

LAND, CITY, STATE, NATION, AND EMPIRE IN SIPINGGAI, NORTHEAST CHINA, 1900-1945

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On September 18, 1931, the Japanese Guandong Army launched an invasion of Northeast China. After this event, widely known in the West as the Manchuria Incident, the Japanese quickly took control of the whole region--a vast territory three times the size of Japan--in a matter of months. The following year, the Japanese government established the puppet state of Manchukuo, through which it was able to consolidate its control of the region and used it as a base for further invasion into North China. The notorious No-Resistance Policy of Zhang Xueliang and Chiang Kai-shek led to the Japanese army's quick military victory, but the Japanese owed much of their success in controlling and stabilizing the population to Chinese civilian collaboration. The long Japanese presence before the incident in Southern Manchuria (*nanman*, the area south of Changchun) and the influence that the Japanese had established were crucial for the quick conquest of the extensive Northeastern territory.

The Japanese imperialist presence in the Northeast began with the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, in the form of Mantetsu Attached Land in many cities and the Guandong Lease Land in the Liaodong Peninsula. These Japanese-controlled lands seriously fragmented Chinese sovereignty and created a new set of social, political, and economic relationships on Chinese territory. In this article, I investigate the social, political, and economic dynamics of the new railway city Sipinggai before and after the Manchuria Incident and demonstrate that different groups in the Chinese population evinced different attitudes toward the Japanese, consistent with their particular economic interests and educational background. Specifically, the merchants, who were close to the Japanese before the incident, continued to collaborate later and became powerful figures in the local society. In contrast, the intellectuals showed strong nationalism and led the resistance to Japanese imperialism.

Nation and State in the Local Context

Many scholars consider nationalism a modern ideology that is closely related to the nation state. However, like any theoretical tools, the concepts of nation, state, and nationalism often become complicated when applied to specific cases, especially those of chaotic historical periods, such as China during the Republican era (1912-1949). The concept of "tangible state," put forward by Zhijia Shen in her study of Shandong during 1930s and 40s, is an ingenious adjustment of the concept of state.¹ Between 1930 and 1937, Han Fujū's government in Shandong operated largely independently from the Guomindang (GMD) central state--not only in ruling the Shandong territory and populace,

¹ Zhijia Shen, "Nationalism in the Context of Survival: The Sino-Japanese War Fought in a Local Arena, Zouping, 1937-1945" in George Wei and Xiaoyuan Liu, ed. *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 78-79.

but also in negotiating with the Japanese and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).² Shen perceptively points out that, to the people in Shandong, “Han Fujū’s provincial government represented the most tangible nation-state to which they could relate.”³ As all contemporary Chinese regimes, Han’s warlord government was authoritarian. But it carried out many reforms and established seven years of peaceful development in Shandong, disrupted only by the Japanese invasion in 1937.⁴ Therefore, the Han Fujū regime not only operated independently, but also acquired legitimacy among the populace.

Shen examines local loyalty through military resistance to the Japanese invasion in Zouping County. When both the county and the nation needed protection, Shen shows, most local elites and peasants did not hesitate to stay home and protect local interests. Their opposition to the Japanese, although appearing nationalistic, was not necessarily motivated by nationalism; it was often about survival and human dignity.⁵ In contrast to this traditional parochialism, the modern version of nationalism was clearly visible in the local intellectual and military commander Meng Zhaojin, who was willing to participate in battles against the Japanese outside his own county.⁶ Meng’s nationalism was due to his national identity, which probably took shape from his “national” experiences, such as going to college in Beijing, attending military school in Shaanxi, and fighting in the GMD Northern Expedition Army.⁷ Similarly, intellectuals in Sipinggai were also leaders of nationalist resistance.

In Northeast China during the Republican period, the issue of nation and state was even more complicated than in Shandong because of the much larger presence of imperialist powers. In 1896 and 1898, the Qing government was coerced by Russia into signing two treaties, allowing the Russians to build the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) (*zhongdong tielu*) from Manzhouli to Suifenhe and a Southern Manchuria Branch (SMR) from Harbin to Dalian. With rights to the lands on both sides of the railway, rights to forests and mines near the railway, and military forces stationed along the railway, the Russian presence seriously fragmented the Chinese administration’s sovereignty in the region. Furthermore, the Russians also gained a large leased territory from the Chinese government--the Liaodong Peninsula--for a period of twenty-five years. The Russians eagerly named the leased territory Guandong Province (*Guandong zhou*) and set up an administrative institution, giving the impression that it was part of Russia. The seaport Lüshun was located at the tip of the peninsula and became a strategically important base for the Russian navy.⁸

² Zhijia Shen, “Nationalism in the Context of Survival: The Sino-Japanese War Fought in a Local Arena, Zouping, 1937-1945” in George Wei and Xiaoyuan Liu, ed. *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 78-79.

³ *Ibid.*, 78. I differ from Shen in her use of the term nation-state; “state” is more appropriate here because Shandong clearly was not a nation.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 81, 84, 89.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁸ Boris Aleksandrovich Romanov, translated from Russian by Min Geng. *Di e qin lüe manzhou shi (1892-1906)* (A History of Russian Encroachment in Manchuria) (Shanghai: Shang wu yin shu guan, 1937).

For the Chinese, the situation only worsened after the Russo-Japanese War because the victor, Japan, was even more aggressive in encroaching upon Chinese territory and sovereignty. The Japanese took from the Russians the 437 mile-long Southern Manchuria Railway, which ran between Changchun and Dalian. They then established the Southern Manchuria Railway Company (SMRC, *Mantetsu* in Japanese) to facilitate the imperialist enterprise. It inherited the Russian “Railway Land” and expanded it into “Mantetsu Attached Land.” In addition, despite strong protests from the Chinese government, the SMRC built and ran the 160-mile Anfeng Railway, which linked the seaport city Andong and the capital of Fengtian Province.⁹ Japan also inherited the Liaodong Peninsula or Guandong Leased Territory from the Russians, which included the seaport cities of Dalian and Lüshun. Just like the Russians, the Japanese set up an administrative structure also called Guandong Province.¹⁰ Between 1898 and 1931, the local Chinese population thus lived under two sovereignties--the imperialist railway authority on the one hand and the Chinese State on the other.

The imperialist presence in the Southern Manchuria was different from other foreign presence in the treaty ports in that it featured a long railway (about 600 miles in total) and the Mantetsu Attached Lands along the railways. The concessions in treaty ports like Shanghai and Tianjin, in contrast, were isolated spots whose impact was largely limited to the cities. The lands under the Japanese control constituted only a small part of the Northeast, but because they were distributed from the north to the south, the imperialist penetration into the Chinese territory and society was much more profound. The Mantetsu Attached Land and the privileges on them were largely inherited from the Russians, who had attained both the Railway Lands and *absolute and exclusive* power over them in the two treaties of 1896 and 1898.¹¹

The Japanese operated the Mantetsu territories in about twenty cities including Changchun and Shenyang, all next to the SMR railway stations. The Mantetsu Attached Land was a special district in the city, and for all intents and purposes, the Japanese administered these areas as a state--they taxed businesses, policed the area, held jurisdiction over it, provided education, set up postal service, and built infrastructure such as roads, water supply, and electricity facilities.¹² The Japanese actively courted Chinese businesses onto their railway land and many Chinese merchants opened their business there. To the Chinese merchants who owned businesses on the Mantetsu lands, the Japanese administration was the most tangible state. The situation was like “a country inside another country” (*guo zhong zhi guo*), as the Chinese often complained.¹³ This fragmentation of sovereignty, as we will see in the city of Sipinggai, had profound sociopolitical impact on Chinese society. Not surprisingly, the Mantetsu Attached Land was often commercially important in the host city. In a new city like Sipinggai, the

⁹ Rucheng Mi, *Diguo zhuyi yu zhongguo tielu*, (1847-1949) (*Imperialism and Chinese Railways (1847-1949)*) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1980), 126-127.

¹⁰ Tie Yin, *Wan qing tielu yu wan qing shehui bianqian* (*Railway and social changes in late Qing*) (Beijing: jingji kexue chubanshe, 2005), 76.

¹¹ M. Royama, “The South Manchuria Railway Zone: And the Nature of Its Administration,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 11. (Nov., 1930), 1020.

¹² Royama, 1021-1022; Committee for the Compilation of Siping Gazetteer, ed. *Siping shi zhi* (Siping City Gazetteer). (Changchun, China: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1993), 3.

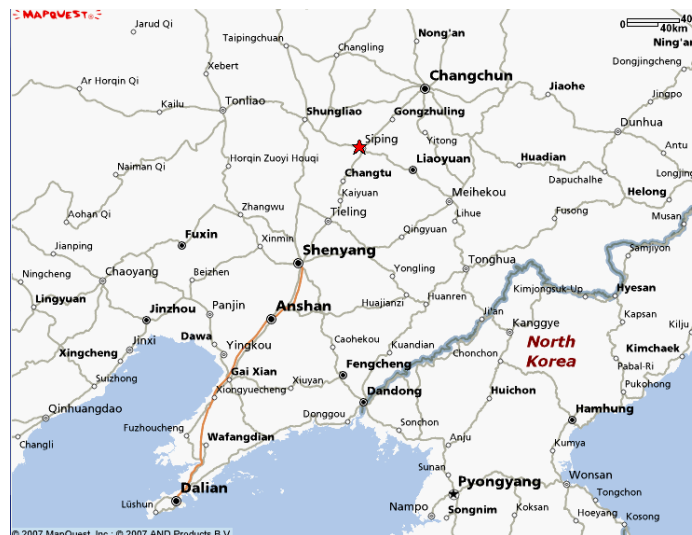
¹³ *Siping shi zhi*, 3.

Mantetsu land comprised the bulk of the city; but even in Shenyang, the largest city in the region, the Mantetsu land drastically altered the urban landscape by becoming the second business center of the city.

The Chinese warlord Zhang Zuolin became both the military and the civil governor of Fengtian in 1916. The Fengtian provincial government, like other warlord regimes, largely operated independently from the central government in Beijing. Internally, Zhang Zuolin appointed all the officials including the civil governor. Externally, he was the one with whom the Russians and the Japanese negotiated for issues in Fengtian, and later, the whole Northeast. The Zhang Zuolin regime was a state in essence. Combined with the provincialism at the time, the situation often inspired state loyalty to the Zhang regime, not the government in Beijing. For the Northeastern population, the Zhang regime was the largest tangible state and the Beijing government was hardly relevant.

The Railway City Sipinggai and the Rise of the Merchant Class

Sipinggai is the present-day Siping of Jilin Province. Prior to 1928, it was part of Fengtian Province (Liaoning after 1928). Sipinggai was born a semi-colonial city--its history began in 1900, when the Russians finished the construction of a railway station and named the station after the village to the west.¹⁴ The cooperation between foreigners and local people had been part of the city life from the beginning. In 1902, the Russians built three streets near the railway station and Sipinggai became a small railway town. Soon more than twenty Chinese-owned small businesses appeared on these streets. The Russians set up a police box to maintain order in this area.¹⁵ Thus, foreign rule began together with the birth of the city.



(Map provided by www.mapquest.com)

Figure 1. Sipinggai has been renamed Siping. It is in Jilin Province today but belonged to Fengtian/Liaoning Province before 1931.

¹⁴ Shengye Zang, Wenkui Zhang, Chun Yao, Enpu Gu, Yan Jin, eds. *Siping zhi zui* (The Most Prominent Things in Siping). (Siping, China: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1995), 165.

¹⁵ *Siping shi zhi*, 3.

The Japanese began their dominance in Sipinggai in 1905, after Japan's military victory over Russia. They inherited the former Russian Railway Land throughout South Manchuria, expanded it, and renamed it the Mantetsu Attached Land. In Sipinggai, the Attached Land included the areas west of the tracks and adjacent to the railway station. The quasi-official joint-stock SMRC established a local office there as the major administrative institution and ruled the land according to the principle of extraterritoriality. Although the SMRC was a railway enterprise in name, it acted as a government on the Mantetsu land, managing administrative issues such as infrastructure, land rental, education, public health, and taxation.¹⁶ The SMRC constructed streets and allocated real estate developers to attract businesses and residents. Soon the streets near the Sipinggai station became prosperous and the population increased rapidly. Because of the railway station, many merchants from nearby counties established grain stations in Sipinggai. As a consequence, vehicle repair shops, breweries, flour mills, brick factories, and barbershops also emerged. The population of the Mantetsu Attached Land grew from less than 1,000 in 1907 to 20,948 in 1937.¹⁷ In December 1916, the SMRC established four administrative wards; in April 1917, two local heads were appointed for each ward. Of these eight heads, five were Chinese merchants.¹⁸ The police in the area was jointly administered by the department of the Japanese Guandong Province and the Japanese Consulate in Fengtian.¹⁹ In 1931, the force consisted of as many as 138 Japanese policemen.²⁰ All in all, the SMRC acted as a state on the Mantetsu Attached Land. The commercial power of the Chinese merchants gradually turned into political power due to their close relationship with the Japanese authority.

The peculiarity of Sipinggai, an important railway city with little administrative significance, provides a good opportunity to study a small city below county level and an otherwise overlooked class--the merchants. Few Chinese merchants in Sipinggai were well-educated, either in the modern or in the traditional system, but they became the most powerful political group among the Chinese population because of their collaboration with the Japanese. Since many of them owned businesses on the Mantetsu Attached Land, before the Manchuria Incident, the merchants as a group were the closest to the Japanese. To borrow Zhijia Shen's idea, for the Chinese merchants on the attached land, the Japanese authority was "the most tangible state." It was especially so because in the Chinese administrative hierarchy, Sipinggai was insignificant and the presence of the Chinese state was weak. Sipinggai occupied no formal administrative position until 1922, when it finally became the seat of a ward (*qu*) in Lishu County.²¹ The long period of Japanese presence in Sipinggai and other parts of the region before 1931 (1905-1931, longer than what is normally considered a generation), must have given these merchants

¹⁶ Ibid., 113.

¹⁷ Ibid., 199-200.

¹⁸ Ibid., 372.

¹⁹ Royama, 1020. We lack direct information about who was responsible for establishing the police on the Japanese controlled area in Sipinggai. Royama stated that, at the beginning, there were two police forces on all railway zones, managed by the police department of Guandong Province and the Japanese Consulate separately. In 1908, they were merged into one and placed under the Guandong police department.

²⁰ *Siping shi zhi*, 496.

²¹ Zang et al, 171.

an impression of permanence and legitimacy, although it may not have given rise to any emotional attachment similar to nationalism. Indeed, there were two states in the life experience of these merchants. They dealt with one while conducting business on the Mantetsu Attached Land, but the other when they moved into other parts of the city. Therefore, not only can a state have many people, it is also possible for one person to have multiple states on a daily basis. The situation in the Mantetsu Attached Land in Sipinggai made the collaboration with the Japanese acceptable to the Chinese merchants, both before and after the Manchuria Incident.

In China, uneducated merchants rarely became the most powerful political group in a city. One reason they became prominent in Sipinggai was the lack of established local elites, both in the city and in the county. The Northeast had been seriously underdeveloped compared to other parts of China because of the Qing court's prohibition on immigration into the region, the Manchu emperors' ancestral land. The region was officially opened to Han immigrants only in 1903; for the first time, Han immigrants were permitted to hold title deeds to land. Although the region's population grew rapidly since then, it was still sparsely populated in the 1920s.²² Fenghua County, in which Sipinggai was located, was established only in 1878.²³ The lack of an established elite group can be seen in the small number of degree holders from the county at the end of the Qing. For instance, in the section of "Local Notables" in the county's gazetteer, the authors presented a list of *shengyuan*--the lowest degree in the civil service examination system--and explained that "*shengyuan* are normally not listed in gazetteers, but Fenghua has not been a county for very long; education and culture have not been well established."²⁴ If we adhere to the convention, there would be too few names to list."²⁵ Sipinggai was a village in such a backward county until 1900. It became a municipality only in 1937 under the administration of the recently established Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. It was in such a vacuum of established elite that the uneducated merchants turned their commercial success into political power, with the sponsorship of the Japanese.

Common Cultural Heritage and Collaboration in the Northeast

In the Northeast, those who collaborated with the Japanese in effect shared a cultural identity that included China and Japan, which served Japanese expansionist interests, both before and after the Manchurian Incident. Although there are almost always collaborators during any occupation, the degree of collaboration varies, depending on many factors. Thus, the degree to which the local inhabitants perceived a positive image of the invaders or obtained economic advantage from them can make a difference. The Japanese expansionists had put forward the notions of *dobun* (common culture) and

²² Christopher Mills Isett Isett, "State, Peasant and Agrarian Change on the Manchurian Frontier, 1644-1940" (Ph.D. Thesis--UCLA, 1998), 34.

²³ Zang et al, 314.

²⁴ Fenghua County was renamed to Lishu in 1914 because there was a county named Fenghua in Zhejiang Province. See Zang et al, 314.

²⁵ Fan Daquan, et al., ed. *Lishu xian zhi* (Lishu County Gazetteer) (China, 1934), *yi bian* (volume II), 18. The gazetteer primarily covers the period prior to the Manchuria Incident. At the time of its compilation, the civil service examination system had been abolished for twenty seven years.

doshu (common race) as justification for Japan's colonial and semi-colonial domination of Korea, Taiwan, and the Northeast. They believed that they were more entitled to imperialist encroachment than Western powers.²⁶ In the Northeast, the rivalry between the Russians and the Japanese did not end with the Russo-Japanese War. Even after the defeat of Russia in 1905, the Japanese-owned newspaper *Shengjing Times* (*Shengjing shibao*), which was published in Chinese in Fengtian, repeatedly warned the danger of "the powerful neighbor to the north" and accused the Russians of interfering with China's sovereignty.²⁷ In the first month of 1907 alone, the newspaper published at least five analytical articles on the Russian threat of Chinese sovereignty, not including reports of specific incidents of Russian aggressions. Behind these accusations, the newspaper implied the need for China to get help from the Japanese and thus sought to justify the Japanese presence in the Northeast.

Indeed, the notions of common culture and common race were not totally bogus, although they could not justify Japanese imperialism. For example, literate Chinese and literate Japanese could "pen talk" by exchanging written notes. The two nations, as the Japanese so often said, possessed a common cultural heritage alien to other foreign powers.²⁸ In the 160th issue of *Shengjing Times* published in 1907, a report titled "The Revival of Confucianism" described a traditional memorial ceremony in Japan, held in the Temple to the Sage Confucius in Tokyo by the Japanese Confucian Association. More than six hundred people attended the ceremony, including many political luminaries in Japan such as Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, Minister of Education, Minister of Finance, and the Chinese ambassador to Japan. In the keynote speech, the president of the association proclaimed that "Confucianism was the source of Japanese culture." In the appreciation speech, the Japanese baron Hosokawa Junshiro called Confucius "the Great Sage Late Teacher." The author of the news report likened the speech to a memorial article dedicated to Confucius by the famous Tang poet Pi Rixiu.²⁹ It is not difficult to imagine that reports like this probably created much resonance among many Chinese readers, especially those who had been educated in the traditional system and identified strongly with the traditional culture.

This image the Japanese projected of a common cultural heritage probably did not make them more acceptable to the Chinese intellectuals who had received a modern education. In Sipinggai, all the active resisters before the Manchuria Incident were intellectuals educated in modern universities.³⁰ Traditional Chinese culture, often essentialized as Confucianism, was first sidelined then criticized in modern schools and universities, especially after the New Culture Movement of 1919. Therefore, modern intellectuals, unlike older Chinese, no longer identified strongly with the Confucian culture celebrated by many Japanese. More importantly, modern education implanted ideas of nationalism in students. In Sipinggai and the Northeast in general, the Japanese presence was tolerated by the Chinese government. Thus, the local intellectuals' protest

²⁶ Peter Duus, Ramon Myers, Mark Peattie, ed. *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), xxvi.

²⁷ *Shengjing Times*, January 1907.

²⁸ Duus, Myers, and Peattie, 164.

²⁹ The date of this issue in Chinese calendar was the twenty-fifth day of the third month in the thirty-third year of Guangxu Reign.

³⁰ After the incident, open resistance to the Japanese was no longer possible.

against the Japanese presence was a manifestation of a highly self-conscious and very energetic nationalism. The Siping City Gazetteer contains four biographies of anti-Japanese activists, all of whom were educated in the modern universities in large cities. Modern education provided the basic framework of nationalism, including the history and geography of other nations; it also presented the ideology itself--through nationalistic writings. Campus activism further reinforced students' nationalist ideas.

In contrast to the strongly anti-Japanese intellectuals, the merchants in Sipinggai were willing to cooperate. There are three biographies of merchants in the Siping City Gazetteer. These merchants shared two noticeable traits--they were all major collaborators with the Japanese and they all received little or no education. One of these men, Zhao Hanchen was born in a family that was "not rich" in Leping County, Hebei Province and became an apprentice at the age of sixteen at a brewery in Huaide County, Jilin Province. As for the other two, Kan Chaoshan and Zhai Shutian, the gazetteer does not indicate how much education they received, a sign that they probably was not educated. The only educated collaborator in the gazetteer was Wang Zan, who was from a peasant family and whose "ten years of private traditional education (*sishu*)" was mentioned.³¹ The last collaborator found in the gazetteer biographies, Wang Yongqing was probably not educated either--he had been switching his career between banditry and soldiery since the age of sixteen.³² Because these individuals were never educated in modern schools, they were not exposed to nationalist insemination. More importantly, unlike the intellectuals, who were employed in schools or companies, the merchants, especially those who owned businesses on the Mantetsu Attached Land, had economic interests that depended on a good relationship with the Japanese. Business interests and lack of nationalism led to the merchants' cooperation with the Japanese. For Wang Zan and Wang Yongqing, who were in the police and the army respectively, collaboration with the Japanese meant quick ascendance to power.³³

Nationalism and Resistance in Sipinggai

Before the Manchuria Incident, the biggest challenge to the Japanese in Sipinggai came from the Lishu County magistrate (*xian zhishi*) Yin Shousong (1920-24). Yin was a native of Tongcheng, Anhui and a graduate of Meiji University in Tokyo.³⁴ He was probably the most capable magistrate in Lishu County's history. In Sipinggai, before 1921, most businesses were located on the Japanese-controlled Mantetsu Attached Land, and the Chinese government suffered a heavy loss of tax revenues while Chinese native industry and commerce (*minzu gongshang ye*) was hampered. Yin Shousong was the leader in the Chinese counter efforts. In 1920 and 1921, after receiving approval and encouragement from provincial and prefectural officials including Governor Zhang Zuolin, Yin established a new business district, called the New Market by the locals, despite the fierce opposition from the Japanese. He bought 2,082 *mu* of land on the east side of the railroad, built streets and houses, and attracted businesses by offering a tax exemption for the three years. At the same time, Yin also led the construction of a new

³¹ *Siping shi zhi*, 2603, 2643.

³² *Ibid.*, 2578-79.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2579, 2643.

³⁴ Tanabe, 358.

road between Sipinggai and the Lishu county seat to facilitate transportation and trade. Soon after, businesses in the New Market outnumbered those on the Mantetsu land.³⁵ In 1924, with the cooperation of local elite, Yin established the official-merchant joint company Sipinggai Electric Lights Ltd., which set up electric lights in the New Market and made it more competitive than the Mantetsu Attached Land.³⁶ Yin was enormously popular among local people as well as highly praised by prefectural and provincial officials. Because of the competition from the New Market, the Japanese had to change their policies on the Mantetsu land to be more favorable for businesses.³⁷

Foreign affairs and nationalism were prominent themes in Yin's career. He was appointed as the head of the Gongzhuling Foreign Affairs Bureau in 1912.³⁸ Because of the widespread Japanese encroachment along the SMR, he considered it important for local governments to be able to handle foreign affairs and took the initiative in establishing the Foreign Affairs Branch in Huaide and Lishu.³⁹ His plan of the New Market in Sipinggai encountered fierce opposition from the Japanese, who often behaved as if they were above the Chinese law. The Japanese tried to frustrate the project by making false legal claims to the land of the New Market. Yin studied documents and archives diligently to discover contracts concerning the county and treaties between the Chinese and the Japanese governments. He was thus able to refute all the Japanese claims. Yin's nationalist concern clearly went beyond his local jurisdiction. In the process of establishing the New Market against Japanese opposition, Yin compiled a collection of treaties between China and Japan and sent one hundred copies to the provincial government. Officials in the Foreign Affairs offices applauded the book.⁴⁰ Yin's nationalist ambitions and research abilities were both the result of his modern education.

In Sipinggai, mass nationalism was most visible in the guidance and influence of teachers in local schools. In 1925, after the May Thirtieth Massacre, Shanghai workers went on strike to protest the killing of Chinese workers by British and Japanese factory owners. On June 16, 1925, the three hundred plus Chinese students at Mantetsu Sipinggai Public School each donated five *jiao* to support the strike.⁴¹ The donation was likely organized by the Chinese teachers. Some students (school unidentified in the source material) also sold "National Humiliation Fans."⁴² In Sipinggai Fulun Elementary School, the nationalist education was directly related to the semi-colonial situation in the city. The school was founded in 1927 as the attached school of the Sitao Railway Bureau (Sitao was a Chinese railway that intersected with the SMR). The teachers and staff donated money to make an iron bell three to four feet tall, with a character *chi* (humiliation) on it. Every day during the morning meeting, teachers and students

³⁵ *Lishu xian zhi*, 1100-01.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1105.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2634-35.

³⁸ Gongzhuling is a city in Huaide, a neighboring county of Lishu.

³⁹ *Siping shi zhi*, 263.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2635.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴² Committee for the Compilation of Siping wen shi zi liao, *Siping wen shi zi liao, 2nd volume* (The historical records of Siping) (Siping, China, 1991), 8. These fans were usually featured illustrations reminding the Chinese of their dire situation, such as a map indicating how much of their territory was occupied by foreign powers. But the specific design(s) of the fans sold by the Sipinggai students is not indicated in the book.

performed the “strike the bell, ask about the humiliation” ritual. A student would strike the bell nine times and ask three questions, one after every three strikes. A list had been compiled of more than ten obvious questions, out of which three were asked every morning, included “Are the Twenty-one Demands the humiliation of China?” and “We have not reclaimed the Southern Manchuria Railway, is it a humiliation for China?” Everyone would respond with “yes!”⁴³ This ritual went on every day prior to the Manchuria Incident, side by side with the cooperation between Chinese merchants and the Japanese. The teachers and students seemed to be living in a different world from the merchants.

The intellectuals also disseminated nationalism among the workers. The Sitao Railway Colleagues’ Progressive Association (SRCPA) (*sitao tielu tongren xiejin hui*) was an institution of railway workers, which had been established by Xiu Zhenjiang and several other young railway employees, largely in response to the Japanese oppression, both in the Sitao Railway Bureau and in the city of Sipinggai. Born in 1902, Xiu was a native of Laiyang, Shandong. He graduated from Beijing Jiaotong University in 1928 and came to Sipinggai to work for the Sitao Railway in 1929.⁴⁴ The Bureau ran the Sitao Railway, a Chinese railway that was funded by a loan from the Japanese and constructed with the help of the SMRC. The bureau was staffed by both Chinese and Japanese employees, with the latter occupying key positions and receiving much better pay.⁴⁵ The relationship between the Chinese and the Japanese was often tense.

In May 1929, Japanese police arrested a Chinese worker of the Sitao Railway based upon an accusation by a Japanese merchant. Workers struck in protest. Xiu Zhenjiang and his comrades took the opportunity to advocate solidarity among workers and founded SRCPA, with headquarters in Sipinggai and branches in several other small railway cities. The goals of the association, proclaimed in its constitution, were to “strengthen solidarity among colleagues and promote patriotism” and to “educate colleagues and improve work environment and life conditions.”⁴⁶ The association published the journal “Progress Together” (*xie jin*), set up a night school for workers, and propagated anti-Japanese ideas. One popular slogan among workers was “Do not take the Japanese bus! Do not buy Japanese goods! Do no work for the Japanese!” Xiu’s wife Jing Yingkui volunteered to teach at the night school. The association protested the appointment of too many Japanese managers in the railway and forced the railway to replace some Japanese managers with the Chinese. After the Manchuria Incident, Japanese police disbanded the association and arrested and killed some leaders. Xiu was forced to flee Sipinggai.⁴⁷ Although most members of SRCPA were probably workers, the association operated under the leadership of Xiu, Jing, and their comrades. Their promulgation of nationalism and solidarity, organization of the night school, and publication of “Progress Together” set the agenda for the association. The picture is fairly clear that in Sipinggai, the intellectuals provided the initiative and leadership for all the nationalist activities.

⁴³ *Siping shi zhi*, 60.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2567.

⁴⁵ *Siping wen shi zi liao*, 56.

⁴⁶ *Siping shi zhi*, 2567.

⁴⁷ Zang 1995, 11-12; *Siping shi zhi*, 2567-68.

Collaboration and Resistance in Sipinggai after 1931

The connection between the Chinese and the Japanese in Sipinggai was established primarily through commercial activities and the administration of these activities. There were also some cultural elements in the relationship. Ma Longtan, the oldest sworn brother of Zhang Zuolin, was appointed the director of the Sitao Railway in 1922. As the prefect whose jurisdiction included Lishu County, he encouraged Yin Shousong to carry out the New Market plan. Ma was the only educated among the eight sworn brothers and was famous for his calligraphy. Between 1922 and 1940, he lived in Sipinggai and many Japanese came to him for his calligraphic works. Ma either declined the requests or let his secretary do the work. He also adamantly refused to accept an official position after the Manchuria Incident.⁴⁸ Although Ma never became friendly with the Japanese, we can still see the potential of the common cultural heritage in helping the Japanese establish cooperative relationship with some Chinese. Overall, cultural exchanges in Sipinggai seemed limited, because it was only a newly established small city.

⁴⁸ *Siping shi zhi*, 2570-71.



Figure 2. The pictures are from the *Lishu xian zhi*, 1934. The two men dressed in traditional Chinese style were actually Japanese, which we know only from their names: Isozumi Teiichi and Matsumura Kenji. They were appointed as county officials.

After the Manchuria Incident in September 1931, the political power of the Chinese merchants expanded beyond the Mantetsu Attached Land. On October 15, less than a month after the incident, the Sipinggai Temporary Municipal Office (*Sipinggai linshi shizheng gongsuo*) was set up under the control of Japanese army. Zhai Shutian, a merchant, was appointed as mayor (*shizhang*), Kan Chaoshan, also a merchant, and Zhao Hongye (profession unknown) were appointed as consuls (*guwen*), and eleven other people were appointed as board members (*weiyuan*).⁴⁹ Zhai had been a Japanese sympathizer even before the incident and his friendship with a Japanese named Sato was well known.⁵⁰ These connections probably facilitated his collaboration with the Japanese right after the incident. The municipality's jurisdiction was limited to district east of the railway, which had been under Chinese control before the incident.⁵¹ On May 2, 1932, when the League of Nations Commission stopped at Sipinggai railway station, a group of collaborators led by Zhai, Kan, and Zhao Hanchen (another merchant), under the name of "Sipinggai People's Petitioners" rushed into the station while the Japanese police pretended to try to stop them. The petitioners submitted a document to the commission to help the Japanese justify their occupation of Sipinggai and the Northeast.⁵² The cooperation with the Japanese in Sipinggai showed clear continuity--those who had cooperated before the incident collaborated under occupation.

Zhao Hanchen was the wealthiest businessman in Sipinggai and, not incidentally, also a major collaborator with the Japanese. Before the Manchuria Incident, Zhao owned one of the largest grain stations on the Mantetsu Attached Land. In March 1933, Zhao opened Yihehou, a conglomerate enterprise that included the largest department store in Sipinggai, manufacturing plants, and banks, with more than five hundred employees including six Japanese and two Koreans. Two of the Japanese employees, one a woman, were translators and four handled issues related to Japan. According to Zhao's biography in the *Siping wen shi zi liao*, "because Zhao Hanchen was very rigorous and strict, all subordinates were afraid of him, even the Japanese employees."⁵³ The shared reverence for one's superior by the Chinese and the Japanese is noticeable in the story. The company had deployed personnel in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya as well as Shanghai, Tianjin, Hangzhou, Dalian, Shenyang, and Harbin for gathering commercial information. The success of Yihehou relied on the goodwill of the Japanese authorities, which was at least in part the result of Zhao's frequent bribery.⁵⁴ When Zhao returned home to Hebei Province for his father's funeral in 1940, many Japanese businessmen in Tokyo and Japanese officials in the Northeast sent him condolence telegraphs.⁵⁵

The shared culture not only facilitated the cooperation between the Chinese and the Japanese on an individual basis, it also made the co-option of some religious groups easier for the Japanese-backed Manchukuo government. During late Qing and early Republican periods, many religious redemptive societies emerged in China. They amalgamated Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, following the Chinese historical

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2642.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 2642.

⁵³ *Siping wen shi zi liao*, 98.

⁵⁴ *Siping shi zhi*, 2604-05.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2604.

tradition of sectarianism and syncretism.⁵⁶ During the same period, similar religious movements such as the pan-Asianist religion *Omotokyo* also emerged in Japan.⁵⁷ *Omotokyo* had ties with the Red Swastika Society in China even before the Manchuria Incident. These religious societies from the two nations communicated easily because they were all based on China's three major teachings. Persecuted by the Nationalist regime during the anti-superstition movement, the Chinese redemptive societies found new opportunities under the Japanese-backed Manchukuo government. After the devastation of World War I, as some intellectuals in both countries were arguing that Eastern culture was spiritual and benevolent while the Western culture was materialistic and destructive, the shared cultural identity between the Japanese and the Chinese became more prominent.⁵⁸ In Sipinggai, several local branches of the redemptive societies were headed by the collaborators. Zhao Hanchen, Zhai Shutian, and Kan Chaoshan, all merchant collaborators without modern education, acted as the presidents of the local branch of the Red Swastika Society (*hong wanzi hui*) during the Japanese occupation. Zhai was also the president of the Morality Society (*daode hui*).⁵⁹ Both societies helped to propagandize the Japanese slogan "Paradise under the Kingly Way" and "The Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere."⁶⁰ Like the Nationalist Guomindang regime, the Manchukuo government censured the superstitious character of the redemptive societies. However, instead of eradicating these societies, it sought to transform them into "teach and transform" (*jiaohua*) organizations--agencies engaged in welfare, enlightenment, and control of people.⁶¹

After 1931, just as the merchants continued to collaborate with the Japanese, the intellectuals kept on resisting, but on a much smaller scale, because it was no longer possible to be openly anti-Japanese. There were many instances of covert, individual patriotic activities in the colleges in Sipinggai. In the schools, teachers and their students were still living in a different world from the merchants. The most intriguing example of this contrast can be found in the family of Zhai Shutian, the Japanese-appointed mayor and the biggest collaborator in the city. On December 8, 1942, students at Siping Women's Advanced School, Siping Xiaodong Advanced School, and Siping Normal School all found patriotic pamphlets (*chuandan*) on their campuses, which read: "Dear compatriots, please contemplate carefully: What kind of life are we living? What kind of education do we receive? Have you forgotten your mother country (*zuguo*)?" The Japanese police arrested two student suspects, one of whom was Zhai Yazhen, Zhai Shutian's granddaughter. Sources are not clear as to whether Zhai Yazhen actually distributed those pamphlets, but she probably showed some patriotic and anti-Japanese sentiments on campus, otherwise, she would not become the first suspect. A single family exhibited a great divergence of nationalism and collaboration. Yazhen and the other student was released the second day.⁶² The organizer behind the pamphlets turned out to

⁵⁶ Duara Prasenjit, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 104.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 99-104.

⁵⁹ *Siping shi zhi*, 2534-35.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2534-35.

⁶¹ Duara, 115.

⁶² *Siping wen shi ziliao*, Volume 1, 64.

be a teacher at the Normal School named Tan Baozhen.⁶³ He was arrested together with several other teachers and some students. He was later tortured to death in prison in 1944. Tan was a native of Fengtian and received his university education in Beijing. After 1931, he joined a resistance army but returned to teaching after the army was destroyed by the Japanese. When he was teaching at the Normal School, Tan could hardly cover his strong anti-Japanese sentiments--he often reminded students “we are all Chinese” and often quarreled with the Japanese teachers.⁶⁴ When the whole Northeast was under the Japanese’s control, Tan’s fate could be nothing but tragic.

Conclusion

As I have tried to demonstrate, the special situation of “a country inside another country,” manifested in the situation of the Mantetsu Attached Land, is a key to our understanding of the social, economic, and political landscape of the Northeast. In contrast to the similar case of concessions in Shanghai, which has been thoroughly studied, the urban layout of semi-colonialism in the Northeast has not received enough attention from Western scholars. Rana Mitter’s work on collaboration and resistance in the Northeast after 1931 remains the most comprehensive study.⁶⁵ Mitter emphasizes Japanese efforts in co-opting the Chinese political elites. Many collaborated--often after hesitation--to stay in power and to maintain social order. Mitter only mentions the Mantetsu Attached Land in passing and pays little attention to the effect of its twenty-six-year presence and its role in co-opting the Chinese in many cities before 1931.⁶⁶ The work on Japanese informal empire edited by Peter Duus, Ramon Myers, and Mark Peattie is a collection of articles by Japan scholars who provide the Japanese perspective on the Japanese aggression. But neither Duus’s chapter on the SMRC nor Peattie’s chapter on concessions mentions the Mantetsu Attached Land. In this article, I establish the significance of the Mantetsu Attached Land by showing how the physical fragmentation of urban space led to the political fragmentation of the population. I also hope to contribute to the theory of modern state by showing the complexity and multiplicity of state as seen by the people on the ground. Another goal of this study is to fill the gap in the existing literature, which covers both large cities and rural areas but omits the small cities. Through this case study of a small city and demonstrate that the investigation of major themes such as state and nationalism needs not have a large geographical scope. In fact, it is advantageous to focus on a small city, since we can examine people’s life experience more closely.

The complexity of nation and state, provincialism and nationalism persists in China. The current situation in Taiwan and Hong Kong is not easy to grasp if we do not adopt a more flexible understanding of state. Most importantly, we need to separate the concept of state from that of nation state. Are people in Taiwan (official name the Republic of China) part of the nation China? The answer might be yes or no depending on whom you would ask--actually, defining “China” can be a contentious issue. However,

⁶³ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁴ *Siping shi zhi*, 2636.

⁶⁵ Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press: 2000). Mitter also addresses the issues of nationalism, resistance, and non-resistance in the whole China in general.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 41- 44.

state is much easier to define--everybody knows that Taiwan and the mainland are under different regimes. For many in Taiwan, the state is the elected government on the island, but the nation includes the mainland. For others, both are limited to the island. Moreover, for people in Hong Kong, which was unified under the "one country, two systems" rule in 1997, the nation is China but the state is mostly the Hong Kong government. The state is not always a nation state. As a political entity, often created or destroyed by political events, the state is more fluid than the nation.

In Sipinggai and in the Northeast in general, local people evinced different attitudes and responses to the Japanese presence, often determined by their education, social status, occupation, and ideological conviction. Sipinggai is an ideal place to observe Chinese society's response to the Japanese aggression, because as a newly established city, Sipinggai was low in the Chinese administrative hierarchy and the presence of Chinese state was insignificant. Thus, people were left with more room to act, no matter whether they were antagonistic to or cooperative with the Japanese.

The merchants, although all uneducated, became in effect the ruling class in Sipinggai due to their economic and eventually political cooperation with the Japanese. The merchants' lack of nationalism can be partly attributed to their lack of education. The intellectuals in Sipinggai, in contrast, showed energetic nationalism; no matter they were county officials, school teachers, or railway engineers. This contrast suggests that modern education was one determining factor in inspiring nationalism in individuals. It is also true that, in China, there were many who received modern education and still collaborated with the Japanese. This shows us the other side of the coin--even modern education and national identity could not always turn one into a nationalist resister; quite often, considerations for expedience and a better life outweighed ideology. However, as Poshek Fu has shown in his study of Shanghai intellectuals under Japanese occupation, the collaborationist Shanghai intellectuals had to overcome the agonizing moral dilemma and came up with various kinds of apologies for their choices.⁶⁷ Torn by humiliation and sometimes self-hatred, some of the collaborationist intellectuals even named their study "Studio of Shame" and "Studio of Remorse."⁶⁸ We see nothing similar in the collaborationist merchants in Sipinggai--who, without the clear national identity that characterized intellectuals, showed neither shame nor remorse.

⁶⁷ Poshek Fu., *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

⁶⁸ Fu, 137-138. It was a tradition of Chinese literati to name their residence by self-proclaimed personality, favorite motto, biggest hobby, or anything that they identified strongest with. These names were usually positive.

Chinese Glossary

chi	耻
chi	尺
chuandan	传单
Dalian	大连
daode hui	道德会
Fenghua	奉化
Fengtian	奉天
fushu	附属
Gongzhuling	公主岭
Guangxu	光绪
Guandong zhou	关东州
guo zhong zhi guo	国中之国
guwen	顾问
Harbin	哈尔滨
Hong wanzi hui	红万字会
Huaide	怀德
Chiang Kai-shek	蒋介石
jiaohua	教化
Jilin	吉林
Jing Yingkui	景英葵
Kan Chaoshan	阚朝山
keju	科举
Leting	乐亭
Liaoning	辽宁
Lishu	梨树
Ma Longtan	马龙潭
minzu gongshang ye	民族工商业
nanman	南满
Manzhouli	满洲里
mu	亩
Nanyi xiang	南一乡
Pi Rixiu	皮日休
qu	区
Shengjing jiangjun	盛京将军
Shengjing shibao	盛京时报
shizhang	市长
Sipinggai	四平街
Siping shi zhi	四平市志

Sipinggai linshi shizheng gongsuo	四平街临时市政公所
Siping zhi zui	四平之最
sishu	私塾
sitao tielu tongren xiejin hui	四洮铁路同仁协进会
Suifenhe	绥芬河
Tan Baozhen	谭宝珍
weiyuan	委员
xian zhishi	县知事
Xie jin	协进
Xiu Zhenjiang	修振江
Yihehou	义和厚
yi bian	乙编
Yin Shousong	尹寿松
Zhai Shutian	翟书田
Zhai Yazhen	翟雅珍
Zhang Xueliang	张学良
Zhang Zuolin	张作霖
Zhao Hanchen	赵汉臣
Zhao Hongye	赵鸿业
Zhongdong tielu	中东铁路
zuguo	祖国

Japanese names and romanization

dobun	同文
doshu	同種
Isozumi Teiichi	五十住貞一
Mantetsu	滿鐵
Matsumura Kenji	松村健二
Nagoya	名古屋
Omotokyo	大本教
Osaka	大阪
Sato	佐藤
Hosokawa Junshiro	細川潤四郎

