

Manzhouguo's Forgotten Collaborators, 1932-1945

Jennifer Imber
History Department
Hendrix College
1600 Washington Ave
Conway, Arkansas 72032 USA

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Deborah Skok

Abstract

Manzhouguo, the puppet state established in 1932 in the Manchuria by Japan, has become, for contemporary China, a humiliating mark on its history. In records of this event, many Chinese historians glorify the resistance fighters who challenged the invasion, while ignoring the multitudes of collaborators working within the new state. The examination of this high degree of collaboration contributes to scholar Prasenjit Duara's argument that Manzhouguo's goal was to become a sovereign and authentic state. This is shown by Manzhouguo's survival, in a hostile region, for thirteen years. Therefore, it is imperative that one examines the forgotten lives of those who collaborated. This paper looks at the various motivations that inspired collaborators to begin working with the Manzhouguo state. In addition, it studies the context in which these individuals are today remembered through Chinese monuments, museums, and textbooks. This paper pieces together motivations for cooperation with Japan by the use of primarily confessions and documents from war criminal management sites after the fall of Manzhouguo, an examination of the demographics of participants, and theories on the nature of collaboration. Upon completion of the research, it can be seen that the primary reasons for collaboration were extremely varied and could stem from almost anything, including: confusion, convenience, fear, different understandings of personal identity, and even defiance.

Keywords: Collaborator, China, Colonialism

1. Introduction

Hanjian (汉奸), or "a person so irredeemably subhuman as to forfeit all claims of being Chinese" is generally accepted to be the most derogatory of Chinese terms when discussing collaborators, such as those who helped the Japanese in Manzhouguo.¹ As Manzhouguo has become an embarrassing mark on the history of China, historical narratives concerning the state lasting from 1932 to 1945 tend to glorify the resistance fighters who challenged invasion. This approach allows for the burying of a national shame, but also ignores the multitudes of collaborators that aided the authentication of Manzhouguo. Today, collaboration is an *ex post facto* label that lumps anyone who sided with the losing party in a conflict together, but in reality the nature of collaboration in Manzhouguo was very complex. With motivations stemming from confusion, convenience, fear, different understandings of personal identity, and even defiance, collaborators must not be forgotten, as the intricacies of the decision to cooperate cannot be traced to any one source.

To tell the story of collaboration, this paper uses confessions, documents from war criminal management sites, demographics of participants, and memories after the fall of Manzhouguo in piecing together motivations for cooperation. First, political leaders and their reasons for cooperating with a collaborative movement are introduced. Next, the issue of a Manchurian identity is addressed. The implementation of the ideology of *wangdao*, or the "kingly way" popular during the dynastic period, explains the use of history to legitimize rule and collaboration.

Finally, literary leaders show how other facets of life, including the arts, were affected. In conclusion, a brief representation of contemporary Chinese memory of Manzhouguo through monuments and museums address the continual problems of explaining collaborator's lives and the establishment of myth-making to prove some of the faults with the Manzhouguo regime.

2. Background

During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) Manchuria, located today in Northeastern China, was officially a part of China but was not fully controlled by Chinese diplomats. As most of the region was not officially established until just before the turn of the century, Russians, Japanese, and Koreans all influenced and shaped the polyglot that made Manchuria. Just after major cities were established in Manchuria by Russia's construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway, Japan became involved in the region. After defeating Russia in the Russo-Japanese War lasting from 1904-1905, Japan leased the Liaodong Peninsula and the Russian rail system through the permission of the Treaty of Portsmouth. In subsequent years, Japanese power in the region grew. In 1915, the Japanese government issued the Twenty-One Demands to the Chinese, which stipulated greater commercial rights and the assignment of a Japanese police force to north China.² After World War I, Japan was granted German concessions in Shandong Province located in Northeastern China.

China's grip on Manchuria decreased further after the fall of the Manchu Qing Dynasty in 1911. The absence of political leaders and boundaries led to a search for an authentic government. It was during this time that Zhang Zuolin, a soldier in the late Qing, swept into Northeastern China and swiftly took control of the three northernmost provinces: Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning.³ Zhang made agreements with Japan to maintain control and keep the Nationalist Party (Guomindang) out of the Northeast.⁴ But, on 4 June 1928, Japanese troops assassinated Zhang in a train bombing. The Japanese believed that Zhang's son, Zhang Xueliang would be easier to control as they moved toward their larger goal of sparking a war between Zhang and the Nationalist Party, ultimately distracting the Chinese from focusing their animosity on Japan.⁵ To Japan's surprise, in order to avenge his father's death in December of 1928, Zhang Xueliang unified with the Nationalist Nanjing government under Chiang Kai-shek, a military leader who was trained in Japan.⁶

Together, Zhang Xueliang and Chiang Kai-shek attempted to drive Japan out of China by rejecting new railway deals, refusing extraterritoriality requests, and promoting an economic boycott of Japanese goods. In response, without permission from the Tokyo government, Japanese army officers in Mukden (today called Shenyang and located in Liaoning), on 18 September 1931, set off explosives on the Japanese railway in an attempt to force a military conflict between China and Japan. This event, known as the Mukden Incident, Manchurian Incident, or September 18th Incident (九一八事变), resulted in skirmishes between the Japanese and Chinese.⁷ As soon as news of the bombing reached Chiang Kai-shek, he issued a nonresistance order to Zhang Xueliang and the Nationalist troops in the Northeast.⁸ In response, Zhang Xueliang withdrew south of the Great Wall, and by the end of 1931, Manchuria was under Japanese control.⁹ In 1932, Japan made agreements with the last Qing emperor ousted from his official position during the Revolution of 1911, Puyi, to start a new Manchurian state called Manzhouguo (满洲国).¹⁰

The state of Manzhouguo existed from February 1932 until the end of World War II in August 1945. During this time, Japan established (and heavily controlled) a functioning government, incorporating political heads from Japan, China, and Korea (which had been a colony under Japanese control since 1910). The government, based on the Chinese Republican model on paper, had a Prime Minister and many ministries.¹¹ But, according to historian Andrew Reed Hall, it is commonly believed that "the ministries were mostly symbolic, intended to impress observers and co-opt local power holders to whom posts were given. Few were intended to do actual governing work," which masked the Japanese control of the region.¹² In 1934, 53 percent of head positions in ministries were held by Japanese and by 1940, Japanese held 69 percent of those same positions.¹³

The idea of Manzhouguo manifested itself differently among various groups. For the Japanese public, Manzhouguo was a way to alleviate the international, economic depression that struck Japan during the 1930s. By gaining more land and resources, various factions within the Japanese government, military, economic system, and public all used expansion into Manchuria as a panacea for their woes.¹⁴ For those living in Northeastern China, Manzhouguo represented a stable government—at the time the region lacked this. Manzhouguo was also advertised to some, such as the last Qing Emperor Puyi, as a resurrection of the Qing Dynasty, another state controlled by the Manchus.¹⁵

In contrast, others were strongly opposed to the Manzhouguo government and subsequently fell victim to its new rule. Critics focused on infamous actions taken by the Japanese government such as the conduction of lethal medical experiments on human subjects in “Unit 731.” Japanese also installed advisors, immigrants, and spies throughout the region to keep a close eye on locals.¹⁶ Today, to those Chinese who retain the memory of oppression by the Japanese invasion, Manzh

ouguo is known as “Wei Manzhouguo” (伪满洲国), literally meaning “false Manzhouguo.”

3. Historiography

Histories written about the Manchurian state inevitably address the degree to which Manzhouguo was autonomous and legitimate. One main approach portrays the Chinese and the Japanese colonialists as victims of the Japanese military leaders. In this conceptualization, the agency of the Manchurian state resides mainly in the hands of the Japanese state.¹⁷ The other main approach focuses not on the state’s responsibility, but on the societal role of and reasoning behind colonization.¹⁸ Even within the two major perspectives, however, various sub-approaches have been taken. Many narratives on Manzhouguo’s history, as historian Rana Mitter points out, perpetuate the myth that “there was widespread resistance to the Japanese occupation.”¹⁹ In response, Mitter claims that this is not necessarily true, and, in fact, collaboration with Manzhouguo’s government often occurred.

The “myth” Mitter refers to when explaining how resisters are often glorified and exaggerated both in heroic acts and numbers is not only present in historical writing on Manzhouguo but can be observed in the histories of many other countries. Parallels are often drawn between Manzhouguo and Vichy France when discussing participation. Both Manzhouguo’s and Vichy France’s narratives often portray heroic defiance to an evil occupier, when, in actuality, the majority did not put up a fight, but instead, in some sense, collaborated.²⁰ But, even within this group of “collaborators” many were not purely pro-Japan or even showed support to Manzhouguo. Many were actually just continuing their lives within a region they had previously lived.

4. Terms

“Collaboration” was first used in the way it is commonly used today by Phillippe Pétain, the chief of state of Vichy France on the radio on 30 October 1940 (six days after meeting with Adolf Hitler), when he said, “a *collaboration* has been envisioned between our two countries.”²¹ Chinese historian, Timothy Brook, notes that, “since then, ‘collaboration’ has been the word by which we denigrate political cooperation with an occupying force.”²² In English, this word has developed strongly negative connotations, directly challenging the idea of nation, nationality, and nationalist. Where nation is defined as “a type of constructed political identity... that is posited on citizenry and people who are self-aware subjects,” becoming someone who strictly supports one’s own nation, or “nationalist,” becomes possible.²³ Mitter states that “to be a nationalist is not to abandon other loyalties to region, family or workplace.”²⁴ This is complicated when considering those who lived in Manzhouguo. Their previous ties to China, Manchuria, and Japan affected where their natural loyalties lay. In addition, the aftermath of Manzhouguo, where the term “collaboration” is often used, affects the meaning of the word in China. When Mao Zedong came to power in 1949, Manchuria became a part of the PRC. As a natural enemy of Japan, the PRC labeled those who worked for Manzhouguo’s government as collaborators and those who resisted as nationalists.

To problematize the common definition of collaboration, resistance must also be briefly examined. Resistance, in the context of an occupied region, is closely related to the term nation or nationalist.²⁵ Resistance, or actively fighting for nationalist ideals, as a concept becomes particularly attractive after the “invader” has lost and the home territory wins.

The Chinese vocabulary for collaboration also carries various connotations. Historians tend to use different Chinese words for collaboration to construct their arguments, which enables each to support their contentions about the nature of collaboration in Manzhouguo. Chinese words for collaboration range from the fairly neutral to the strongly negative. For example, the term *hezuo* (合作) is often used to mean: “to work together.” Today it is used in the context of business interactions of two companies collaborating or individuals working together on one project.²⁶

Another term that is sometimes used is *tixie* (提携), meaning “collaborative support.” *Hezuo* and *tixie* have positive or neutral implications, labeling the action of one who is willing to work with others to reach a common goal. These terms are often implemented within narratives that describe the positive aspects of Manzhouguo.²⁷

Other words have more negative connotations. *Gongju* (工具), which literally means tool, and today refers both to physical tools, such as a hammer, as well as to the more abstract tools of communication, is often used in China when describing those who aided the Japanese takeover of Manchuria. Similarly, *kuilei* (傀儡), meaning puppet, is commonly used when describing both Chinese and Japanese political leaders who advocated for the Japanese occupation and Manzhouguo state. Collaborators are also described as those who *ting Riben ren* (听日本人) or listen to the Japanese. This phrase makes it clear that it is not only being controlled by the Japanese that is considered a crime against the Chinese “nation,” but also simply accepting the Japanese suggestions or teachings. The most derogatory of Chinese terms when discussing collaborators is *hanjian* (汉奸), which means “a person so irredeemably subhuman as to forfeit all claims of being Chinese” or a “traitor to the Han Chinese.”²⁸ These negative terms all evoke strong emotional responses from Chinese today and it is important to note that many of these words were used during Manzhouguo as well as today. But importantly, today’s negative vocabulary is strongly associated both with Manzhouguo and the Second Sino-Japanese War further south in China, which occurred around the same time (1937-1945) and therefore cannot be said to stem purely from the memory of Manzhouguo.

When discussing collaborators, various historians have placed such individuals into neat categories. Werner Rings, in his examination of the collaboration of individuals and nations under the National Socialist (Nazi) party in Europe from the late 1930s into the 1940s, argues that there are four degrees of collaboration. The first is “neutral collaboration.” A neutral collaborator decides to work with an invading force out of convenience and self-interest. They participate so as not to fall into “bankruptcy, unemployment, starvation, chaos, and destruction” and act in order to survive the circumstances in which they find themselves.²⁹ Historian Lo Jiu-jung agrees that for most people, survival is the driving force in collaboration for both ordinary people and those at the top.³⁰ However, she complicates this by explaining that survival can be represented through political, military, family, or group survival.³¹ She claims that there tends to be a “wide range of different types of survival, giving rise to conflicts of interest as well as divided loyalties.”³²

The second of Rings’ categories of collaboration is “unconditional.” This group joins forces because they “endorse its principles and ideals.”³³ This term, “unconditional,” seems to fit better with the ideology of the National Socialist Party in Europe than it does in the case of Manzhouguo. One could argue that the Japanese invested in Manzhouguo played the role of the unconditional collaborator. But, in the case of non-Japanese, especially Chinese, it is difficult to find accounts of unconditional collaboration for those who survived the end of Manzhouguo. The third degree is “conditional collaboration,” in which one cooperates with an occupying power while only endorsing “some, not all” doctrines.³⁴ The last type of collaborator is tactical. These individuals act so as to “disguise[] resistance.”³⁵ Rings also claims that individuals could simultaneously take part in various roles at the same time, even if the categories seems contradictory.³⁶ These categories of collaboration are certainly useful, but in reality, most people do not fit purely in one category or two: they tend to be more complex.

5. Government Officials’ Reasons for Collaboration

Today, in order to perpetuate the narrative of heroes who resisted the Manzhouguo state, Chinese historians tend to dismiss collaborators as “being motivated by gross moral turpitude.”³⁷ But, as Mitter explains, for many working with the Manzhouguo government, collaboration was simply a continuation of their lives before the change in regime. Many “accept[ed] the collaborative ‘bargain’ of higher wages and better working conditions than were available in North China.”³⁸ Collaborators that have been examined by Chinese historians the most closely are the political and provincial elites. Mitter explains that it was a “combination of necessity and political calculation [that] underpinned the agreement by many Chinese elites to collaborate with the invaders.”³⁹ Many today believe that necessity may be excused for the general public, but political elites were aware that their decisions often influenced others. They are labeled as collaborators because of their choice to show to others that their political alliances lay outside of the Chinese nation.

After the Manchurian Incident in 1931, the political leader Chiang Kai-shek ordered Zhang Xueliang and his troops to not resist the Japanese. It is unclear whether Chiang and Zhang meant for the political elite living in Manchuria at the time to flee, risking their lives and financial stability, or to continue their lives under the Japanese with the risk of becoming collaborators. This message may have been confusing for leadership to understand. Many historians wonder what would have happened if the Nanjing government had made a stand against the Japanese from the beginning. However, because Chiang did not consider his forces sufficient or prepared for defending

Manchuria, a region more than nine hundred miles away from the Chinese capital, and Zhang was convinced the League of Nations would intervene, they did not order a counter attack.⁴⁰

Some political elites quickly became the models of collaboration with Manzhouguo. Xi Xia was named governor of Jilin Province as a reward for his cooperation. On 14 October 1932, in the *Shenjing Shibao*, the largest Japanese-owned Chinese language newspaper in the region, Xi reassured the public, in an interview, that cooperating with Manzhouguo would not have dire results.⁴¹ Using carefully worded sentences and avoiding the question of the Japanese presence in Manchuria, Xi, when asked “What negotiations has the new government undertaken with the Japanese?” curtly responded “none.” He also explained how the new government would provide local attention and “public order” by “deal[ing] with the matters that concern Jilin, and not matters that concern other provinces.”⁴² These promises to others from a Chinese elite who had already decided to cooperate with the Manzhouguo government reassured the public to not fear the consequences of collaboration.

In addition to the example set by Chiang, Zhang, and Xi, the Japanese, according to Hall, “used a potent combination of violence and persuasion to bring prominent Manchurian Chinese provincial leaders over to their side during the initial phase of the occupation.”⁴³ The Japanese claimed they would provide protection for various groups, especially from Russians and the Chinese Nationalist Party.⁴⁴ Japanese assurances of safety provided an alternative to a powerless life exiled to Beijing.⁴⁵ Because of this strategy, enough collaborators stepped forward so the Manzhouguo government could be successfully established with local support.

Other political leaders were forced to decide, and decide quickly, which side they would support. Zhang Jinghui, the governor of Heilongjiang, chose to support Manzhouguo since he feared being attacked by the Guandong Army, Japanese forces in Manchuria.⁴⁶ If the Nanjing government or Zhang Xueliang had promised to send troops to fight on his behalf, he might have become a resistance leader. But, not given the protection of either of their armies, Zhang Jinghui had to protect his base in Harbin before the Japanese army arrived, leaving his only possible alliance with Manzhouguo. Soon after, he became the prime minister of Manzhouguo.⁴⁷

Others collaborated politically for completely different reasons. Some, like Ma Zhanshan, even avoided being labeled a puppet.⁴⁸ A. T. Steele, an American reporting in Manchuria during 1932 records the famous story of Ma, a warlord from Northeastern China, and his tactical collaboration. According to Steele, Ma had fought against Japan in Manchuria before the Manchurian Incident. This made him an “instant hero,” and “portraits of him were sold like hotcakes in the streets of Shanghai, Canton and other Chinese cities.” Despite his popularity in China, in 1932 when Manzhouguo was established, he was offered the position of Minister of War in Xinjing, the capital city of Manzhouguo.⁴⁹ Accepting, Ma was “denounced as a traitor,” and the Nationalists claimed that he had “‘sold out’ to the Japanese to become Minister of War in the newborn puppet state.” Ma traveled to Xinjing to “immediately lin[e] his pockets with Japanese gold,” while the Japanese press hailed “him now as an enlightened prophet of the New Order.” One morning they discovered he had “slipped away... to resume his interrupted war against Japan.” Once again Ma became a hero in China and an “illiterate bandit” to the Japanese, who repeatedly “declared [him] slain in battle; but he wouldn’t stay dead.”⁵⁰

Ma’s example shows that in some special cases political collaboration with the Manzhouguo government and the Japanese did not automatically damn one in the eyes of the Chinese public. Some, like Ma, are fondly remembered; even though for a period of time he worked for the Manzhouguo government, he supposedly did so with the intent of stealing money to use for the resistance. Hence, Ma could be considered to be one of Rings’ tactical collaborators, but with the caveat that there is no way to be sure of what Ma was thinking when he decided to work with the Japanese. As K. K. Kawakami, a Japanese American reporter in Manzhouguo during its early years, explains, when Ma joined the Japanese forces, he “was utterly out of his element.”⁵¹ He may have joined them thinking it was the best thing to do, but when he realized that he was not going to make a difference in their control over Manzhouguo, he left, and became a resistance hero.

6. Identity

In the case of Manzhouguo, it is important to understand the ways that those living in Manchuria prior to 1932 self identified since they may not have held allegiances to the Chinese nation before the start of Manzhouguo. Since the beginning of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.), the Han ethnic group was understood to represent “Chinese” people. The Chinese then began to define those who were not Han as “non-Chinese.”⁵² Manchuria, while technically a part of Qing China, was not purely Han Chinese. Manchus and Mongolians also lived in Manchuria during the Qing and after its fall in 1911. Within the records from the Manzhouguo demographics, “Chinese” are all lumped together and include the Manchus, Mongols, and the Hui, or predominantly Muslim Chinese. This mixed “Chinese” group

comprised approximately 94.2% of the Manzhouguo population in 1940. Sadly, there are no extant records that differentiate between these various identities. Koreans also made up a significant portion of the population at about 3.3%. By 1940, the Japanese comprised 2.3% of the population in Manzhouguo. A remaining 0.2% were labeled as “others.” But, as 75.2% of the Chinese worked in the countryside on Agriculture, Forestry and Husbandry while 13% of the Japanese and 29.3% of the “Others” did the same, influential peoples living in cities who had more of a choice of whether or nor to collaborate could have had more even distributions of nationalities in the major cities.⁵³

Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang Province, is an example of one of the most diverse cities within Manchuria. Because the Russians founded it in 1898, it developed strong identity ties to many nationalities. As James H. Carter explains in *Creating a Chinese Harbin: Nationalism in an International City, 1916-1932*, Harbin cannot be defined as “Russian or Chinese at any point in its history.” Instead, he claims, “to deny its Russian, or Chinese, or Japanese (or Polish, Korean, Jewish) characteristics is to omit entire dimensions of this unique metropolis.”⁵⁴ Carter narrates the story of how Harbin became more “Chinese” during the 1920s until regionalism, foreign aggression, and factionalism stopped the movement.⁵⁵ Carter also explains that the lack of consensus on the idea of nation and various groups with cross-purposes became “a fatal weakness of the Chinese nation.”⁵⁶ Due to this lack of national pride, by the time that the Japanese invaded, there was little protest in the city. And, in almost the same way that the “Chinese” sinofied Harbin, the population was able to easily take on the identity that the Japanese provided under Manzhouguo. Those working within Manzhouguo perpetuated the multi-national identity provided and delivered speeches in multiple languages. On 3 March 1932, Bao Guandeng, the mayor of Harbin under Manzhouguo, explained on the radio “The Basic Understanding We Should Have of the New Nation” in Chinese, Japanese, English, and Russian. In this talk he condemned followers of Sun Yat-sen for not following the will of heaven by embracing democracy instead of the traditional imperial orthodoxy.⁵⁷ By embracing the international identity that was already present in Harbin, Manzhouguo was able to replace the Chinese identity that had been forming in Harbin over the past sixteen years.⁵⁸ In this way, Manzhouguo authenticated its power in Manchuria.

Manzhouguo was quite successful at inducing a cross-ethnic identity within its borders. Propaganda through posters, literature, and film were produced in order to perpetuate this idea of “ethnic harmony” (Japanese: *minzoku kyōwa*). As Sookyeong Hong explains in “Between Ideology and Spectatorship: The ‘Ethnic Harmony’ of the Manchuria Motion Picture Corporation, 1937-1945,” the idea of this ethnic harmony was used to legitimize the state. The Manchuria Motion Picture Corporation was established in 1937 as a war propaganda machine and during its lifetime produced approximately one hundred feature films and one hundred eighty documentaries.⁵⁹ This corporation’s emphasis on the ability of the ethnicities to work in fellowship is an example of the way that the state continued the conception of a “Manchurian” identity, including anyone who lived in Manzhouguo, as separate from China.⁶⁰ Images were posted around Manzhouguo showing girls from five major ethnicities (Manchus, Japanese, Han, Mongols, and Koreans) holding hands. Even the national flag had five colors to promote the national idea of “Five Races Under One Union.”

Puyi, the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty, was chosen by the Japanese to be the symbol of unity and harmony. As a Qing Dynasty emperor from Manchuria, Puyi was a Manchu. K. K. Kawakami suggested that had Puyi left China during the revolution and started an independent Manchurian state, the “revolutionists would have accepted the proposal without hesitation.”⁶¹ Instead, Puyi was too young (he was five at the time) and eventually, he fled to Japanese occupied territories in Tianjin when the Chinese reneged on their promise that he could remain safely in the Forbidden City in Beijing. When Japanese leaders told Puyi that Manzhouguo would restore the Manchus from their embarrassing overthrow by the Republicans, he accepted.⁶² While Kawakami’s views tend to represent the Japanese imperialist attitudes, they explain how and why Manzhouguo made certain decisions, like putting Puyi into power. Kawakami’s portrayal of Chinese history as a fight between the Manchus in the north and the Chinese in the south propagates the idea that, ethnically, problems would always remain between the two. He suggested that the best way to resolve these issues was to have Manzhouguo represent the north while staying above the Great Wall and leaving the south to the Chinese.⁶³

Today, the popular Chinese conception of Puyi is that he was forced, against his will, to become the puppet emperor of Manzhouguo, but according to a H. G. W. Woodhead, the editor of *China Year Book*, who interviewed Puyi on 2 October 1932, at the time, this did not seem to be the case. When asked if he was happy in his position, Puyi responded “with emphasis, that he was.”⁶⁴ Another question that Woodhead asked was whether or not the Japanese kidnapped him. Puyi “roared with laughter” when hearing this question and repeated “Kidnapped? Kidnapped? No! No!”⁶⁵ Kawakami agrees that “at no time... was [Puyi] ever under any restraint, nor was any coercion applied to him.”⁶⁶ Why would he have agreed to go along being a puppet leader of Manzhouguo? This could possibly be because the Japanese forces were watching Puyi’s answers in the interviews or he could have legitimately thought of himself as a good Manchu leader rather than a puppet.

7. Wangdao

Another way that the Manzhouguo regime was able to gain more collaborators and authenticity was by incorporating the various beliefs from the different identities into their own government. This can especially be seen with the idea of *wangdao* (王道), or “the way of the king.”⁶⁷ *Wangdao* is a Confucian ideal that goes along with the mandate of heaven in which the ruler or the regime is legitimized through its success. Manzhouguo was not the first regime in China to use this, but Kawakami argues the idea was necessary in order to successfully have a Chinese regime. The Republic of China, starting in 1912, under Yuan Shikai, was unsuccessful because it replaced *wangdao* with republican values.⁶⁸ Instead of moving to a new form of government (either communism, republicanism, democracy, etc.), the return to *wangdao* was a way to use history to authenticate the new regime.

Instead of implementing a new government system, Japan attempted to marry together *wangdao*, or the old traditional Chinese filial values, with modern technologies and science. Kawakami argues that Japan was the only one able to do this, as Western nations did not have the capacity to respect *wangdao* and the Chinese did not have the scientific capabilities of the Japanese.⁶⁹

This ideology was employed in all sections of life. Textbooks within Manzhouguo’s curriculum emphasized Confucianism, the idea of *wangdao*, and “ethnic harmony.”⁷⁰ The “New *Wangdao* Woman” (王道新的妇女) extended female loyalty beyond “the domestic sphere to the state, the nation, and society” in the process of creating a “national spirit.”⁷¹ In order to promote the ideal of the new *wangdao* woman, Manzhouguo established women’s societies such as the *Wanguo Daodehui* (万国道德会) or an international Morality Society. One woman who joined this society, Mrs. Gu, was strongly influenced by it. In 1933, when she was eighteen years old, she wanted to act as an independent woman who supported her family. When her father was arrested by the Japanese for his association with the Chinese Nationalist Party, she received a call that she could “save his life” if she joined the *Daodehui*. Initially, she did not like the society, but once they taught Confucianism, it “changed their [the members of the society’s] hearts.”⁷² Soon, she became a devoted lecture manager, disseminating information on female virtue, breast-feeding, women’s education, and prenatal education. After her period of collaboration with Manzhouguo in teaching these values, she continued her work in Taiwan in 1945.⁷³ Duara explains that the “juxtaposing of the self-sacrificing and traditional against the fiercely independent and even revolutionary woman may sound incongruous,” but it was the model for womanhood in China, Japan, and Manzhouguo during this time period. In this way, women played out the roles explained in *wangdao*, and supported the Manzhouguo state.

8. Literary Leaders

Norman Smith, author of *Resisting Manchukuo*, explains that historians today typically dismiss Manzhouguo as a “cultural wasteland,” but in reality, while Manzhouguo was not the best place to live and had some oppressive freedom laws, it provided opportunities not present in other places to the literary world, especially women.⁷⁴ For the first five months after Manzhouguo was founded in March of 1932, the new authorities destroyed over 60,000 copies of works and investigated, arrested and incarcerated booksellers resulting in the closure of many businesses. It was through these actions that the government indicated that it would control the production of local literature.⁷⁵ But, by the end of the year, the “atmosphere lightened” and the literary world resumed publications as long as they were in accordance with the “Publication Laws” which required official registration for publications and insulated local society from China by promoting Manzhouguo nationalism.⁷⁶

During the early 1930s, a group of famous authors based themselves in Harbin. During the first few years of the occupation, they struggled under the new laws, and by 1935, all had fled except for Liang Shanding. By leaving, they formed the “Exiled Faction” (流亡派), which was later praised by the PRC government and population. However, other authors that remained behind after given the option of leaving with the exiled faction, such as Liang, were considered collaborators.

Soon after the exiled faction left, new literary groups formed in their absence. Some followed the parameters set by the government and wrote without asserting any political stance, while others, especially women, were more openly critical of Manzhouguo and the Japanese state as a patriarchy that should be rebelled against. During 1937, at the outbreak of war against China, literary restrictions were tightened. On 21 February 1941, Manzhouguo passed the “Eight Abstentions” (八不), which did not permit authors to write about emotional things that could criticize the

state including “love” and “darkness.”⁷⁷ But, they were not strictly enforced, so literary life continued to survive in Manzhouguo.⁷⁸

Smith explains the stories of seven women who lived and wrote during the Manzhouguo period. They represent different parts of Manzhouguo life, as they grew up in different regions and cities. As they are truly a group of “Manchurians,” their ethnic diversity represents Manzhouguo, with some authors Han Chinese, Han and Korean, Han and Manchu, and one who was Hui.⁷⁹ Their writings ranged from critiques of Japanese patriarchy to discussion of the new woman’s sexuality. Some were able to be very successful under Manzhouguo. Mei Niang, for example, attended the 1944 Greater East Asia Writers’ Congress with her bestselling anti-patriarchal and anti-colonial novella in which a family suffers under Japanese rule and capitalism, *Xie (Crabs or 《蟹》)*.⁸⁰ But, after the occupation, Mei and the other six women were “stripped of their colonial possessions” and were “tarred for their ‘colonial’ years.”⁸¹

Similarly, Prasenjit Duara examines Liang Shanding, the man who did not flee from Harbin with the exiled faction. In 1942, he wrote a novel called *Green Valley* (《绿色的谷》) about a local Manzhouguo man. During the same year *Green Valley* was translated into Japanese. This story was an example of “native soil literature,” that portrayed life in a very local sense. Native soil literature was popular and could more easily get by censors because it depicted a Manzhouguo separate from the rest of China. Native soil literature was even taught in school textbooks to show the independence of Manchuria’s traditions and natural beauty, thereby authenticating Manzhouguo’s presence in Manchuria.⁸²

Even though *Green Valley* was native soil literature various passages in Liang’s work were still censored and he was harassed by police after it was printed. His encounters with the police forced him to publish a poem celebrating pan-Asianism, or the Japanese empire, just before he fled Manchuria in 1943.⁸³ Duara, however, does not end the story there, he instead examines the ways the government, both of Manzhouguo and the PRC, shaped Liang’s novel, even after it was written. Duara claims that the story was mainly and originally about the tension between capital and community, not national values. But, after the establishment of the PRC in 1949, it was criticized for being translated into Japanese and the omission of a strong sense of nationalism, which could have been shown through resistance. In a subsequent printing of *Green Valley*, Liang wrote in the postscript that the novel was “constrained by its time and circumstances,” and that is why it ignores the issues of nationalism and the uprisings of the peasants against the landlords.⁸⁴

9. Memory of Collaboration

Four years after Manzhouguo was dismantled at the end of World War II, China was still embroiled in civil war between the Communist Party and the Nationalists. When the Communist Party claimed victory on 1 October 1949, the Party’s leader, Mao Zedong, declared the beginning of the PRC. Following its establishment, the PRC went through several rough periods, including the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957-1959) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In the first year of the Anti-Rightist Movement, three hundred thousand intellectuals were branded “rightist,” anti-communist, or anti-revolutionary, epithets that ultimately ruined their carriers and caused them to be sent to labor camps, prison, or the countryside.⁸⁵ During the Cultural Revolution there was an attack on the “four old” elements of society: old customs, habits, culture, and thinking. These two events strongly affected the image and lives of those who had collaborated with the Japanese in Manzhouguo.⁸⁶

In the Second Sino-Japanese War and Manzhouguo Atrocity museums and monuments in China, those who collaborated with the Japanese are often omitted. With two exceptions (Ma Zhanshan and Puyi) collaborators are usually not discussed. Instead, pictures and stories of those who resisted, those who stayed and fought, martyring themselves, and those who left the region to get help from the Chinese Communist Party, cover the walls of the memorials. The only reason that Puyi, the “puppet emperor” is left in the museums is to memorialize the compassion shown by China and Mao Zedong to re-educate him in the Fushun War Criminals Management Site.

In the Museum of the Imperial Palace of the Manchu State, located in the city of Changchun, the previous capital of Manzhouguo, a large exhibit, titled “From Emperor to Citizen,” explains that Puyi was an emperor three times, driven from power three times, married five times, and imprisoned, all in order to eventually become a “common citizen.” During his time as the emperor of Manzhouguo, he: “betrayed his nation,” “promulgated thousands of reactionary laws,” and “colluded with Japanese military forces to promote Japanese domination in Northeast China.” Consequently, the exhibit continues, he was a “criminal in the eyes of his nation.” Luckily, the Communist Party “adopted for a lenient punishment of physical labour and mental education [*sic*].” At the end of the retelling Puyi’s

life story, the exhibit claims “he sincerely supported [Chinese] leadership by the Party and loved his socialist homeland.” Concluding the exhibit with a quote from the past Premier of China, Zhou Enlai, “we reformed the last emperor and made him a good citizen. This is a wonder to all the world,” shows the way that Puyi’s story has been reappropriated to show the benevolence of the People’s Republic of China.⁸⁷

Puyi was reeducated in the Fushun War Criminal Management Site, and though the majority of prisoners there were Japanese and Nationalist Party war criminals, the China Fushun War Criminals Management Center museum today completely fails to mention the seventy-one Manzhouguo criminals the facility housed until it was closed in 1975.⁸⁸ Instead, the site shares the stories of the 982 Japanese war criminals who were imprisoned there, the inmates’ fair treatment by the Chinese guards, and their quest for forgiveness for the crimes that they committed against the Chinese.⁸⁹ By ignoring those who “collaborated” even with regard to the site where they were re-educated and incarcerated for years for their actions, is a telling omission that demonstrates these individuals are even forgotten in the programs in which they participated run by the Chinese government.

Huangfu Jun, another man who was incarcerated in the Fushun Criminal Management Site, shared his story of collaboration in a self-confession. Published in 1993 in a compilation of stories of both Japanese and Chinese who helped to support Manzhouguo, these stories require careful reading as they were likely written during various “reeducation” periods either in prisons like Fushun assigned by the new political leaders, or penned to mitigate the social and political damage of collaborating with the enemy. The Chinese government often used these sorts of texts both as a writing exercise for re-education and the encouragement of regret. Additionally, these writings served as a warning and guide for others on how they could avoid the “immorality” of anti-nationalism.

Huangfu’s narrative is titled “My Profession as a Puppet” (“我的傀儡生涯”). His autobiography explains how he became involved with the Manzhouguo government as the head of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and specifically how his actions failed to prevent the misery of those in the agricultural regions close to Andong, of which he was in charge.⁹⁰ Particularly interesting in his confession is his self-portrayal as a victim of Manzhouguo.

Huangfu explains that it was particularly easy for him to become involved in the Manzhouguo government because he was offered a promotion as the head of the Ministry of Civil Affairs in Changchun (known as Xinjing during the Manzhouguo period, alerting the reader that this was written after the Manzhouguo government was dismantled in 1945). His account tells how he was treated badly by the Japanese who worked alongside him. His story begins by explaining how he quickly “discovered that every day military police came to patrol [him] which made [him] feel restless. Working in this type of environment made [him] uncomfortable, but [he] had no other way.”⁹¹

He continues by relaying stories of how he was isolated because all his coworkers spoke Japanese exclusively, which made it difficult for him to give input on what they were doing.⁹² Even though his colleagues spoke Japanese, Huangfu stated that everyday he had to be “very careful with [his] actions and words.”⁹³ While the rest of his narrative focuses on his inability to convince the Japanese that those living within his agricultural region in Manzhouguo needed more food or better clothing, it is interesting that even in his confession, he proclaims himself a *gongju*, or tool, of the Japanese in Manchuria and does not take full responsibility for participating with the Japanese forces.⁹⁴ Huangfu’s alleged political and vocational success during the Manzhouguo period resulted in him being put into the Fushun Criminal Management Site as the war came to a close in 1945. As he is currently listed as “lost,” it is likely that Huangfu perished in the camp.⁹⁵

In addition to confessions and museums, when considering the memory of Manzhouguo, it is important to examine the textbooks of China today. In China, as Keith A. Crawford and Stuart J. Foster, authors of *War, Nation, and Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbooks*, explain, “much of Chinese education is geared toward maintaining the ‘dream’ and supporting a ‘special charisma.’”⁹⁶ If, however, the stories of those who collaborated with the Japanese in Manzhouguo do not represent that “dream” or “special charisma,” then it is omitted from textbooks. Instead, a story of “popular nationalism, patriotism, and the identification of a personal and national enemy are powerfully presented.”⁹⁷ Other historical studies of Manzhouguo often show images or biographies of those who survived by “leaving” or “resisting.”⁹⁸ For Chinese historians and classrooms the inclusion of collaboration would disturb the national narrative of patriotism by overcoming the Japanese.

10. Conclusion

It is important to remember the forgotten lives of collaborators, as they made up the majority of the population living in Manzhouguo from its establishment in 1932 to its return to China in 1945. Very complex situations influenced individuals in deciding to join forces with the Japanese and Manzhouguo or to fight against it. And, many

individuals were not officially considered “collaborators” until after Japan was removed from the region. While some worked with the Manzhouguo government for survival or conditionally, others made the decisions tactically, whether to be resistant to the regime or to continue a literary career that could not have existed outside of Manzhouguo. These various reasons overlap, and collaborators could be anyone from authors to political leaders and all others in-between.

These “collaborators” that remained in Manzhouguo were the ones that made Manzhouguo possible, even if that was not their goal. It is because of them Manzhouguo attained any sort of authenticity. But, sadly, at the war’s end, these individuals have been mostly forgotten or lumped together and labeled “collaborators” with the Japanese enemy in order to maintain a narrative of Chinese victory over the region.

11. Entnotes

1 Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 17, and Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 10.

2 Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 281.

3 *Ibid.*, 323-324. Zhang Zuolin is also known as Chiang Suo-lin. In this paper I have chosen to use the pinyin system to represent Chinese names, except in the case of Chiang Kai-shek because of the historical ubiquity of this version of his name.

4 Guomindang or GMD is also rendered as Kuomintang, KMT, or the Nationalist Party.

5 *Ibid.*, 346. Zhang Xueliang is also known as Chang Hsueh-liang.

6 *Ibid.*, 368. Nanjing is also known as Nanking.

7 *Ibid.*, 369. Chiang Kai-shek is the exception to using pinyin, as he is not known by his Chinese name in English literature. His Chinese name is Jiang Jieshi.

8 Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 73.

9 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 370.

10 *Ibid.*, 370-371., Manzhouguo is also known as Manchukuo. Manchukuo was used during the event by English press, but it uses a mixture of the dated Wade-Giles Romanization system of Chinese and a random interpretation of the pronunciation. Instead I have chosen to use the system named pinyin that has been popular since the 1950s. See Figure 1 for map of Manzhouguo and Japanese occupied regions in China and Korea during 1941.

11 Andrew Reed Hall, “Constructing a ‘Manchurian’ Identity: Japanese Education in Manchukuo, 1931-1945,” University of Pittsburgh ETD, March 19, 2004, 24.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

14 Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 428.

15 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 370-371.

16 Lin Yongqiang, “建立伪满洲国经济机构,” (Harbin: Harbin Institute of Technology, 2013).

17 As seen in Norman Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo: Chinese Women Writers and the Japanese Occupation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), and Mariko Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009).

18 As seen in Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* and Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

19 Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth Nationalism, Resistance and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 16.

20 *Ibid.*, 16, and Timothy Brook, *Collaboration*, 2-3.

21 Phillippe Pétain quoted in Brook, 1.

22 Brook, *Collaboration*, 1.

23 Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 7-8.

24 *Ibid.*, 7.

25 *Ibid.*, 16-17.

26 Brook, *Collaboration*, 9.

27 Young, *Japan’s Total Empire*, 428.

28 Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 17 and Brook, *Collaboration*, 10.

29 Werner Rings, *Life with the Enemy* (München, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1979), 73.

30 Lo Jiu-jung, “Chapter 6: Survival as Justification for Collaboration, 1937-1945” in David P Barrett and Larry N. Shyu, *Chinese Collaboration with Japan, 1932-1945: The Limits of Accommodation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 116.

31 *Ibid.*, 128.

32 *Ibid.*, 131.

33 Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 86.

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- 34 *Ibid.*, 106.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 129.
- 36 Norman Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo*, 6.
- 37 Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 17.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 73-74.
- 41 Hall, "Constructing a Manchurian Identity," 23.
- 42 Xi Xia quoted in Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, 84.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 80.
- 45 *Ibid.* Beiping was formerly Beijing, a name change that was made after the Nationalists moved the Chinese capital to Nanjing.
- 46 Also referred to as the Kwantung Army.
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 Also known as Ma Chan-shan.
- 49 Also known as Hsinching and located in today's Changchun.
- 50 A. T. Steele, *Shanghai and Manchuria, 1932: Recollections of a War Correspondent* (Arizona State Univ Center for Asian, 1977), 18.
- 51 Kawakami, *Manchukuo: Child of Conflict*, 88.
- 52 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, Anne Walthall, and James B Palais, *Pre-modern East Asia: To 1800: a Cultural, Social, and Political History* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2009), 64.
- 53 Kang Chao, "Demographic Development in Manchuria, 1924-1941," *近代史研究所集刊 第十期*, 574-575.
- 54 James H. Carter, *Creating a Chinese Harbin: Nationalism in an International City, 1916-1932* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 4.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 189. Sun Yat-sen is known in China as Sun Zhongshan.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 190.
- 59 Sookyeong Hong, "Between Ideology and Spectatorship: The 'Ethnic Harmony' of the Manchuria Motion Picture Corporation, 1937-1945," in *Cross Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 5 (2012): 115, accessed October 29, 2013, <https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-5/Hong>.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 61 K. K. Kawakami, *Manchoukuo: Child of Conflict* (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1933), 127.
- 62 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 370-371.
- 63 Kawakami, *Manchoukuo: Child of Conflict*, 100-101.
- 64 H. G. W. Woodhead, *A Visit to Manchukuo* (Shanghai: The Mercury Press, 1933), 5.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 66 Kawakami, *Manchoukuo: Child of Conflict*, 135.
- 67 *Wangdao* is also written *wangtao*.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 107.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 116-117.
- 70 Hall, "Constructing a 'Manchurian' Identity," 37.
- 71 Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo*, 26.
- 72 Interview with Mrs. Gu by Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 132.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 132-133.
- 74 Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo*, 5.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 76 *Ibid.*
- 77 *Ibid.*, 50.
- 78 *Ibid.*
- 79 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 80 *Ibid.*, xii.
- 81 *Ibid.*, xii.
- 82 Prasenjit Duara, "Local Worlds: The Poetics and Politics of the Native Place in Modern China." in Thomas Lahusen, *Harbin and Manchuria: Place, Space, and Identity (South Atlantic Quarterly)*, Winter 2000 edition (Duke University Press Books, 2001), 34.
- 83 *Ibid.*, 30, 34-35.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 85 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 543.

86 *Ibid.*, 575.

87 "From Emperor to Citizen," The Museum of the Imperial Palace of the Manchu State, Changchun, China.

88 "Fushun War Criminals Management _ Baidu Encyclopedia," accessed October 21, 2013,

<http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=0pWVjGBXp4A4nND-z5ggzKeLT9qVB1jhAgg7Wlip6r5leY4IEk-PLtW0XnvdyeUk>.

89 China Fushun War Criminals Management Center, *Place of New Life Of Japanese War Criminals: China Fushun War Criminals Management Center* (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2005).

90 Also known as Antung.

91 孫邦 et al., 伪满人物 (长春市: 吉林人民出版社, 1993), 585. *Wei Man Ren Wu*. "整天有宪兵来回巡逻, 令人心生不安, 工作在这样环境里, 心里很不舒服, 但又没有办法。"

92 *Ibid.*

93 *Ibid.*, 584. "平时言行均小心翼翼".

94 *Ibid.*, 595. "工具".

95 "Huangfu Jun Baidu Encyclopedia," accessed October 21, 2013,

http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=hEZGnO04hsZ8663VnM_ZKfviRgvkRIGmAsVpDWQPHuSXqMTvtD4NxOZwXL6mN6JT6XgavSTgja_ri50JTx3yNK. "下落不明" literally meaning present whereabouts unknown.

96 Keith A. Crawford and Stuart J. Foster, *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbooks* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2007), 103.

97 *Ibid.*, 104.

98 伪满洲国的"照片内参" (山东画报出版社, 2004), 38; 董滨, 魏纪奎, and 石礼文, 东北抗日联军 (光明日报出版社, 2005); and Liangli Tang, *The Puppet State of "Manchukuo."* (China United Press, 1935).