

Manchuria as a Borderland: History, Culture, and Identity in a Colonial Space

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Fairbank Center for East Asian Research

I. Theme:

This workshop aims to take advantage of the current momentum in the study of early 20th-century Manchuria (what is called Northeast China today) by inviting selected junior and senior scholars from various disciplines to establish intellectual dialogues that cross national boundaries and bridge typical periodizations (1911 and 1949 in Chinese studies, and 1945 in Japanese and Korean studies). Participants will analyze various types and genres of materials from and about Manchuria, with particular emphasis on how literary and historical sources reflect different representations of political transition and individual identity from the late Qing empire to the present. As a historical borderland, Manchuria invites attention to transnational and transcultural perspectives as well as to individual and experiential boundary transformations. The workshop will address such topics as nation-building, the colonial imagination, and the effect of these larger processes upon individual reconfigurations of ethnic and national identity. In the process, we hope to encourage scholars to share their fieldwork experiences, archival research information, and to bring a sharper focus to the particular problems affecting work on a region that has reshaped from borderland to bordered land, and still bears many signs of its transnational past.

Manchuria's military, political, and economic history has of course been well studied. Much less well studied, however, are the stories of how Manchuria was perceived within the ever-shifting frameworks of imperial, national, and colonial regimes, and of how people living in the region perceived themselves within and beyond the shifting borderlines. By focusing on these questions, we hope to remedy an obvious gap in the scholarly literature – a gap that exists largely owing to post-war taboos that have forbidden discussion of what Manchuria really meant to people before and after the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, except in terms of strict nationalistic interpretations. Though such work has contributed much to our understanding of this region, its acceptance of contemporary national borders as defining the proper limits of scholarly inquiry seriously hampers our understanding of the cultural and political processes that had such a profound impact on the region. Overdetermined nation-centered narratives, we feel, simply do not do justice to the complicated cultural situation in Manchuria, a place in which Chinese, Japanese, Manchus, Mongols, Koreans, Russians, and Poles all claimed as "home." In this connection, we also hope to advance a conceptualization of Manchuria as a "borderland." In this connection, we also hope to advance a conceptualization of Manchuria as a "borderland," which we take our cue from the US and European history. This, we believe, will permit more powerful analyses of the Manchurian situation and will also provide a way for broader comparative thinking.

The historical importance of this region has recently been revived as the latest generation of Chinese leaders has called for new development projects in Northeast China. We hope that this workshop will contribute to a deeper, more sophisticated understanding of the complex history of an area that was a focal point of international contestation a century ago, when the older political structures of East Asia began to give way to new national forms and Manchuria found itself redefined, not just by economic and political forces, but by powerful cultural forces as well.

II. Organization

The workshop will consist of four panels:

Panel I will focus on the history of cultural trends in Manchuria and cultural representation of Manchuria in history.

Faye Yuan Kleeman's paper, "Inscribing Manchuria: Gender, Ideology, and Popular Imagination," examines how popular cultural media shaped and sustained the image of Manchuria during the interwar era. Specifically, it will look at two types of visual and textual texts: heroic adventure tales for teenage boys and the earth mother-like image of pioneer women and their role in blending gender desire and imperial optimism into the ideology of empire building. The construction of popular imaginaries, framed within the context of popular literature (*taishū bungaku*) and popular culture (*taishū bunka*), demonstrates how gender played a very specific role in this negotiation and how these images and discourses, trafficking between the metropole and the colony, reinforced each other.

Atsuko Sakaki's paper will analyze the writings of Abe Kōbō (1924-1993), a modern Japanese novelist/playwright. The exilic nature of Kōbō's work has been attributed to his boyhood in Manchuria, a territory of ambiguous origin that dissolved into a void after the demise of the Empire of Japan. Unlike the older generation of Japanese writers who were either committed to the advancement of an agenda of literary colonization or who thrived on the ostensible hybridity of the constructed empire of Manchukuo on the other, Abe invalidated the notion of nationality as an "identification modality." It is not coincidental that his fiction, theatre works, and films, which lack an apparent national identity, made a brilliant international debut in the wake of the Algerian War, when the contingency and persistence of the modern nation-state were at once highlighted and exploded from within and without. In this paper, Sakaki shows how Manchukuo contributed to the rhetoric showcased in one of Abe's most famous works, *Suna no onna* (*Woman in the Dunes*, 1964). Abe, she argues, embodies the aporia of co-presence of the desire for articulation of national boundaries and the penchant for the extinction thereof.

David Tucker in his paper, "Colonial Cherries," will examine how Japanese colonial administration in Manchuria and the Manchukuo government devoted significant resources to landscape and park design as a part of urban planning. A key and recurring element was cherry plantations. This paper examines cherry-viewing plantations as part of parks, shrines, and memorial complexes intended to help to claim, civilize, memorialize, and signify a Japanese

presence in Manchuria. Japanese colonists held that cherries were not native to China, and were culturally specific to Japan, so their use was part of the attempt to transform Manchuria, and make it less culturally Chinese. As culturally significant locations, Tucker argues, cherry plantations were also sites of cultural anxiety and conflict.

Panelists of Panel II, "Borderlands in the National Imagination," will discuss how the nation is imagined in this borderland, and how that imagination has influenced people's identity reconfigurations:

Mark Elliott's paper will discuss Japanese studies of Manchurian history. Still a taboo term in much academic discourse, "Manchuria" is widely held to be a geographical fiction created by the Japanese imperial/colonial imagination. This belief, though not entirely accurate, is at the same time not entirely untrue, either. For the Manchuria that came to worldwide attention in the early 1900s was indeed in great measure the product of the Japanese imperial mind, which saw in the region a land with a history and culture separate from that of the rest of China. Moreover, the notion of an independent Manchuria following its own historical path informed much thinking about Japan's role in the region during the first half of the 20th century. To try to better understand contemporary perceptions of Manchuria as a region, this paper revisits the arguments put forward in articles and books on the history of Manchuria written by Japanese scholars such as Shiratori, Tamura, Yano, Kuwabara, Inaba, Haneda, and Wada. What historical vision of Manchuria did these men advance? What were their sources and their biases? How did they affect opinion at the time, in Japan, in China, and in the West? What can we make of their arguments today? In seeking to answer these questions, the paper aims not to pass judgment on the validity of their conclusions but to assess the role of Japanese historical scholarship in the construction of "Manchuria."

Shao's paper will analyze Manchus' memories of Manzhouguo. Manchuria was regarded as the Manchu sacred homeland in the Qing dynasty. But in the late 19th century, the Manchus' Manchuria became the "Cockpit of Asia," in which various powers competed for economic and political interests. Manzhouguo, under Japanese control, used Manchu history to legitimate its nationhood. Shao asks, How did the establishment and collapse of Manzhouguo affect Manchus and their perception of identity in the historical context of state-formation and nation-building during the first half of the 20th century? Based on unpublished investigation reports, annals of local history (or local gazetteers, *difangzhi*), genealogical records, memoirs, and interviews, this paper analyzes Manchus' perception of ethnic and national identities, viewed through the prism of their memories of Manzhouguo.

Tak Matsusaka will talk about "Japan's Manchurian Myths." He will review the dynamics of myth production along with the complications that the imagined Manchuria created for those charged with managing the "real" Manchuria, from 1905 through the 1930s. He will analyze how journalists and other writers as well as public officials produced a body of myths that helped to condition Japanese thinking about China's Northeast. He concludes that the promise of ample living space that would relieve overcrowding in Japan was among the most powerful yet misconstrued of these ideas.

Panel three, "Ethnicity in Borderland," provides a platform for scholars who studies ethnic groups in Manchuria:

Chris Atwood, an expert on Mongol history, will discuss "Ethnicity and State Service in Hulun Buir." In the eighteenth century, the Manchu Qing dynasty settled the Hulun Buir area of northwest Manchuria (now in northeastern Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region) with bannermen of diverse ethnic origins: Daur, New and Old Barga Mongols, Solon Ewenkis, Orochen, and "Öölöd" (Zünghar) Mongols. While this diversity was in part the result of Manchu social engineering, it also reflected long-standing patterns of Siberian Mongol moiety organization. The Daur and Ewenkis had, since at least the sixteenth century, been linked as two intermarrying moieties of a "Solon" confederation which kept the Barga Mongols and Orochen in tribute. In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, successive Manchu and Mongolian models of patrilineal ethnicity oriented to service of a larger state were superimposed on this moiety-based social structure. Histories and local gazetteers of Hulun Buir, written from the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, reflect the tensions and changes implicit in this superimposition.

Suk Jung Han, a Korean Sociologist, will present a paper titled, "From Pusan to Fengtian: the Nexus between Korea and Manchukuo in the 1930s." His paper is an inquiry of the close relationship between Korea and Manchukuo during colonial period which has long been ignored in Asian and Western historiography. Han points out that Manchukuo is vital for the contemporary Korean history, particularly for state-formation of North and South Korea in the post-liberation period. Han's project would trace the human and material flow between Korea and Manchukuo with the focus of the rise of Pusan harbor. With the Japanese takeover of Manchuria and the subsequent state-building in the early 1930s, Korea became a jumping board for Japanese expansion toward the Chinese continent. Pusan harbor was the pivotal point to link Japan and China. In a sense, East Asia was organically connected through Pusan. This inquiry would broaden the scope of the study of the Japanese colonialism by covering the relationship not only between the metropolis and its peripheries, but also between peripheries. This paper will give us some implication for the influence from Manchukuo to Korea in the post-liberation period.

Ding Yizhuang will introduce to us "*Suiqiren* in Liaodong: Between Bannerpeople and Civilians." Nowadays, in the field of China studies, it has been well-accepted that the difference between "qiren" (bannerpeople) and "minren" (civilians) also distinguish Manchu and Han. Her paper will challenge such an argument with an analysis of the "suiqi" community. "Suiqi ren" refers to a specific community of Han banner people who were emigrants from Shangdong Province and who were integrated into the banner system in the Qing dynasty. People of the "suiqi" community have complicated identities that make them different from both Manchu and Han communities. They call themselves "suiqi ren", a term that never appears in any official history but accurately reflects how they perceive their own identity. Ding will focus on the following questions: How do the "suiqi" people and their offspring remember the Qing dynasty? How do they view the identity of their ancestors? How do they perceive their own ethnic identity? Answers to these questions will remind us of the existence of similar communities whose overlapping social and ethnic boundaries make their identity complicated.

At the end of the workshop, all participants will join a roundtable discussion of the present situation of and the prospects for Manchurian studies. Professor Nishimura Shigeo and Dr. Ronald Suleski will be the mediator, and each talk on recent scholarship in Japan and discuss themes and approaches of the workshop papers, and it is hoped that all participants will share information about archival research, fieldwork methodology, and questions and problems for future work.

II. Panels (tentative):

1. Cultural Manchuria

Atsuko Sakaki (University of Toronto): "Manchuria, Aporia, and Abe Kobo"

Faye Yuan Kleeman (University of Colorado, Boulder): "Inscribing Manchuria: Gender, Ideology, and Popular Imagination"

David Tucker (University of Iowa): "Colonial Cherries"

Chair and Discussant: Gavan McCormack (ANU)

2. Borderlands in The National Imagination

Mark Elliott (Harvard): "Japanese Scholarship in the Making of Manchurian History"

Dan Shao (Fairbank Center): "Manchus' Memories of Manzhouguo"

Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka (Wellesley): "Japan's Manchurian Myths"

Chair and Discussant: Rana Mitter (Oxford)

3. Ethnicity in Manchuria

Ding Yizhuang (CASS): "*Suiqiren* in Liaodong: Between Bannerpeople and Civilians"

S.J. Han (Dong-A University): "From Pusan to Fengtian: The Nexus Between Korea and Manchukuo in the 1930s"

Christopher Atwood (Indiana University): "Ethnicity and State Service in Hulun Buir"

Chair and Discussant: Prasenjit Duara (University of Chicago)

4. Roundtable discussion (Prospects, archival research, methodology problems)

Nishimura Shigeo (Osaka Gaidai): Japanese studies of Chinese Modern Northeast in the Past Ten Years

Ronald Suleski (Fairbank Center): General comments on papers