continuing administrative reorganization. Changchun became a prefectural capital in 1889. On 14 January 1907, the government officially opened Changchun to foreigners, that fall appointing Manchuria’s first governor general, Xu Shichang, to deal with emerging issues. On the eve of the 1911 Revolution, Changchun was the headquarters of one of Jilin Province’s four intendantcies, with jurisdiction over two prefectures, two sub-prefectures (one independent), and seven districts. In 1912, the new government made Changchun prefecture a county (*xian*) and in 1925 the city a municipality (*shizheng*).¹²⁰

The Japanese presence in central Manchuria unfolded in a series of waves, overlapping with arriving Europeans. The first Japanese in Manchuria after 1868 arrived in Yingkou in 1872 but did not travel north of Shenyang.¹²¹ One of the first visiting Changchun, in the winter of 1899, was IJA captain Hanada Nakanosuke, who, masquerading as a Buddhist priest, gathered intelligence across Manchuria, Mongolia, and eastern Siberia.¹²² Changchun’s earliest European visitors were members of religious societies (discussed in Chapter 4), but Hanada was more interested in imperial agents, especially Russians who began building a CER maintenance yard in 1898 at Kuanchengzi, a kilometre northwest of Changchun, in violation of an agreement to stay twenty versts (twenty-one kilometres) away from urban centres. Other Japanese likely passed through at that time, given that Japanese labourers and peddlers contributed to constructing Russian railways.¹²³ Working from opposite ends, Russians completed the CER just south of this yard on 18 July 1901, enabling the line to commence operations that fall before officially opening on 1 July 1903, though the *Yomiuri shinbun* incorrectly reported that the line passed through Jilin City.¹²⁴ Delaying the official opening of the railroad was the Boxer uprising, resulting in some 2,500 Russian troops occupying Changchun and Jilin City until the Russo-Japanese War.¹²⁵ Any Japanese present would likely have withdrawn for the war’s duration, but many returned to live in Mantetsu’s growing new railway towns.

A Russian presence endured at Kuanchengzi, the station town providing Japanese accommodations if pressed for housing in Changchun, although the town failed to develop. The town stagnated, despite its gaining a branch of the Russo-Chinese Bank in 1900, only two years after branches opened in

Harbin and Dalian. Initially focusing on financing railway construction and bribing Manchu officials when necessary, the bank quickly shifted to tea in exchange for Russian kerosene and textiles.¹²⁶ Kuanchengzi was not much more than a train stop in 1902, however, and did not thrive after 1905.¹²⁷ Economic difficulties in Russia made it difficult to administer Harbin, let alone smaller towns.¹²⁸ The town gained a consulate in 1907 and an Orthodox church in 1908, but immigrants were few. Although some five million of the tsar's subjects immigrated to Siberia between 1891 and 1910, few journeyed as far as Kuanchengzi, despite support offered by the railway.¹²⁹ A French missionary reported in 1908 that there was "nothing remarkable" about the settlement except the post office.¹³⁰ A 1913 Japanese travel guide described it as only "an isolated spot with scarcely any buildings except a few belonging to the station," and there was little change in the 1920 edition.¹³¹

Russian Kuanchengzi's failure to thrive was due in part to Japan's arrival in Changchun, a strategically important locale. Located on the northwestern side of the foothills of the Changbaishan range, Changchun facilitated Japan's access to the central Manchurian plain. Changchun was also prosperous. Writing in 1905, British China Hand Bertram Lenox Simpson (writing as Putnam Weale) described it as "the most important entrepot for trade in the whole of Manchuria, containing a quarter of a million inhabitants." He opined, "The occupation of Jilin [City] will be strategically far more important than the occupation of Shenyang because the headwaters of the great river the Sungari will be reached and a base provided for further important operations ... [Changchun] will provision the Japanese armies from its vast granaries."¹³²

Histories of the Russo-Japanese War typically conclude discussing the land campaign with the Battle of Shenyang, where a half million troops collided. These analyses, moreover, note the poor condition of Japanese forces after facing the larger Russian foe, suggesting that another large battle may not have ended in Japan's favour. One British observer even thought Japan's war plans originally did not consider proceeding beyond Tieling or Shenyang, and lacked meaningful reconnaissance in the north.¹³³ Changchun and Jilin City's allure, however, likely galvanized Japanese. War's end found the two armies facing one another more than a hundred kilometres to the southwest, but Japanese cavalry raids, sometimes joined by Chinese irregulars, stalked the Changchun region, threatening Russian supply lines.¹³⁴ The *Yomiuri* reported a secondary Russian defensive line at Changchun only a month after Shenyang, describing the area's topography as well as a rumoured advance

toward Changchun and a weakening enemy.¹³⁵ During the Portsmouth negotiations four months later, an unidentified Japanese reported that imperial forces “are within striking distance of [Changchun], the greatest trade market in Manchuria.”¹³⁶ Some expected a Japanese occupation of Changchun, or reported it as a *fait accompli*.¹³⁷ Hearing the treaty’s terms, some in the Russian field headquarters at Guojiadian (Godzyadani) wondered if Russia had been “outwitted” at the bargaining table, because making Changchun the boundary meant losing control of Jilin Province, source of Russian foodstuffs and coal for the previous six months.¹³⁸ Japanese journalists quickly spotted opportunities and reported on preparations to occupy Changchun.¹³⁹

By the Treaty of Portsmouth, Russian diplomats agreed to transfer to Japan that section of the railway “south of Changchun,” but determining exactly where jurisdiction changed resulted in dispute. Japanese took the treaty to mean Kuanchengzi, the station nearest Changchun, as was reported in Mantetsu’s *Manshū nichichi shinbun* (*Manchuria Daily News*), which began publishing on 3 November 1907, initially calling Kuanchengzi “West Kuanchengzi,” part of Changchun. Not until January were the two separated, the *Yomiuri* reporting on negotiations in Japan.¹⁴⁰ After briefly sharing facilities, Japanese opted to build a new town on land that was primarily sorghum fields – the site of the future Yokohama Specie Bank was a field where rabbits were hunted – and home to scattered farmers. Cossacks were quartered near the old town, and so Japanese had to oversee their transfer as well as claims from landowners. Mitsui arranged these land purchases, although ultimately some bribery proved necessary.¹⁴¹

The Qing officially opened Changchun and other northern towns on 14 January 1907.¹⁴² The new Japanese settlement emerged between the walled city of Changchun and the Russian station at Kuanchengzi, integrating more with the former than the latter. A road soon linked the new town’s train station with old Changchun’s North Gate, only two kilometres distant, and the town’s central southern boulevard curved southeast to the Mahao Gate. Just inside this gate were the offices of the Daotai and other officials.¹⁴³ A mercantile district (Ch, *shangbu*; Jp, *shōfuchi*) between the Japanese settlement and Chinese Changchun further integrated the two.¹⁴⁴ These activities were not novel – Japan’s first urban enclave on the Asian mainland was at Busan in 1876. The Chinese response – to constrain the Japanese town, the government encouraged the mercantile district’s expansion – was evident in other similar situations.¹⁴⁵ Ultimately both towns grew, a testament to the region’s economic dynamism. This lured Japanese civilians, though such immigration

paled in comparison with Chinese settlement (see Chapter 4). The British naturalist Arthur de C. Sowerby observed in 1919 that “the Japanese areas of Shenyang and Changchun are pitifully lifeless when compared to the neighboring Chinese quarters of these towns, or with the Russian sections of Harbin.” Ominously, he concluded that “however much the Japanese may strive against it, it is almost certain that Manchuria is doomed to be settled and populated by Chinese, whoever gains the political control of that country.”¹⁴⁶

Anticipating Chinese numerical dominance and with prior experience in Taiwan, Mantetsu’s first president, Gotō Shinpei, championed a modernizing presence for Japanese in places like Changchun. Specifically, this meant administering “scientific policies” based on “biological principles” – meaning studying native practices in order to understand colonized peoples and encouraging their gradual participation in Japanese empire building, eventually assimilating them. At the same time, Gotō sought to subtly secure Japan’s position through a policy of “military preparedness in civilian clothing,” ensuring real strength was never far away, while encouraging acceptance of Japanese through colonial development and the demonstration of Japanese leadership in scientific and urban infrastructure. Gotō returned to Japan in 1908, but as a senior official, including stints as home minister, foreign minister, and Tokyo’s mayor, he continued to influence policy on planning and the built environment across the empire.¹⁴⁷

Changchun stood for a quarter century as the northernmost outpost of Mantetsu’s string of railway towns, altering its built environment in a manner reflecting the evolving nature of Japanese society, including what it meant to be modern.¹⁴⁸ The Manchurian Incident challenged the railway’s domination of the town, however, and shifted some of the ways Japanese defined urban modernism. This shift was especially evident in Changchun, renamed Xinjing (New Capital; Jp, Shinkyō) on 14 March 1932. Jeffrey Frieden has observed a higher incidence of military takeover of regions having greater investment in primary production for export, notably the extractive industries and agriculture.¹⁴⁹ Manchuria’s seizure seems to belong to this category, but Manchukuo involved more than resource extraction. Rather than a new colony, Kantōgun officers created a notional country, replete with currency, ceremonies, and symbols. Seeking to accommodate Chinese nationalism, Kantōgun officers also sought a quick reversion of the railway zone to Manchukuo sovereignty – though resistance delayed this until 1 December 1937. In relinquishing extraterritorial privileges, returning railway towns to local

authorities, and withdrawing Japanese police, Japan did not give up control. From the outset, beneath the national fig leaf, Japanese directed the country via a strategy called “internal guidance” (*naimen shidō*), pairing Manchukuo’s leaders with Japanese advisers and having the Kantōgun supervise Japanese bureaucrats. The Kantōgun commander also served simultaneously as the Japanese ambassador – though the Japanese consulate continued to operate – and it was Japanese who managed Manchukuo’s foreign affairs.¹⁵⁰ The ubiquitous presence of Japanese advisers amid Xinjing’s tight security at Manchukuo’s declaration of independence on 9 March 1932 led some foreign observers even then to call the new state “Manikinchoria” or “Japanchukuo.”¹⁵¹

Similarly noting Japanese minders, Peter Fleming – Ian Fleming’s brother – a special correspondent for the *Times* of London, ruminated in 1933 on Manchukuo’s rhetoric. He wrote of “Propaganda Elbow” – that is, of being weighed down by voluminous documents one could not easily dispose of and, given a lack of taxis, had to carry. Its regularity prompted him to wonder “why this perpetual guilding [*sic*] of the lily? Why these everlasting and redundant attempts to pass off a policy of enlightened exploitation as a piece of disinterested rescue-work? This parading of non-existent virtues, this interminable process of self-vindication breeds doubt and scepticism in the foreign observer.”¹⁵² Citing Homi Bhabha and Mary Louise Pratt, Annika Culver suggests such activities are central to how new states establish themselves and can reflect imperialist attitudes.¹⁵³ Fleming was also responding to the hyperbolic nature of the rhetoric, in particular to the “Principle of Benevolent Rule” (Ch, *wangdao*; Jp, *ōdō*), also translated as “kingly way,” a term derived from the Confucian tradition and meaning ethical rule. Revitalized by Sun Yat-sen and reaffirmed by some left-leaning members of the Nationalist Party, the term was promoted by some Japanese civilians seeking a new state even before the Manchurian Incident. Fleming noticed other “portentous phraseology,” perhaps referring to the utopian promises of Manchukuo’s becoming a “paradise” (*rakudo*) and an “ideal state” (*risō kokka*) offering “ethnic harmony” (*minzoku kyōwa*). Specifically this was “five races’ harmony” (*gozoku kyōwa*) for the Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, Korean, and Japanese inhabitants.¹⁵⁴

To co-opt Chinese support, Manchukuo’s architects gleaned what they could from China’s heritage and the Nationalist regime, and wrapped what they used in a Pan-Asianist flag.¹⁵⁵ The regime later also invoked the “spirit of national foundation” (Ch, *jianguo jingshen*; Jp, *kenkoku seishin*), a phrase gaining currency in Japan. The government-published pamphlet *Fundamentals*

of *Our National Polity* (1937), for example, sought to define Japan's own "national essence" (*kokutai*) in this manner and presented Manchukuo's founding as an extension of prehistoric Japan's own imperial unification. Invoking this in Manchukuo, however, may have represented a shift from initially emphasizing civilizational ideals to the needs of state building.¹⁵⁶

More than slogans, these mantras represented efforts to distinguish Manchukuo from previous and rival forms of government.¹⁵⁷ Under these banners, Xinjing became a stage for the military and its supporters to put an acceptable face on their activities, often with much pomp and circumstance. The capital's first mayor, for example, was the Manchu prince Jin Bidong. His lineage was close to the Qing throne – there was even some support for Jin's becoming Manchukuo's leader, and some Japanese had earlier supported an independent Manchuria under Jin's father Shanqi (Prince Su).¹⁵⁸ Jin himself ultimately supported his clansman Puyi, the Kantōgun's choice, helping his sister Kawashima Yoshiko (Jin Bihui) smuggle Puyi's wife out of Tianjin in 1932.¹⁵⁹ Puyi – the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty, whose ancestors supposedly once lived northeast of Xinjing at Shitouchengzi¹⁶⁰ – became Manchukuo's head of state (Ch. *Zhizheng*; Jp. *Shissei*) that year. This was not an imperial title, but Manchukuo's calendar acknowledged Puyi's authority as regent by instituting the era-name *Datong* (Great Community), a phrase referring to Confucius' utopia. Allowed to be named emperor in 1934, Puyi inaugurated a second era, *Kangde* (Abundant Virtue) – *kang* being the first character of the era name of one of the greatest Manchu rulers, the Kangxi Emperor, and *de* the first character of the temple name (*miaohao*) of the Guangxu Emperor, Puyi's uncle. The Kangde Emperor celebrated his elevation by announcing his accession at a makeshift Altar of Heaven in Xinjing, wearing the robes of the Guangxu Emperor as a symbol of a Qing Restoration rather than the military uniform required by the Kantōgun for his enthronement.¹⁶¹ Reportedly, fifty thousand troops flanked the seven-kilometre route of his procession.¹⁶² Puyi embodied not only the Manchu and Chinese traditions, though – his lineage also included Genghis Khan, imbuing him with broader significance.¹⁶³ Puyi's lack of children, however, elevated his younger brother Pujie's importance. In 1937, Pujie married into the Japanese imperial clan, and Puyi worried that a successor could come of this union.¹⁶⁴ Manipulated and insecure, Puyi grew desperate to stabilize his throne, resorting even to enshrining Amaterasu, the Japanese Sun Goddess, in the palace's new National Foundation Temple in 1940, despite issues that raised among Chinese. To do so, Puyi visited Japan that year, leaving and returning to Xinjing with much

fanfare. Japanese officials encouraged this visit, enabling Puyi to be part of the lavish celebrations that year recognizing the 2,600th year since the empire's founding, something also to be marked by Tokyo's hosting the Summer Olympics.¹⁶⁵ Although war caused the games' cancellation, under Puyi's "patronage ... 50,000 youths representing Japan, Manchukuo, and China" assembled on the capital's Datong Plaza on 19 September 1940 to mark the empire's anniversary. Later that month, Manchukuo's largest games to date were held at the capital, with thirteen hundred participants.¹⁶⁶

Although Puyi recalled a warm reception upon arriving in Changchun in 1932, opposition to his selection and elevation emerged from the outset among both Japanese and Chinese who saw him and the position of emperor as symbols of a bygone era. Peter Zarrow has observed that, after 1911, Chinese "mainstream elite imagination no longer conceived of the state as based on an emperor," and Puyi's moving out of the Forbidden City in 1924 allowed for the "complete museumification" of that space.¹⁶⁷ Selecting Puyi and the puppet state's structure reflected Kantōgun priorities, but ultimately neither helped the Kantōgun govern.¹⁶⁸ Japanese constituted a tiny minority in Manchukuo, so officials needed at least the tacit support of non-Japanese to govern and complete their various construction and economic projects. Ultimately, the Japanese relied on the use of force or its threat to maintain order. Although widespread collaboration was unavoidable, instances of Chinese "collaborationism" – meaning ideological identification with Japan – were few.¹⁶⁹ This was significant, because the puppet state expected to elicit non-Japanese support, and some thought it possible. The problems inherent in Zhang rule had left many Chinese open to an alternative arrangement, and Japanese rule in Taiwan succeeded in eliciting Chinese support there.¹⁷⁰ Japanese promoted economic growth and modern practices in Manchuria, and, even if they did so primarily for their own profit, others would benefit too. Noting the advantages of currency stabilization and the expansion of transportation infrastructure, Edgar Snow thought some Chinese willing to collaborate with imperial Japan, including those seeking a Confucian revival as well as those merely seeking profits.¹⁷¹ Despite finding "little enthusiasm," George Woodhead reported general Chinese acquiescence in 1932, noting Zhang regime corruption and that "millions ... have emigrated to Manchuria ... to escape the oppression and misrule" of the warlords in the south. He described Chinese peasants as "potential neutrals," but cautioned that there could be "passive, if not active resistance," elsewhere, especially among "merchants, politicians, and the old militarists."¹⁷² On the other hand,

Manchus and Mongolians apparently had reason to support the new state, as did many Koreans following the Wanbaoshan Incident.¹⁷³

Some noteworthy Chinese elites offered public support. One was the monarchist Zheng Xiaoxu, Manchukuo's first prime minister. Educated in Japan, Zheng advised Puyi after 1923 and encouraged him to trust Japan, although soon after Manchukuo's founding he reconsidered Japan's reliability.¹⁷⁴ Perhaps written with a defensive eye, in his diary he was critical of Puyi, the Japanese, and the new regime, as well as Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang, whom he called "mice, not men" for their reactions to the Japanese takeover.¹⁷⁵ More supportive were men such as Zhao Xinbo, a lawyer educated at Meiji University who favoured a constitutional republic but helped draft Manchukuo's declaration of independence and served as the first president of Manchukuo's Legislative Yuan and first mayor of Shenyang after the takeover.¹⁷⁶ A Kantōgun legal adviser at the time of the Manchurian Incident, Zhao objected to Zhang Xueliang's opposition to Japan – a 1934 British consular report called him a "pro-Japanese opportunist of notorious reputation."¹⁷⁷ The terms Manchukuo and Xinjing are sometimes attributed to Zhao.¹⁷⁸

A frontier town on the Mongolian prairie, Changchun experienced extensive changes in the twentieth century with the additions of a treaty port and an imperial capital. The Japanese-built urban environment and local economy and the society associated with them reflected the varying motive forces present in Japanese society at home as well as in Manchuria. These transformations ultimately paved the way for Changchun's becoming Jilin's provincial capital after 1945, usurping Jilin City's role despite the latter's longer history. Even if much of Changchun's pre-war built environment is today rapidly disappearing, its contemporary influence remains.

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