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**Review: Manchurian Memories in Postwar Japan -- Satou Ryou, Kano Tomohiro,
Yukawa Makie (eds.)**

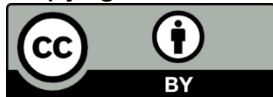
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*Manchurian Memories in
Postwar Japan* (戦後日本の満
洲記憶). By Satou Ryou, Kano
Tomohiro, Yukawa Makie, eds.
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Review by
CHI HO KIANG

Before the post-WWII dissolution of the Japanese Empire, the empire's subjects had been settling in China for several decades. Most of them contributed, directly or indirectly, to Japan's expansionist project and modernist agenda. Peter Duus, professor of Japanese imperialism at Stanford University, suggests that the Japanese presence in China had a profound impact on modern Japanese History in the early twentieth century.¹ However, what cannot be disputed is that Japanese colonial settlers' experiences living in China played a constitutive role in their lives. How they formed, rationalized, and "reframed" historical memories and their own identities in postwar Japan is a question seldom explored. Drawing mainly from the "Newsletters" (会報) issued by former Manchukuo settlers' groups, the contributors of *Manchurian Memories in Postwar Japan* (戦後日本の満洲記憶, mostly young scholars from Japan in History and Memory Studies, provide a fresh perspective on the post-war experiences of former imperial settlers in Manchukuo by embedding it into the history of post-war Japan's politics and society.

In a total of 11 articles, organized into the three sections entitled "Memory of War", "Conflict Memory," and "Peripheral Memory", the contributors illuminate the ever-

changing historical memory of these former settlers. They scrutinize how the narrative resonated with and was reframed by the ups and downs in Sino-Japanese relations and Japan's internal politics. One shared theme amongst these articles is the struggle between identity and memory, the constant interaction between personally held memories of experience and larger memory narratives. Given that settlers were regarded as notorious "invaders" and primarily excluded from the foreign property compensation scheme and the pension scheme, it is hardly surprising that they were highly motivated, both emotionally and financially, to redeem their reputation by highlighting their contribution to the empire, to the community, and to the welfare of the Chinese people. Stories and memories about Manchukuo selected by respective leaders were published in the aforementioned newsletters to emphasize settlers' contributions. The "past" was deliberately and purposefully engineered. These articles offer intriguing insights into this engineering, demonstrating how Manchukuo historical memory was reframed due to several non-historical reasons deeply embedded in post-war Japanese politics and international dynamics. In its entirety, this book captures the uncertain relationship between historical events, experience, and myth.

Impressively, most contributors demonstrate an ability to connect personal identity and historical memory with postwar

1 Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), xi.

geopolitical developments, while also successfully illustrating the complexity of the colonial experience. For instance, Kano Tomohiro (菅野智博) in his article “Narrated Andong History” (語られる「安東史」——一九五〇～一九七〇年代初期における『ありなれ』を中心に) reveals that officials and merchants had noticeably different attitudes towards the South Manchurian Railway Company, the empire, and the city itself. Take manufacturing as an example: for the officers, the introduction of new manufacturing technology, the establishment of the new harbor, and the building of a hydroelectric power station were mainly regarded as part of the imperial efforts. On the other hand, settlers took these achievements as evidence of Andong’s advantages or characteristics to compare against other major cities in Manchukuo and emphasized how the local community could benefit. Nevertheless, Kano underlines that this more or less contradicted local narrative was eventually subsumed into an imperialistic narrative. It is convenient to characterize all Japanese in Manchukuo as “imperialists” or, on the other hand, to over-emphasize the independent “settlers” that departed from the imperial agenda. Instead, Kano stresses that their variant agendas and interests were inherently intertwined with the imperial structure.

The book deserves a further compliment for offering a new take on post-war East Asian relations. The legacy of the Japanese Empire has

often been underestimated. Japan, the former empire, lost much of its influence in the formal diplomatic world for several years after World War II. In this circumstance, students of the dead empire could be “re-activated” to advance the national interest. For instance, Japanese and Taiwanese students who graduated from the Daido Gakuin, a training institute for colonial officials in Manchukuo, played an underestimated role in Asian geopolitics in the post-war period. According to Lin Chih-hung’s (林志弘) article “Daido Gakuin Alumni Association under the Cold War System” (冷戦体制下における大同学院同窓会——日本と台湾の場合, these once empire-trained students played a role in maintaining non-governmental relations between Taiwan and Japan. In a sense, these state-builders-to-be fulfilled their mission at last – to facilitate communication between Tokyo and East Asia.

It is worth noting that the overwhelming majority of this book is related to Manchukuo’s historical memory. However, the articles do not draw much from literature on memory studies and cultural memory. Looking at concepts such as “transnational memory” and “multidirectional memory” could further problematize these articles. Another issue comes from the focus on the collective: taking full advantage of the settlers’ “Newsletters”. Most authors accentuate how these groups operated as a cohesive organization in post-war society, while little

attention is devoted to how this memory affected the everyday experiences of the individuals who belonged to these groups.

Manchurian Memories in Postwar Japan is an excellent addition to the study of imperial history in East Asia that connects empirical analysis with geopolitical dynamics. Researchers of postwar Japan will also find this book appealing. The voices of the “Manchukuo settlers”, including the merchants, residents, students, and women subordinated in contemporary Japanese society, have finally been made intelligible to the public.