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Annika A. Culver

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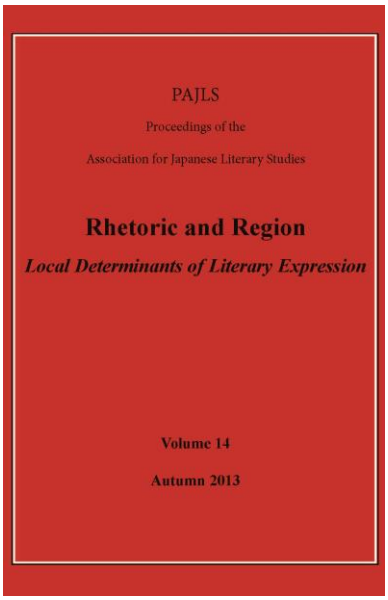

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Japanese Women and Rural Settlement in Manchukuo: Gendered Reflections of Labor and Productivity in *Manshū gurafu [Manchuria Graph]*, 1936-1943[1]

Annika A. Culver

Florida State University (FSU)

Introduction

Japan's involvement in what would become the Second World War began as early as 1931 when Japanese Kantō Army troops invaded Manchuria, or northeast China, and helped engineer the 1932 creation of the nominally independent state of Manchukuo after occupying the area. Beginning in the thirties, Manchukuo's Japanese handlers and its Chinese collaborators intended for the nation to serve as a model utopia for Japanese developmental aims. Following the 1937 Japanese invasion of China below the Great Wall, the wartime goals of the imperial Japanese government began to suffuse all aspects of public and private spheres as propaganda efforts intensified both domestically and throughout Japan's empire during a time of total war—including in Manchukuo. Women, and especially mothers, became the targets of these endeavors as well as served as active participants in the war effort, both through their labor as workers and child bearers. Propaganda media such as magazines and pictorials linked domestic Japan with its empire, and touted desirable behaviors of all Japanese subjects where women raised future soldiers, supported their men as they went to war, and took their places at work in both urban and rural locales.

From the 1930s into the 1940s, the frenzied media portrayal of Manchukuo's "empty" lands and its ability to relieve rural pressures in domestic Japan was no exception. This flurry of Manchuria-related media supporting state propaganda aims also extended to advertisements and commercial publications as Japanese companies took advantage of growing public interest in Japan's development of "frontier" areas in occupied northeast China. Even the Shiseidō Corporation, which produced high-quality cosmetics for urban Japanese women, featured a rural

[1] Portions of this text were adapted from Annika A. Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), Chapter Four, "Reflections of Labour and the Construction of the New State: Fuchikami Hakuyō and *Manchuria Graph*, 1933-1941." To view some of the images discussed here, please see the latter portion of chapter 5, pp. 120-133 of the same volume.

pioneer woman (*kaitaku-sha*) on the November 1938 cover of its *Hanatsubaki* (Camellia) magazine.[2] With her white headscarf, straw basket carrying sheaves of grain, simply patterned indigo cotton kimono, and no-nonsense tied-back sleeves, the young woman serves as an unmistakable icon of the new, developing rural Manchukuo. Her contented smile and rosy plump cheeks reveal her potential fertility and suitability to hard work outdoors.

Beginning in the mid-thirties and intensifying in the early forties, Japanese farmers in distressed areas like Nagano prefecture were encouraged to migrate to Manchukuo. To support this policy initiative of the imperial Japanese government, propaganda pictorials published in Japanese and English by the South Manchuria Railway Company (SMRC) like *Manshū gurafu* [*Manchuria Graph*, 1933-1944] portrayed the region as a fertile utopia for rural Japanese families—ensuring prosperity and elevated productivity of crops and future generations. For example, a montage of scenes from an August 1936 edition shows women performing various tasks like plowing alongside men, building seed beds, weeding rows of corn, and tending cattle with the Japanese caption touting "Settling the great lands of Manchuria at the Self-Defense Village" and, in English, stating, "Breaking up the virgin soil of Manchoukuo--at the 'Railway Guards' settlements."[3] None of them yet carry babies on their backs, but the images imply an imminent fertility of the soil and its settlers.

In the late thirties, young women began to arrive in larger numbers from the Japanese archipelago to serve as “continental brides” (*tairuku hanayome*) for male rural settlers of Manchukuo. In *Manshū gurafu* and other media, they were depicted accompanying their new grooms in mass marriage ceremonies at the numerous Shintō shrines dotting Japanese settlements in northern Manchuria. As opposed to (usually) urban Japanese women who were already living in Manchukuo for several years, an "imported" wife from the Japanese mainland was believed to have maintained proper levels of "Japanese-ness" as a *Yamato-nadeshiko* [true Japanese maiden] uninfluenced by the harsh, frontier environment and its often crude, masculine ways. However, upon arrival, their duty was first and foremost to serve as mothers and productive helpmates.

A spread in the August 1936 issue captioned "Japanese Lullabies Over Desolate Manchurian Plains" shows two women modestly looking down while carrying infants on their backs bundled in quilts. The English caption elaborates on their important role in settling the areas surrounding the railways and peopling the region with offspring, while maintaining the stability (and security) of crucial areas:

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[2] Kazumasa Nagai and Yusuke Kaji, eds., *Creative Works of Shiseidō (*Tokyo: Kyuryudo Art Publishing Company, 1985), chronological collage of *Hanatsubaki* covers, 1937-1956, unpaginated rear photo materials.
[3] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 4, no. 8 (number 25) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 147.

> In close cooperation with the near-by [sic] Manchoukuoan farmers, the Japanese settlers of the "railway guards" settlements shoulder a weighty and noble duty of being life-long [sic] guards of the railways. Consequently, they are all married, well-built young men with a strong will to settle in Manchuria. As the safety of the railways enhances [sic] day by day, and as the cultivation of the settlers continues year after year, the number of the offsprings [sic] of the settler increases, and today, just as in the peaceful villages of Japan, soothing melodies of Japanese lullabies can be heard over the virgin soil of Manchoukuo.[4]

The newly married women displayed in the photographs within *Manshū gurafu*'s pages hoisting sheaves of grain while carrying smiling babies on their backs reflected the pro-natalist stance of the government that exhorted settlement of the region. A December 1936 cover image shows a woman in a padded winter kimono in trousers with the proverbial plump infant bundled against her back boasting a cute hand-knit wool hat with a pompon.[5] Such recurrent scenes in this pictorial of mothers at work in productive rural villages revealed government preoccupations with the appropriate roles for women. Moreover, by the early forties, advertisements for various patent medicines improving women's reproductive health and boosting men's virility appeared alongside enthusiastic articles touting the extraordinary production potential and fertility of the land under Japanese auspices. Propaganda magazines such as this one reflected imperial Japanese ambitions to create a utopian paradise as a template for occupied regions in China, and after 1940, Southeast Asia.

The October 1, 1940 edition of *Manchuria* opines that these farming communities represent a quaint, but respectable vision of virtue, and that if one grasps the conditions in this microcosm, Manchukuo as a whole can be understood:

> The farmers who compose rural villages are but poorly educated, but they respect their honor and their credit just as much as the intelligent class… Peace and order is generally well kept in the village... Anyway, it is an urgent duty to permeate the national policy through every nook and corner of the land by taking full consideration of faming villages and their inhabitants, so that their merits may be made much of and their demerits removed. For this purpose, the Japanese residents in this country would do well to inspect them on

[4] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 4, no. 8 (number 25) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 148.
[5] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 4, no. 12 (number 29) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 223.

> the spot, and surely they will find much to amuse them and benefit them. Real knowledge of Manchoukuo begins with the study of farming communities; that is my advice.[6]

Though Manchukuo's political atmosphere remained largely peaceful into the 1940s, the region also served as an important frontier buffer zone against the Soviet Union and a base for Japanese operations in China and Southeast Asia. Rural Japanese women's wartime contributions to the war effort through their support of colonization and settlement activities in Manchukuo is a long-neglected topic in English-language scholarship, and an issue which has received only scant attention by Japanese scholars.[7] However, in Manchukuo, Japanese women as mothers would play a special role as efficient producers of both children and crops to showcase the success of Japan and its empire during a critical time. As propaganda, these images with their accompanying captions elide Japanese military aggression in China and on the continent, but leave an important record in the gendered legacy of Japan's total war in these largely unrecognized female actors.

The Historical Context of Images of Japanese Settlers in a Rural Utopia

The images of Japanese settlers in *Manshū gurafu* appear against the backdrop of Japan's deepening imperialistic war on the continent, begun first with the military manoeuvres of the Kantō Army in Manchuria after 1931, and then, following the 1933 Tangu Truce, tensions in the demilitarized zone between Manchukuo and China proper from 1933 to 1937.[8] Small-scale skirmishes finally erupted into the Second Sino-Japanese War by July 1937, which resulted in the costly "China quagmire" (1938-45). Amidst a climate of ever-increasing operations in China south of the Great Wall, the Japanese government's rhetoric focused on the need for greater involvement in the affairs of other East Asian nations. By 1940, this culminated in plans for the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." However, as early as 1938, diplomat and foreign ministry spokesman Kawai Tatsuo (1889-1965) argued: "The objective of Japanese expansion is neither the attainment of capitalistic supremacy nor the acquisition of colonies, but the realization of harmony and

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[6] October 1, 1940 edition of *Manchuria,* (Shinkyō, Manchukuo: South Manchuria Railway Company, 1940), 488.
[7] Most Japanese sources focus on the policies involved in the rural settlement of Manchukuo, though some discussions of women appear imbedded in the text.
[8] Named for a location near Shanhaiguan where the Great Wall of China meets the sea, the Tangu Truce was decided upon by both the Chinese nationalists under Chiang Kai-Shek and the Japanese to provide a buffer zone between China and Manchukuo, and to limit the hostilities of the Kantō Army from penetrating further into China proper by sacrificing the Northeast.

concord among the nations of East Asia and their common happiness and prosperity."[9]

"Harmony" and "concord," or *kyōwa*, were ideals first articulated in Manchukuo by proponents of a right-wing version of socialism (like that of Colonel Ishiwara Kanji who masterminded the 1931 Manchurian Incident), in which capitalism took a backseat to the aims of a utopian, Confucian-inspired paternalistic government. In 1940, the Greater East Asia concept developed from Foreign Minister Arita Hachirō's (1884-1965) proposal, whereby Japan would guide East Asia's nations based on the lessons of the Manchurian experiment. An editorial entitled "The New Morality" from October 1, 1940 edition of *Manchuria* notes the "social renovations" sweeping East Asia through the New Order:

> A healthy sign in these crucial days is the new, spontaneous movement towards simpler life and more spiritual living. War is a mighty purger: it cleanses the dross of life that accumulates through long years of peace. A life of sobriety and thrift is now being held up as a pattern… But the current reform which personally affects the average resident of Manchuria or Japan is the waves of social renovations now sweeping the whole of East Asia. All the Occidental frivolity and foibles, that were recklessly imported, for several decades, largely through alien agents for their commercial gain, are drastically discarded or remodeled one by one.[10]

Arita's successor, MatsuokaYōsuke, a former president of SMRC, would soon coin the term "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." In April 1943, Shigemitsu Mamoru (1881-1957) proclaimed the liberation of East Asia as Japan's primary war objective. If we view the images of the rural pioneers against this background of rising conflict along with exhortations for a new spiritual order celebrating the exact type of values found in rural locales, we can finally grasp the important role the Japanese settlers played in the geopolitics of East Asia.

The photographs of the *kaitaku-sha* thus serve as examples of the intrepid Japanese settler who developed the northern Manchurian frontier amidst Japan's deepening conflicts on the continent. By the early 1940s, Manchukuo was lauded by Japanese officialdom as a template for the Southeast Asian nations into which the imperial army "advanced" in order to help "liberate" them from Western colonial rule. In *Manshū gurafu*, emphasis on labour and productivity in the

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[9] From Tatsuo Kawai, *The Goal of Japanese Expansion,* 1938 reprint (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), 67. Quoted in Zeljko Cipris, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals: Kobayashi Hideo on Japan at War," *Japan Focus,* available at http://old.japanfocus.org/products/topdf/1625 accessed on August 4, 2010, 1.

[10] October 1, 1940 edition of *Manchuria*, (Shinkyō, Manchukuo: South Manchuria Railway Company, 1940), 488.

rural and urban spaces of Manchukuo remained a constant theme throughout its roughly eleven years of existence. An evident evolution of themes can be seen in three historical phases of images featured in the years from 1933 to 1937, 1937 to 1940, and 1941 to 1944. These stages parallel political developments in Japan and the Empire as well as the eruption of the war in China (1937) and the Pacific (1941). Nineteen thirty-seven was also the concluding year of the first five-year plan for Manchukuo, while 1942 was the concluding year for the second. Thus, in *Manshū gurafu*, the placement of certain recurring images like those of mothers at work in rural areas is important in terms of how they are framed and juxtaposed with events taking place in the Japanese Empire.

The "Reproducibility" of Japanese Rural Settlements in Manchuria, 1936-1940

Early images of the *kaitaku-sha* appearing the year of *Manshū gurafu*'s 1933 inception communicated the area's vast potential for settlement, while later editions focused almost exclusively on the northern Manchurian Japanese pioneers or military operations in north China. From 1936 onwards, individual editions were more likely to feature Japanese *kaitaku-sha*, but they were just one of many topics related to Manchuria. From the late 1930s onwards, individual editions increasingly devoted more spreads to these farmers, while a December 1940 special edition entitled "Kaitaku-chi o meguru" ("Touring the Rural Development Areas") was the first to focus exclusively on their efforts.

Naturally, it was a huge undertaking for the governments of Manchukuo and Imperial Japan to attract the settlers and to convince them to immigrate, in accordance with state aims, from 1933 to 1936. Therefore, all media in charge of propaganda in both countries, including the SMRC-funded *Manshū gurafu,* were mobilized. In the two years following the Manchurian Incident, the Japanese public consumed songs, images, and myriads of mass culture products (including war songs, film melodramas, "human bullet" candy, and even odd Manchurian-themed restaurant menus) induced by a climate of "war fever," and soon developed a voracious appetite for news with a Manchurian theme.[11] In addition, printed materials related to Manchuria also took off during this time, fortuitously jump-starting a flagging Japanese publishing industry. An industry yearbook even happily touts: "brisk sales of books on Manchuria have breathed new life into an utterly stagnated publishing industry."[12] Nonetheless, prospective Japanese farming

[11] See Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 69-78.
[12] *Sōgō shuppan nenkan* [General publishing yearbook] (Tokyo: Tosho kenkyūkai, 1932), 963. Quoted in Young, *Japan's Total Empire,* 70.

families had to be convinced that the area was fertile as well as safe, and that it presented them with a better life than in the cramped and resource-poor archipelago.

Thus, scenes such as in the December 1936 edition captioned "The Image of Peaceful Living" in Japanese, and "Peaceful Life at a Settlement" in English, feature bucolic images that reveal women (with the requisite baby on their backs) walking on a path between wide vistas of land sown with grain interspersed with streams boasting families of ducks tending numerous ducklings.[13] Here, empty lands appear illuminated by the sun, clear streams flow full of ducks and fish, and the ever-present woman works productively in the fields with an infant carried in a sling on her back.[14] According to Michael Baskett, this image of "real" women in the Manchurian space was also very common in films of the era, such as the 1937 Japanese-German co-production *Atarashiki tsuchi* (*New Earth*).[15] Their message emphasizes that both people and animals in the region will prosper while abundantly producing offspring in the new rural utopia.

The path towards planning for the colonization of northern Manchuria was formulated in the early to mid-1930s in both Tokyo and Shinkyō, the capital of the new nation. In Manchukuo, Shinkyō hosted a colonization conference in November 1934 for a group of fifty experts and interested parties to discuss the settlement of this part of the region by Japanese farmers.[16] In December 1935, in the same city, the Manchuria Colonial Development Company was organized with start-up capital of 15 million yen.[17] It assisted settlers in acquiring suitable land; supervised and distributed that land; and provisioned financial aid, equipment, and facilities: "One-third of the authorized capital was provided by the Manchukuo government, one-third by the South Manchuria Railway Company, and one-third by the general public in Japan."[18] Interestingly, this joint venture represented the fascistic corporatism of Manchukuo in its even division of responsibility for the endeavour among the new state's government, SMRC (as long-term developer of the region), and the Japanese people. SMRC's *Fifth Report on Progress in Manchuria to 1936* notes: "In April, 1936, it [the Manchuria Colonial Development Company] decided to settle 20,000 Japanese farming families in ten years and 1,500 families during 1936, and the Department of Colonial Affairs in Tokyo placed at the disposal of the Company 1,135,000

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[13] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 4, no. 12 (number 29) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008), 234-235.
[14] Ibid., 235.
[15] Michael Baskett, *The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 127-28. Cesar Franck headed the German side of the production, while Amakasu Masahiko (1891-1945) of *Man'ei* [Manchurian Film Association] directed the shooting in Manchukuo.
[16] South Manchuria Railway Company, *Fifth Report on Progress in Manchuria to 1936* (Dairen: South Manchuria Railway Company, 1936), 132.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

yen and the Manchoukuo Government the necessary land. The settlements will take place in Pinkiang Province."[19] The area in question was located in northeastern-most Manchuria a hundred miles away from the Russian-influenced city of Harbin—a land of harsh climatic contrasts and frontier character close to the Soviet Union.

Instant success was not guaranteed during the shaky first wave of settlement in 1933-36, when five groups of five hundred farmsteads attempted colonization. The message conveyed in *Manshū gurafu* seemed to be that colonization was hard work and required *gaman*, or endurance, but that, in the end, a uniquely Japanese perseverance would prevail. Despite the best efforts of the Manchuria Colonial Development Company, the December 1936 special edition of *Manshū gurafu* entitled *Nihon imin no sōbō* ["The Faces of Japanese Settlers"] notes that 40 percent left the settlements, either "dying of illness [or] quitting their new land owing to some unavoidable circumstances."[20]

Whatever these "unavoidable circumstances" were is never explained, but in northern Manchuria, Chinese landlords often hired local mercenary militias consisting of young Han Chinese peasant men who would cultivate the land during the growing season and defend their territory (and raid other areas) in the fallow season and in severe winters.[21] Not surprisingly, if Chinese gentry failed to be properly compensated for their land, these informal militias would come to rectify matters. Such mercenary armed Chinese peasants were characterized as "bandits" by the Japanese settlers, who, as a result, supported an increased Kantō Army presence (in collusion with SMRC, whose tracks they were ordered to patrol) and also armed their own young men. This lent a militaristic character to these isolated villages, which were connected only by a growing railway network built by SMRC.

By November 1938, captions in *Manshū gurafu* insistently focus on security and "peace," much of it provided courtesy of SMRC. This hints at the fact that personal safety might have been a very relevant concern for the growing numbers of settlers: "In addition, immigrants in the South Manchuria Railway Company's Self-Protective Villages, free immigrants encouraged by various prefectures, and immigrant groups of religious and social organizations will [sic], shortly settle in Manchuria. These groups are expecting to build up peaceful farm communities within their

[19] Ibid. The publication is referring to Binjiang Province, located in the area near Harbin in what is now Heilongjiang Province in the People's Republic of China.
[20] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 4, no. 12 (number 29) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 226.
[21] This was corroborated in my conversations with Liu Yong, whose grandfather Liu Shan-Zheng was the son of a landlord family in Qing'an (Qingcheng, or Keijō, prior to the 1949 liberation) near the Tieli Japanese development area in northern Manchuria. In Japanese maps from 1938, the Liu family estate, or Liu Yuan-zi, can be found equidistant between Tieli (Tetsuryō) and Qing'an (Qingcheng, or Keijō).

respective settlements and will strive to develop agriculture, advance culture, and maintain peace and order."[22] The caption continues, with a hopeful description of some of the paternalistic, Confucian-inspired slogans of the new state, which are intended to ease tension in the locals: "No doubt, the native inhabitants will receive much benefit from the newcomers, and the two will effect a strong, cordial relationship full of inter-racial harmony and peace in the new born [*sic*] land, Manchoukuo."[23] The repetition of words such as "peace," "harmony," and "cordiality" appearing in the pictorial's pages in the late 1930s ring hollow to the contemporary reader, who benefits from hindsight.

In addition to a less-than-welcoming reception by the local Han Chinese population, the Japanese settlers also had to deal with the powerful presence of the Soviet Union, which loomed as an ever-present threat to the Japanese rural settlements in northern Manchukuo. Even if fear of the Russians and Chinese bandits could be overcome, the Siberian winter challenged even the hardiest Japanese recruits from mountainous regions in Nakano.[24] Moreover, pregnancy, childbirth, and the rearing of infants were negatively affected by a harsher and drier climate conducive to respiratory ailments. The food, as well, would have taken much getting used to since northern rivers only provided muddy-tasting fish that could not be eaten raw, and cabbages and other vegetables tasted coarse to the Japanese palate. Added to this, rice was not one of the staples (these were millet porridge and wheat flour for buns and noodles).[25]

Nevertheless, the cover of the December 1936 special edition of *Manshū gurafu* shows a heartening image of robust young women in *monpe* (loose work trousers), with adorable babies in knit caps strapped to their backs, harvesting wheat or millet (no doubt this photograph was shot at the beginning of autumn rather than in winter).[26] Inside, a spread entitled "A Day in the Settlements" juxtaposes a gendered division of labor in images on the page's left-hand side: a homestead appears at the top, over the scene of a gateway framing schoolchildren, above the snapshot of a midwife on her way to a birth, with a newborn being bathed at the bottom, while on the opposite side, male teachers lead children into a school, a medical clinic is being built, a man

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[22] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph], vol. 6, no. 11 (number 52) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 244; *Manshū gurafu* (Dairen, November 1938), n.p.
[23] Ibid.
[24] For more on the villages from which these rural Japanese settlers came, with the majority coming from the Nakano area, see Iida-shi rekishi kenkyûsho-hen [Historical Research Institute of Iida City], ed., *Manshū imin: Iida Shimo Ina kara no messeji* [Manchurian immigrants: A message from Iida City in the Ina Valley] (Tokyo: Gendai shiryō shuppan, 2007).
[25] Other than the ever-present tofu also consumed by Han Chinese, Japanese settlers would have had to accustom themselves to the heavy meat of local main dishes (a high-protein diet being necessary to overcome the cold). Impoverished Chinese made do with a diet of millet porridge, wilted cabbage, pickled vegetables, and frozen tofu.
[26] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 4, no. 12 (number 29) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 223.

fishes by a stream, and a hunter aims into the horizon.[27] The magazine clearly indicates that it is indeed possible to raise a family in rural Manchukuo amongst all the requisite elements of Japanese civilization (proper dwellings, schools, hospitals, and medical care), and that "even" women can easily perform the necessary farm work alongside their men despite their duties as mothers. [28]

Along with these hopeful images, an article in the same edition on "The Utopia of Japanese Settlers in North Manchuria," reflects on the pioneering efforts of the volunteer Youth Corps, who preceded these immigrants, and encouragingly notes: "The remaining 60 percent of the picked youths, however, has [*sic*] conquered every difficulty and has proved the possibility of Japanese emigration to Manchuria."[29] The fact that mere youths laid the groundwork for these Japanese families highlights the rugged nature of the "Japanese race" or *Yamato minzoku*, which could even flourish in the wide, open plains of Manchuria. To the left, the article also features a circular insert of a Japanese shrine built by settlers, and, at the bottom, a map of rail-linked settlements in Sanjiang Province, currently part of the PRC's Heilongjiang Province, with Tieli City (Tetsuryō, a former training centre for the Youth Corps) as its county seat. Tetsuryō's Shintō shrine, of course, serves as the spiritual nerve centre of the community, as a place where marriages are conducted and subsequent offspring are blessed and receive their names. Traditional Japanese values, thus reproduced in the rural Manchurian space, are coupled with modern communications and transportation networks.

The pictorial highlights the modernity of the settlements by stressing the fact that all of them are (or will be) connected via telephone, road, and rail access courtesy of SMRC. The photographers portray the settlements as well-organized, with the Japanese farmers using mechanized McCormick-Deering tractors purchased from the United States; and villages are peopled with well-fed families in which no woman past adolescence appears without a plump infant strapped to her back. Hence, the scenes emphasize the fertility both of the land and of its new immigrants and, thus, the potential reproducibility of the entire rural development scheme on a large scale.

After the mid-1930s, Japan's colonization schemes in northern Manchuria began to accelerate, with the government aiming for the mass migration of Japanese farmers into Manchukuo who would then flourish and populate the region with their own offspring. This is

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[27] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 4, no. 12 (number 29) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 232.
[28] Preceding these immigrant families were the volunteer Youth Corps, consisting of young teenage boys who began to cultivate the land in camps that were ruled by harsh military discipline. For more on the Youth Corps, see Ronald Suleski, "Reconstructing Life in the Youth Corps Camps of Manchuria, 1938-1945: Resistance to Conformity," *East Asian History* 30 (2005): 67-90.
[29] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 4, no. 12 (number 29) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 226.

made clear in the November 1938 edition of *Manshū gurafu*, whose cover shows two robust young Japanese women smiling and holding plump infant sons, with a young toddler in the foreground.[30] As on a similar cover featured two years earlier, the women and children depicted create a picture of well-fed good health. A further spread features scenes of uniformed girls and boys attending school, and mothers attending a mass meeting with their infants, framing the top of a large image of children in western clothing gleefully walking down a country path carrying their siblings, with the accompanying caption, "Children who grow on the new land, the 'good earth.'"[31] The caption title references contemporary popular culture through the popular Japanese/German co-produced feature film *New Earth* released in 1937, as well as Pearl S. Buck's best-selling novel *The Good Earth*, which received a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1938.

An essay within the magazine's same issue also discusses official settlement attempts: "The Japanese government completed recently a plan calling for the immigration of a million families or a total of 5,000,000 individuals within 20 years, but at the present time the First Stage Five Year Program which aims at the sending of 500,000 people is being pushed."[32] In prose and images, the pictorial elucidates much of this plan, which was developed during the intensification of the government's efforts to exhort settlement amidst a global political climate in which Japan's Axis ally, Nazi Germany, favoured extended *Lebensraum* (living space) for its ethnic population.[33] A caption emphasizes the archipelago's need for more land for its burgeoning population:

> The average area of land available for farming in Japan is about 1 *chobu* per household. In comparison to other countries this average is about 1/60 of the United States, 1/90 of Canada, 1/7 of Germany, and approximately 1/16 of Denmark. To make matters worse, Japan is being pressed with an annual increase of 900,000 in population, which make [*sic*] living more difficult for the people who are already stricken with poverty.[34]

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[30] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 6, no. 11 (number 52) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008), 243.
[31] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 6, no. 11 (number 52) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008), 255.
[32] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 6, no. 11 (number 52) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008), 244.
[33] At the same time, in Nazi Germany Adolph Hitler clamoured for more *Lebensraum* (living space) for the ethnic German population, using this as an excuse to expand into neighbouring regions/countries harbouring large German-speaking populations, like the Sudetenland and Austria. This edition came out a few months following the 1938 Munich Conference, at which the League of Nations countries appeased Hitler in the hopes that he would be satisfied with the territory he had so far acquired.
[34] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 6, no. 11 (number 52) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008), reprint, 244.

The following two-page spread, with the English title "Japanese Immigrant Settlements in North Manchuria," is underlined by the Japanese caption *Hirake'iku shojō-chi* (tilling virgin land) spread in white lettering over a photo of two strong young Japanese men from the Tetsuryō Youth Training Camp. In a few years, they too will be ready for marriage, and will wait for the arrival of brides from domestic Japan. According to the essay: "7,000 families have settled in 50 localities so far under governmental sponsorship (total for April, 1939), but besides this total, the Young Men's Training Camp capable of accommodating 30,000 boys from Japan will be established in North Manchuria within this year." [35] The photo illustrating this phenomenon appears on a diagonal, with one-half of the land remaining as prairie and the other half having been ploughed into rows with the metal fingers of a tiller pulled by an American Caterpillar tractor—in an image reminiscent of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* and the American West.[36] Through the recurring juxtaposition of symbols evocative of what Alan Tansman terms the "fascist moment,"[37] which highlight the productivity of land and family, readers are constantly regaled with the potentially high fertility of northern Manchuria's soil and its settlers.

Since 1938, when squadrons of youth labour corps pioneers, like the two young men in the *Tilling Virgin Land* image, were sent over, writings of all kinds and even literature about the intrepid Japanese pioneers and settlers began to proliferate. In a similar vein as the now-defunct 1920s proletarian literature movement, these stories propagated an anti-bourgeois right-wing version of socialism, or what I call "right-wing proletarianism," whose spirit is also captured in the photographs examined above. Of course, Italian fascism, which the Manchukuo example most closely resembles, was indeed a rightwing version of socialism. The influence of "rightwing proletarianism" where a paternalistic state safeguards the rights of farmers and workers also suffuses the Manchukuo-related works of the now politically-converted Japanese proletarian writers Nogawa Takashi (1901-1944) and Yamada Seizaburō (1896-1970). Like Shimaki Kensaku (1903-1945) and Yamada, who began the trend of writing about the rural pioneers in 1939-40, formerly proletarian authors like Nogawa and even Tokunaga Sunao (1899-1958) also published works dedicated to this topic. For example, Tokunaga's 1939 novel *Sengentai* (*The Pioneers*) focuses on the youth labour corps and contains scenes of young Japanese teenagers astounded at

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[35] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 6, no. 11 (number 52) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 244.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Alan Tansman's concept of "fascist moment," or a moment "in which the individual is depicted as merging with, or is called on to merge imaginatively with, a greater whole," evolved from Christopher Bollas's "fascist state of mind," or "an inclination to thoughts, feelings, and acts of binding that purge the mind of the messy diversity of contradictory views and fills the gap left by that purging with 'material icons.'" See Alan Tansman, *The Aesthetics of Japanese Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 18-21.

the labour productivity of Han Chinese coolies hired for the settlements.[38] Japanese readers avidly consumed these visions of empire, with their compatriots flourishing in newly developed areas overseas.

Productivity and Reproduction during Wartime, 1941-1943

After 1941, *Manshū gurafu* began to change its focus, seemingly evincing a less artistic inclination in favour of the new orientation of the Manchukuo regime as a base for Japanese military operations in China proper and Southeast Asia. However, one of the continuities with earlier editions of *Manshū gurafu* is an obvious intensification of the obsession with production from the early forties to 1944. Large spreads of women at work—many of them mothers tending to their babies while engaged in agricultural labor—replacing the men also become more frequent. For example, in the December 1940 special edition on the rural settlers, a photo essay and article on "Women of the Rural Development Areas" (*Kaitaku-chi no josei*) shows women carrying enormous sheaves of grain upon their backs, tending sheep, preparing a meal, and walking through the fields with their children or with infants on their backs.[39] They appear as strong, capable individuals cheerfully going about their daily work, both in the household and out in the fields.

Intriguingly, images of men become less and less frequent, and the December 1943 special edition on "Grain Storehouse Manchuria" features a woman in a curiously similar pose to the November 1938 *Hanatsubaki* cover. Broadly smiling amidst the rays of benevolent summer sunshine, she proudly holds a sheaf of grain, doing her patriotic duty to supply the Japanese troops fighting in China and Southeast Asia with much-needed rations as food in domestic Japan becomes scarce. At this point in the Asian and Pacific conflicts, Manchukuo serves an important role as Imperial Japan's grain storehouse, cultivated largely by the nation's Japanese women.

Nevertheless, despite the "disappearance" of men and food supplies, amidst the darkening wartime climate, agricultural productivity and the creation of large families remain an all-consuming idée fixe for both the Manchukuo state and its propaganda organizations. Similar equivocal messages appear in the *Manshū gurafu* shots of the Japanese *kaitaku-sha*, but with a different political import. The latter show that frenzied agricultural production in the rural space proceeds in an efficient and scientific manner, with the land's being worked by self-consciously smiling Japanese families (usually women and their offspring) who eagerly produce both a bounty of agricultural products and children—helpful in repopulating the ranks of soldiers killed amidst

[38] Tokunaga Sunao, *Sengentai* [The pioneers] (Tokyo: Kaizō-sha, 1939).
[39] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 8 no. 12 (number 77) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint, 119-120.

the intensifying Sino-Japanese conflict, the burgeoning war in the Pacific, and extended operations in Southeast Asia.

In a rather rare late 1943 image of the archetypal pioneer family in the same "Grain Storehouse Manchuria" edition, a husband holds his son while his wife carries a hoe.[40] With the inset of the family overshadowed by unrealistically large wheat or millet plants, the couple smiles in broad grins as the barefoot child toddler looks at the camera with some trepidation. Accompanying nationalistic poetry lauds the power of agricultural production, where even one grain and one bean can move the Japanese towards total victory. The rays of the sun illuminate this archetypal settler family of Manchuria wearing summer clothing, which is somewhat ironic since the edition was released at the beginning of a harsh, Siberian winter.

Further articles such as "The Agricultural Production and Resources of Manchuria as a Military Base," which contain helpful statistics, illustrate the fact that Manchuria now unabashedly serves imperial Japan's war efforts. The 1943 special edition contains more specific examples from certain locales, such as the one featured in "Touring an 'Increasing Battle Power' County: Map of Siping County." Complete with a map, towns appear on the map with the corn, beans, and millet that they specialize in, while railroad lines provided by the South Manchuria Railway Company connect these tiny hamlets.

However, the frenzied pace of labor depicted in *Manshū gurafu* begs the question of how are the Japanese settlers (and the readers of the periodical), both young and old men not at the front, children, and women of all ages, are supposed to sustain the level of energy required to produce the proper yields of crops and children emphasized by the pro-natalist state? In addition, the government slogan exhorted by Imperial Japan, *Ume yo fuyase yo* ["Give birth and multiply"], also clearly was in full force to urge the growth of large families in Manchukuo. Even the advertisements featured in the pictorial in the 1940s emphasize productivity on behalf of the Manchukuo regime. For example, patent medicine ads targeting Japanese men and women liberally pepper these later editions, promising to increase their labour power and virility or femininity (thus ensuring the production of more crops as well as children). The emphasis on efficient production is reinforced in ads for medicines ranging from the energy promoter Vitamin B to several strangely named *horumon* (hormone) concoctions, one for each gender, which supposedly boosted the sex hormones.

To address these two concerns, Japanese pharmaceutical companies produced supplements in the form of over-the-counter patent medicines like Neo-paranutolin based on Vitamin B1, which promised to increase one's strength in an easily digestible form, and Purehormone, which allegedly

[40] *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] vol. 11 no. 12 (number 113) (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2008) reprint.

improved the functioning of both the male and female reproductive organs. For those who desired similar supplements in easily consumable pill form, Metabolin touted that it would boost strength in men due to its Vitamin B compounds, while Oivestin promised menstrual regularity and normal reproductive ability for women through the addition of estrogen. The graphics of the advertisements emphasize the name of the product in blocky *katakana* script used for foreign or scientific words, with its purported uses in smaller type in the middle.

In fact, in the early 1940s, an obsession with birth and breeding of all kinds, whether of humans or livestock, appeared in mass-consumed propaganda films as well as in more highbrow forms of art. For instance, in the short documentary entitled *Manchukuo: The Newborn Empire,* the commentator discusses initiatives focusing on the cross-breeding of native Manchurian sheep with varieties from Japan to increase the production of wool.[41] After leafing through numerous editions of these later volumes, the reader keenly notices that this fixation becomes increasingly ominous as it indicates that imperial Japan is losing its overextended war. This theme of high productivity of both crops and children in the Manchurian space even permeated fine art. Consider, for example the avant-garde artist Asai Kan'emon's (1901-83) striking 1943 painting featuring a Madonna-like Japanese mother (complete with wispy, halo-like clouds near her head) dressed in blue, with her red kimono-attired toddler son, in an image entitled *Hōshū (Homare no kazoku)* (*Abundant Harvest [Family of Distinction]*).[42] The promised "abundant harvest" appears to be the production of one blessed child, who looks towards the viewer, while his mother modestly casts her gaze downwards at the child's jacket, which he will later wear at his first *shichi-go-san* shrine visit.[43] At the *monpe*-clad mother's feet rests a teapot while a dog resembling a red fox, or *kitsune*, in the lower right corner portentously gazes at the matriarchal family. In Japanese folk wisdom, the red fox is a trickster, and his presence casts an ironic shadow over this family that is missing its traditional head, the absent father likely having been called to war. The peaceful scene of maternal harmony is disrupted by the flame-like ochre of the soil and the turbulence of the rolling clouds in the background. Though these two media forms both illustrate the importance of the reproducibility of the Japanese settler communities in very different ways, they still reveal the growing vacuum of men called to the front—a phenomenon which pushes women to the forefront

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[41] The images of the sheep even resemble Terashima's pictorialist photos.
See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlyKKLKsBqQ or contact Prelinger Archives, San Francisco, at www.prelinger.com.

[42] Otani Shōgo, ed., *Chiheisen no yume: Shōwa 10 nendai no gensō kaiga* [Dreams of the horizon: Fantastic paintings in Japan, 1935-1945] (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art, 2003), 92.

[43] In Japan, even today, parents bring children attired in their best clothing to the local shine on their third, fifth, and seventh birthdays for a blessing.

by compelling them to serve as the heads of their families as well as the Empire's leading productive units.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Japanese mothers were an integral part of the Manchukuo experiment during wartime. Their efforts were praised as part of Imperial Japan's government-sponsored *ryōsai kenbō* ["Good wife, wise mother"] philosophy dating since the Meiji period (1868-1912). However, during wartime, this model of virtuous behavior praised by the state intensified, when pro-natalism became part of national policy. The positive aspects of the birth of children who would in turn become soldiers or mothers were reflected in media throughout the empire, and especially in Manchukuo, which became an important base for Japanese operations in Southeast Asia after 1942.

From the late 1930s into the early forties, Japanese handlers of occupied northeast China attempted to portray the new state of Manchukuo as a utopian "paradise" for rural Japanese settlers and their families. Mothers served as the cornerstones of these families, and were placed in charge of reproducing the ideologies of empire along with children. Such immigration efforts into northern Manchuria would help relieve pressures on domestic rural localities and provide an overseas base for the production of food and manpower for maintaining the war effort. Numerous propaganda publications, including *Manshū gurafu* [Manchuria Graph] published by the South Manchuria Railway Company, touted the region as fertile and productive, with ample opportunities to raise numerous healthy children in the wide-open spaces and salubrious climate. The pictorial displayed scenes of a model rural populace settling the region, where men were productive laborers, but women supported the dual role of producing children and raising them as well as their crops. Magazine covers feature seasonal depictions, while the settlers are shown happily cultivating or harvesting crops (with babies on their backs if women).

Images such as these promoted an ideal of peaceful, rural areas as a depository for Japanese values that were to be translated elsewhere—i.e. newly-conquered multi-ethnic areas in Southeast Asia. In addition, they showed both Japanese and Western audiences the success of the Manchukuo experiment through these intrepid pioneers flourishing in their new environment. However, as Japan's war effort bogged down in China and intensified in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, women became increasingly important for the Empire in their childbearing and rearing capabilities while still maintaining labor productivity. Revisiting long-neglected propaganda images such as these is fascinating because they elide the violence of wartime, and

portray what I term a “rightwing proletarian” utopia desired by Japanese framers of the fascist state—representing ideals they were unable to realize in domestic Japan.