

Chapter Sixteen

Japanese Pan-Asianism in Manchukuo, 1935

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Manchukuo (1932–1945), the Japanese puppet state in northeastern China or Manchuria, was the first major laboratory for the implementation of pan-Asian ideology of the Japanese military, in particular, of the Kwantung army, which controlled the region. The Treaty of Portsmouth, which concluded the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, acknowledged China's sovereignty in Manchuria, but it granted Japan the Russian lease on the Guandong (Kwantung) peninsula and the South Manchurian Railroad. From this time, Japanese interests and influence grew, particularly after the annexation of Korea in 1910 and during World War I. By 1927, 85% of Japanese foreign investment was in China, and of its Chinese investment, 80% was invested in Manchuria. The investment of the South Manchurian Railroad in 1920 alone was 440 million yen. By 1932, Japan's share of the total industrial capital in Manchuria was 64%, while the Chinese share was 28%. The Japanese controlled Manchuria through a tacit and rocky alliance with the warlord of the region Zhang Zuolin (Chang Tso-lin, 1875–1928), whom they assassinated in 1928. When his son and successor, Zhang Xueliang (Chang Hsüeh-liang, 1901–2001), declared his affiliation to the resurgent Nationalist Party (Guomindang/GMD, or Kuomintang) on the mainland, the Kwantung army engineered the Manchurian Incident of 18 September 1931 and established Manchukuo in 1932.

Although the establishment of the puppet state was an imperialist act, elements of the Japanese military were also swayed by the rhetoric of Pan-Asianism. While it became increasingly a front for Japanese expansionism, pan-Asianist ideals were pursued by several Japanese idealists and found institutional expression during the early period until 1937. The military learned of the necessity for some kind of compact with the Chinese communities from the settler communities of the area. The Japanese settlers, represented by such societies as the Daiyühökai (Great Majestic Mountain Association)

and the Manshū Seinen Renmei (Manchurian Youth League), were painfully aware that Japanese interests and domination in Manchuria were doomed without a framework of Sino-Japanese coexistence.

The Manchurian Youth League developed the idea of *kyōwa* (*xiehe* in Chinese) or cooperation between races or nationalities and the rejection of colonialist attitudes. This idea was incarnated in a fascistic mass organization in Manchukuo known as Kyōwakai or Xiehehui and translated into English as the Concordia Society. The association was built on rhetoric of eternal peace embedded in East Asian ideals and a framework of mutual cooperation among the different peoples. It advocated anti-imperialism and even conceived of a new type of anticolonial state that would replace all imperialist powers—including the Japanese. Increasingly after 1937, however, the Kyōwakai became a propaganda machine for the Japanese army's expansion into mainland China and Asia. It was from these beginnings in Manchukuo that the *political* ideology of Pan-Asianism grew by the mid-1930s into the Tōa Renmei (East Asian League), the Tōa Kyōdōtai (East Asian Community), and still later the idea of the Daitō Kyōeiken (Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere; see II:24).

The two pieces included here represent two essays from lower-school textbooks. They are written in classical Chinese—obviously for Chinese students—and expound on different aspects of Manchukuo's state-centered Pan-Asianism. Although the piece argues for a multinational state, there is a certain hierarchy of nationalities, with Manchus and Mongols, who were politically insignificant, given an ordinary status and the Japanese a special (and in other texts), leadership role. Although they represented over 80% of the population, the Chinese are not mentioned by name in this and many other texts. The second essay invokes Chinese traditions of loyalty and duty in order to foster these values for the Manchukuo State. The two figures referred to are legendary Chinese martial heroes, Guan Yu (?–219) and Yue Fei (1103–1142) and the state often drew on popular Chinese culture (including Confucianism) to represent itself as a “truly” Asiatic state in contrast to the GMD but especially to the communists. Indeed, Pan-Asianism in Manchukuo was closely intertwined with state building.

Sources (translation from the Chinese original by Prasenjit Duara)
Zhuji xiaoxuexiao xiushen jiaokeshu disice (Beginning Grade, Elementary School, Textbook for Self-Cultivation, vol. 4), December 1935.

LESSON 25: THE CONCORD OF NATIONALITIES

The nation is like a family. The people of a nation are like the members of a family. A family has brothers and sisters who are called siblings from the

same womb (*tongbao*). In the case where a single nationality establishes a nation, the entire nation is like the brothers and sisters birthed by one mother. In the case where different nationalities establish a nation, it is like brothers and sisters birthed by different mothers. In brief, they are all siblings/compatriots.

Although the nationalities in our empire of Manchukuo are many, their unity lies in being the officers and people of the emperor. Their gains and losses, joys and sorrows are all held in common. They are like siblings from different surnames. For the security of our compatriots/siblings, we can only speak of the way of co-operation and concord.

The Manchus and Mongols are the original inhabitants of our country. The Japanese have especially conspicuous accomplishments in the establishment of our imperial state. As for the other nationalities, they have migrated to this land and lived among the people for a long time. Their feelings have melded together. The reason our nation is able to establish its independence in the world is entirely due to the spirit of co-operation and concord of the nationalities.

We ought to know that the great enterprise of establishing a nation-state is not the responsibility of a single nationality or a single name. The various nationalities currently residing in the land must cooperate. We must ensure that the knowledgeable plan thoroughly and the brave labor exhaustively. Only when we exert and arouse ourselves and each person achieves their goal, can we establish the basis of the nation for ten thousand years. Henceforth each nationality within the nation-state must make greater efforts.

Gaoji xiaoxuexiao xiushen jiaokeshu disice (Upper Grade, Elementary School, Textbook for Self-Cultivation, vol. 1), December 1935.

LESSON 28: EXERT LOYALTY AND SERVE THE COUNTRY

We are able to obtain our livelihood because we rely on society and especially upon the sovereign state (*jūnguo*). Try to think; although I may be poor, the rich do not dare to bully me; although I may be weak, the strong do not dare to humiliate me. What is the reason? It is because our national laws protect us. Moreover, if we go abroad, we can find a place to live and plan a livelihood. We can gain people's respect and not meet with their disdain. What is the reason? It is because our nation's authority protects us. As a result, we entrust in our sovereign state and are showered by its favors. Is this not great?

Within the boundaries of our national territory, there is no land that is not our lord's land (*wangtu*). Within the boundaries of our territory, there is no person who is not our lord's officer. Since we receive the great benevolence of our sovereign state, there is none without the responsibility of duty to the

country and there is none who may not keep loyalty and duty in their hearts. Loyalty and duty like that of Guan Zhuangmu and Yue Wumu are truly the best models for us.

Zhuangmu's personal name was Yu; his courtesy name was Yunzhang. He was engaged in a common mission with Zhang Fei. When Zhao Lie was pursued everywhere, he could not escape danger. At a time when Zhao Lie was not yet emperor, Cao Cao had sought to employ Yu. But because Yu had sworn a brotherhood pact unto death with Zhao Lie, he rejected the proposal. Cao sighed, saying, "He is truly a righteous warrior."

Wumu's personal name was Fei; his courtesy name was Pengju. He personally experienced over two hundred battles and had successively defeated the Jin [empire in northern China (1115–1234), ruled by the Tungus Jurchen tribes from Manchuria]. Qin Kuai [1090–1155] arrested him and falsely accused him of plotting rebellion, even to the sentence of death. At the moment of his trial, Wumu tore open his jacket to reveal the four characters that were deeply carved on his back "serve the country with dedicated loyalty."

Those who are loyal and righteous are rooted in heavenly nature. Today when people hear the stories of the loyal and righteous hearts of Guan and Yue, they cannot but well up with admiration and affection. It is evidence of the expression of heavenly nature. This is none other than the way of duty to the country and, moreover, heavenly nature is completed in loyalty and righteousness.