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ARTICLE

Surviving the Second World War in Manchukuo: memories of Korean experiences of the war in Manchurian farming villages

Chong Eun AHN

Department of History, Central Washington University, Ellensburg, WA

ABSTRACT

When the Second Sino–Japanese War broke out in 1937, it became increasingly important for the Japanese Empire to secure and exploit areas under its colonial control in order to strengthen the imperial forces. Focusing on the memories of the Chaoxian *zu* (ethnic Korean) peasants in Minle Chaoxian *zu* Township, Heilongjiang, this article examines how Korean migrant peasants in Manchukuo survived such an exploitative situation. These ordinary people's memories of the years from 1937 through 1945 demonstrate that some Korean migrants negotiated their power in everyday practice by positioning themselves ambiguously in relationship to the Japanese colonizers and to other colonized peoples. While pressure existed to support the imperial forces by producing more rice, by being submissive imperial subjects, and by speaking Japanese in public, this article argues that these Koreans managed to survive by coping with the colonial circumstances. Their emphasis on daily lives challenges the simplistic binary between the colonized and the colonizer and sheds light on the moments when the weak exercised their power.

KEYWORDS

Anti-Japanese War; Manchukuo; Chaoxian *zu*; Korean Peasants in Manchuria

Introduction

When the Second Sino–Japanese War broke out in July 1937, it became increasingly important for the Japanese Empire to strengthen its imperial forces by securing and effectively exploiting areas under its colonial control. Manchukuo, in particular, was important for Japanese colonial planners due to its military supply bases and its production of soybeans, rice, coal, and iron ore.[1] For the Japanese Empire, Manchuria was not only a place that provided arms for its soldiers, but was also a source of the food needed by these soldiers to advance into other areas in Asia. In 1936, Koreans in Manchuria produced almost 90 percent of Manchukuo's total rice crop.[2] Securing the rice production in Manchukuo that fed Japan's imperial subjects both on the home front and the battlefront must have had an impact on the Korean agricultural migration.[3]

CONTACT Chong Eun AHN ahnc@cwu.edu

[1]Tucker, "Labor Policy and Construction," 25; and Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 32, 94, and 183–209.
[2]Jones, *Manchuria Since 1931*, 72–74, and 178–179; and Eckert, *Offspring of Empire*, 163.
[3]Sun Chunri, *Zhongguo Chaoxianzu yiminshi*, 561–575. Sun explicates the imperial policies that aimed to increase rice production, exploit Korean peasants, and establish an unequal rice provision system in wartime Manchukuo.

By the time the war broke out, the Japanese Empire could draw on well-established systems of Korean migration from its prewar colonial experiences. The Governor-General of Korea proposed long-term official programs for large-scale Korean migration to Manchuria beginning in 1931. However, their implementation was delayed for years, because the Kwantung Army preferred Japanese immigration over Korean immigration to Manchukuo. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs in Tokyo, the armies in Japan, and the Kwantung Army took a while to seriously consider the Governor-General of Korea's proposals. In 1936, the various offices involved in colonial governance negotiated the details of the proposals. Subsequently, in August 1936, the Kwantung Army announced immigration guidelines (*zaimanchōsenjinshidōyōkō*) for the resettlement of ten thousand formerly Korean households (about fifty thousand people), primarily farmers, in the 23 relatively secure counties around Jiandao (the area around today's Yanbian), Shenyang, and Dandong. In September 1936, the Korea–Manchuria Development Company (*Senman takushoku kabushikikaisha*) and its sister firm, the Manchuria–Korea Development Company (*Mansen takushoku kabushikikaisha*), were established to expand and implement this Korean migration.[4]

The war expedited these immigration plans as the Kwantung Army became more open to Korean immigration. The previous guidelines of August 1936 that limited Korean immigration to areas in Southern Manchuria were revised in 1938. The Japanese Empire, including the government of Manchukuo, the development companies, and the Governor-General of Korea, allowed and planned for Korean settlements in all parts of Manchukuo. From 1937 to 1940, the Manchuria–Korea Development Company promoted businesses to move Korean peasants. It also purchased approximately nine hundred fifty thousand acres of land from other colonial development companies and Chinese property owners. Then, it funded Koreans who moved to collective farms by paying for their moving fees and operating mortgage programs to help them purchase land from the landowners, who were mostly native Chinese in Manchuria. Overseeing the immigrant population through various measures was a crucial task as well. For example, the Korea–Manchuria Development Company trained and educated applicants for migration while they were still in Korea. In these training sessions, Koreans learned about the ethics of imperial subjects and farming values, Manchukuo state ideology, and farming skills for Manchuria. Individual migrants were also required to show proof of immigration status from the office of the Governor-General of Korea at five offices in Andong (today's Dandong), Ji'an, Changbai, Kaishantun, and Tumen. All of these measures aimed to keep these Koreans on the farms so that they could effectively provide a secure source of food for the empire.[5]

Yet the colonial governments of Korea and Manchuria were unable to bring their strategic projects of planned migration to fruition. As the war unfolded with huge human losses and mounting demand for agricultural and industrial products, Koreans migrated not only to Manchuria and other parts of Asia but also to Japan. As Japan expanded its heavy chemical industries and conscripted young laborers to serve in the

[4]For more on the debates among Japanese elites in the early Manchukuo period, see Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*, 59; Im Kye-sun, *Uri ege tagaon Chosŏnjok ŭn nugu ing'a*, 88–89; Lee Jong-su, "Chungguk dongbuk jiyeok Joseon-jok sahoe ŭi hyungseong," 77–78; and Juong Anki, "Manjuguk-ki *Chosŏnin* ui Manju imin gwa *Sŏnmanch'ŏksik (Chu)*."

[5]Juong Anki, "Manjuguk-ki *Chosŏnin* ui Manju imin gwa *Sŏnmanch'ŏksik (Chu)*," 43, and 68–72; and Jones, *Manchuria Since 1931*, 72–76. For more information about policies concerning Korean immigration to Manchukuo, including the types of Korean immigrants, see Jin Yongzhe, "*Manshūkoku*" *ki ni okeru Chōsenjin Manshū imin seisaku*; and Jin Ying, *Kündae Manju pyŏ nongsa paltal kwa iju Chosŏnin*, 171–267.

imperial forces, some Koreans began finding jobs in Japan. Between 1940 and 1945, more Koreans moved to Japan than to Manchuria.[6] More importantly, as this article points out, it was more difficult than the Japanese planners had envisaged to achieve the goal of *effectively controlling* Koreans by transforming them into loyal Japanese subjects through education and surveillance.

To examine how the Korean migrant peasants challenged the Japanese Empire's ideas and policies toward migrants, this article focuses on the memories of the ethnic Korean farmers in the Minle (Minlak in Korean) Chaoxian *zu* Township. The interviews published in the fourth volume of *Singminji sigi chaeman Chosŏnin ŭi sam kwa kiŏk* [Korean Life and Memory in Colonial Manchuria: Oral History Collection] in 2009 provide many perspectives and stories of the people who lived in Minle during the war period.[7] This article will also analyze a memoire of the famous Chaoxian *zu* scholar, Chŏng P'al-lyong, and others, as they provide clear glimpses of their lives in farming villages at that time.[8] These memories of the years 1937 to 1945 demonstrate that, as in early Manchukuo, the majority of Korean migrants negotiated their power in everyday practices by positioning themselves ambiguously in relationship to the Japanese colonizer and other colonized peoples. While pressure to support the imperial forces by producing more rice existed, these Koreans managed to survive through working under colonial circumstances. Facing oppression, including discriminatory rice provisions and a prohibition on speaking Korean in public domains, the majority of Korean migrants kept farming for their livelihoods and found ways to live as Koreans, mainly by speaking their language and building their identifiably Korean community.[9] In their everyday practices, this article argues, ordinary Korean migrant peasants found and used tactics to sustain their village communities and to survive the war.[10]

History of Minle

The existence of Minle Chaoxian *zu* Township is linked to the history of Manchukuo and its wartime context. According to the People's Republic of China's online Administrative Divisions report, Minle is a township with twelve thousand people in Wuchang City, in the Harbin metropolitan area. The same report states that in 1996, eighty percent of the population was ethnic Korean.[11] This township is famous for its

[6]Lee Jong-su, "Chungguk dongbuk jiyeok Joseon-jok sahoe ŭi hyungseong," 46–47.

[7]Kim To-hyong, ed., *Singminji sigi chaeman Chosŏnin ŭi sam kwa kiŏk: Kusul charyojip*, consists of four volumes of oral histories collected by several noted South Korean scholars. It is the result of the research project "The Life and Memorial History of Koreans in Manchuria during Colonial Korea: Collecting and Arranging Oral History Archives," carried out between July 2006 and June 2007.

[8]Chŏng P'al-lyong, *Kohyang ttŏna 50-Yŏn*.

[9]Xu Mingxun, *Halbin-si* Chosŏn *minjok paengnyon sahwa*, 124–127, and 162–184. Various and familiar stories of the Manchukuo regime's brutality toward Koreans appear in this local history monograph.

[10]Ahn, "From Chaoxian ren to Chaoxian zu," 2013; De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*; Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*. In writing my dissertation, I found conversations between Immanuel Wallerstein and Étienne Balibar helpful in clarifying ambiguities regarding the identities of Korean migrants in the Japanese Empire. They emphasize the internalization of ambiguities in the very processes of social identity production, through which individuals search for their own ways of self-imagining, identities, and even political categories. Michel de Certeau's distinction between "strategies" and "tactics" is also essential to my definitions of "everyday practices" and "tactics."

[11]Xingzhengquhua: http://www.xzqh.org/html/show/hl/27809.html. Since the late 2000s, however, depopulation of Chaoxian *zu* in this area has become an issue. For more information, see *Yanbian ribao* [Yanbian Daily], Sept. 26, 2012; and *Heilongjiang xinwen* [Heilongjiang News], Sept. 14, 2012.

rice production, and especially during the 2000s, it contributed to the organic rice production of the People's Republic of China.[12]

The origins of this township date to Manchukuo in the 1930s and are linked to Gong Jin-hang. The son of a wealthy merchant of the Gong family, Gong Jin-hang came from Kaesong City in northern Korea. He studied in Japan, Britain, and France between 1923 and 1934 before returning to East Asia via the Trans-Siberian Railway. After discovering that his father's business naïveté was reducing their wealthy family's estate, Gong Jin-hang decided that Manchuria would be a good place to make a profit. He thought it would be particularly promising as a location for large plantation-style agriculture and as a destination to promote for the migration of impoverished Korean peasants. With funds raised from his neighbors and friends in Kaesong, he founded the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation (*Manmong sanŏp chusikhoesa*) in 1934.[13]

This corporation first came to Gongzhuling, in today's Jilin Province, and established the Goryo (Korea) Farm in 1934.[14] Since Gongzhuling later became strategically important to the Kwantung Army and to Japanese migration to Manchuria, the Japanese government agencies purchased this land and another farm that the company had developed in the Shulan area in Jilin from the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation. The Manchukuo government sold the corporation land around Anjia station in Heilongjiang, which is close to today's Minle.

At the time, few native Chinese property owners and rice farmers were living in this area. Most Chinese farmers cultivated upland crops, such as corn and peas. One of the 13 villages within Anjia (today's Min'an Village) was called Wangjiacun (Wang Family Village), because many villagers shared the last name of Wang.[15] However, approximately 40 to 50 Chinese households, all but a very few in the area, had to turn over their farming rights to the newly arrived Koreans who migrated there under the leadership of the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation. The company named this land "Anga Farm" (hereafter Anjia, using the Chinese name) and planned to settle 500 households there. The corporation irrigated the land by damming the river, building banks, and dividing the land into three-hectare agricultural fields. It leased the land to peasants through decade-long mortgage programs. By 1945, there were a total of 855 households on this farm; 580 of them were Korean, and the rest were mostly Chinese. According to the colonial government's records, only 262 Koreans lived in the whole of Wuchang County in 1926. In 1945, however, 2,987 Koreans were among a total of 4,513 people on this farm alone. After the Second World War, the Chinese recovered this land from the Japanese, and the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation disappeared from the area. In 1956, after a series of ethnic minority projects in the People's Republic of China, this farm was renamed the Minle Chaoxian *zu* Township.[16]

[12] *Jinan ribao* [Jinan Daily], July 9, 2011, 1. http://jnrb.e23.cn/shtml/jinrb/20110709/125872.shtml; and *Yeongnam Ilbo* [Yeongnam Daily], Oct. 18, 2004, http://m.yeongnam.com/jsp/view.jsp?nkey=20041018.010131005210001.
[13] Gong Jin-hang, *Isanghyang ul ch'ajaso*; and Jeongpil Yang, "1930-nyŏndae chungban Kaesŏngjabon'gaŭi Manju chinch'ulgwa nongŏp t'uja – Gong Jin-hang ŭi saryerŭl chungshimŭro".
[14] Gongzhuling was part of Fengtian Province in Manchukuo before Dec. 1934.
[15] Kim Kyung-sik, *Joseon-jok saengwhal sa*, 82–86.
[16] Kim Wang-bae and Lee Soo-chul, "1930-nyŏndae Manju-ui Chosŏnjok ma-ŭl kongdongch'e," 331–332.

Migrant villages and farms in wartime Manchukuo

The development of a collective farm was not a phenomenon peculiar to Wuchang County. As was previously mentioned, migration projects involving Korean peasants were being implemented in many other parts of Manchukuo. The Manchukuo government organized collective villages in its early years, beginning in May 1933 and focused on Jiandao Province. It gathered together individual peasants dispersed throughout the region and established larger farms with collective villages. In 1937, the Manchukuo government began designating these farms as "safe farm villages." According to Jin Ying:

> The Governor-General's Office in Korea claimed that these villages were designed to "protect" and "lead" Korean refugees who could not return to their hometowns due to the occurrence of the Manchurian Incident as well as to develop the paddy fields of Manchuria.[17]

These villages expanded all over Manchukuo in 1938. By December 1939, more than ten thousand collective villages existed in North China, including Manchukuo provinces, such as Jiandao, Fengtian, Andong, Jilin, Binjiang, and Sanjiang. Approximately 86 villages of this kind were established in Manchukuo between 1936 and 1943 in today's Yanbian alone. These include current Korean autonomous villages, such as Shangtian Village in Helong and Xintun Village in Antu.[18]

The Anjia Farm is one example of these famous collective farms in Manchukuo. Kim Yŏnsu, an industrial entrepreneur active in Korea and Manchukuo, also participated in building large farms in Manchukuo. His family enterprise, Samyang Company, began acquiring tracts of unclaimed land from the government and from private Japanese and Chinese owners across the Yalu and Tumen rivers. Samyang Company organized the lands into large farms populated by Korean immigrant tenants. Kim, in cooperation with the company, established large farms in Yingkou near Shenyang in 1937. By 1942, Kim had established such farms in Jiaohe, Jiutai, Meihe, and Chapeng. By 1945, Kim's landholdings in Manchuria totaled nearly ninety thousand acres.[19]

In his memoir, Chŏng P'al-lyong, who became a professor of Russian literature at Yanbian University in 1960, provides a vivid picture of how a poor Korean family moved around these farms in wartime Manchukuo. Born in 1932 in Damyang (Chŏlla Province in southwestern Korea), Chŏng followed his family to Xita in Fengtian (today's Shenyang) in March 1937. His father was a bamboo craftsman who was impoverished in the 1930s due to the economic depression. Chŏng's father also had to pay the debts of a bamboo products company. After hearing about the opportunities in Manchukuo, the family of eight went there thinking they could make a profit by selling bamboo products, such as hair combs.[20] Yet Xita turned out to be a ghetto area in which poor Korean migrants gathered. Even in 1940, the *Mansŏn Ilbo* (Manchuria-Korea Daily). described the Korean street of Xita as dirty, ugly, and extremely disorderly.[21] Few people could afford bamboo products, and Chŏng's family began to face severe hunger. At the inn where Chŏng's family was living in Xita, people sympathized with this family, in which six children were fighting hunger, and

[17]Jin Ying, *Kŭndae Manju pyŏ nongsa paltal kwa iju Chosŏnin*, 189.
[18]Kim Kyung-sik, *Joseon-jok saengwhal sa*, 82–86.
[19]Eckert, *Offspring of Empire*, 164–165.
[20]Chŏng P'al-lyong, *Kohyang ttŏna 50-Yŏn*, 1–23.
[21]*Mansŏn Ilbo*, Sept. 24, 1940. Analysis of the Xita area also appears in Kim Kyong-il, Yoon Hwy-tak, Lee Dongjin, and Im Sŏng-mo, *Tong Asia ŭi minjok isan kwa tosi: 20-segi chŏnban Manju ŭi Chosŏnin*, 135 and 163–164.

Figure 1. Koreans in Yingkou Farm, May, 1940.

Chu Sŏng-hwa, *Chungguk Chosŏnin iju sajinch'ŏp* [Photo Album of Korean Migration to China], 165, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

they recommended that the family go to Yingkou, which was not far from Fengtian. Thus, the family moved to the collective Korean farm in Yingkou, as shown in Figure 1, which was operated by Yŏnsu Kim.

However, Chŏng's family still had to make yet another move. Life in Yingkou proved to be another trial for the family to overcome. They had nothing with which to purchase land from the collective farm or to use to settle down in the farm village of Yingxing. Luckily, they bumped into a relative of Chŏng's mother and stayed with her family. Yet Chŏng's family was still too poor to purchase land. Consequently, his father and elder brother worked as farm-hands. Two of his sisters babysat other peasants' babies. His mother tried to make some money by selling miscellaneous products on the street. Hunger was still hitting the family hard, and the family allowed a daughter to be adopted by a Korean elementary school principal in the village. The principal moved to the Hedong Farm, which was established by the Manchuria–Korea Development Company near Harbin.[22] After receiving an invitation from the principal in 1938, Chŏng's family also moved to Hedong, where agricultural associations (*xingnonghui*) helped the new migrants to settle down. The difficulties of farming and other colonial oppressions, to be discussed later, continued to complicate Chŏng's family's life in Hedong. Despite the harsh reality, however, the family survived on this farm throughout the war and afterwards.[23]

Chŏng's memoir of migration complicates the stories of village settlements in wartime Manchukuo. In contrast to the major narratives that focus on the "forcefulness" of the migration with emphasis on the Manchuria–Korea Development Company's recruitment of peasants from Korea, Chŏng's story is filled with networks among Koreans across urban and rural sectors. His family found ways to survive by networking with people in an inn in Xita, in the farm village of Yingkou, and at an agricultural association in Hedong. While colonial agents and agencies, such as Kim Yŏnsu and the Manchuria–Korea Development

[22]The Hedong Farm later became the Hedong Chaoxian *zu* Township in Shangzhi City, now in the Harbin Metropolitan Area.
[23]Chŏng P'al-lyong, *Kohyang ttŏna 50-Yŏn*, 1–23.

Company, provided opportunities to explore methods of survival in the region, they were not the direct forces that granted his family lifelines.

Koreans in wartime Manchukuo

How can the stories of Korean migrants, including Gong Jin-hang and Chŏng P'al-lyong, in wartime Manchukuo be approached? To answer this question, a general introduction to the historiography of Koreans in wartime Manchukuo might be helpful. Akin to many other histories of World War II, stories of collaboration and anti-Japanese struggles have dominated the discourse concerning Korean migrants during the war. The major historiographies in the two Koreas and China emphasize the nationalist struggles of the guerrilla forces in Manchukuo through which the states built legitimacy.[24] Heavy criticism of the enemies of the nations, or the "pro-Japanese collaborators," also exists in these narratives.[25]

To go beyond the Cold War apologetics of Japanese imperialist violence against other Asians, critical examination of the exploitation of ordinary people, such as soldiers and military sex slaves, and other tragedies of the war arose in the 1990s. Scholars also began discussing intersections between race, gender, and class in wartime colonial violence.[26] Following these trends toward a critical approach to such complex histories, scholarship in English has discussed this major portion of history differently from the earlier focus on Japanese colonial oppression of colonized poor Korean and Chinese peasants.

Korean soldiers provide one example that reveals critical yet untold stories of wartime Manchukuo, because Korean youth serving in the Japanese army and navy constitute a relatively recent subject of research that first received attention in the mid 1990s. According to Utsumi Aiko, due to postwar national politics in Korea and Japan, the history of Korean men serving in the Japanese imperial forces was silenced. Many Koreans who had served in the Japanese army concealed their service, because they faced possible censure and even social ostracism. Both the Japanese and the Korean sides ignored or denied the historical reality of Korean soldiers in the Japanese military. It was only in the mid 1990s, about 50 years after the end of the war, that Koreans began to speak out, and researchers specializing in the Asian war fronts during World War II began examining this history.[27]

Recent research has shown that more than 214,000 Korean men served as military personnel in the Japanese armed forces between 1938 and 1941. The War Ministry of Japan announced laws to accept Korean or Taiwanese volunteers into the army in January 1938

[24]Armstrong, *North Korean Revolution*, 13–37. The first chapter of this book examines the activities and programs of the Chinese Communist Party's Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army in the 1930s and provides a historical picture of how Koreans involved in these Manchurian partisan activities became dominant political figures in North Korea after 1945.

[25]Kim Kyong-il, Yoon Hwy-tak, Lee Dongjin, and Im Sŏng-mo, *Tong Asia ŭi minjok isan kwa tosi*, 82–85. The histories of urban Koreans in Manchukuo also often fall into the trap of pro-Japanese versus anti-Japanese elites. In such cities as Xinjing (Changchun), Shenyang, and Harbin, various types of people seemed to be "pro-Japanese collaborators." These included Korean students attending imperial universities or military institutions, Korean police officers, lower-level government officials, and elites who joined the Concordia Association of Manchukuo. For example, former South Korean president Park Jung Hee went to the military academy in Manchukuo and served in the army during the war. Seventy Koreans graduated from Dadong Institute, a training school for Manchukuo administration. Yet very few studies focused on lower-class urbanites, including prostitutes and workers in industrial and service sectors.

[26]For example, see Barlow, *Formations of Colonial Modernity*; Fujitani, White, and Yoneyama, *Perilous Memories*; Barrett, *Chinese Collaboration with Japan*; Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*; and Waldron, "China's New Remembering."

[27]Aiko, "Japan's Korean Soldiers," 81–83; and Jeon KyoungSun, "Chŏnsi ch'eje ha Manjuguk gukbyŏngbŏp sŏnjŏn," 133–164. Jeon's research discusses the context and implementation of the National Army Law in wartime Manchukuo and argues the vulnerability of the law in recruiting soldiers for the Japanese Empire.

and into the navy in August 1943. In addition to volunteers, during this time, the empire established systems to conscript young men and to mobilize students in Korea.[28]

This silencing of Korean men who had served in the Japanese imperial forces appears in studies of Koreans in the Manchurian military as well. Relying on its principle of the "five peoples in harmony," the Manchukuo state, even in its early years, recruited officers and service members from among its one million resident Koreans. These men were organized into three border surveillance regiments that were placed strategically in the Dongning and Hunchun Districts. Yet Manchukuo's principle of "five peoples in harmony" did not always function smoothly in the military units. In the summer of 1936, members of one company in Dongning, dissatisfied with their treatment by a Japanese officer, revolted and fled to Russian territory. Confidence in these soldiers then collapsed, and the recruitment of Koreans in Jiandao Province was halted. However, because of the potential of Koreans as soldiers, the incident was not blamed on Koreans alone. Moreover, the remaining Korean soldiers performed well, particularly in skirmishes with the Russians. Recognition of the value of these Koreans was on the rise, and plans were made to increase their numbers.[29]

To accept Koreans into the military, the Japanese Empire implemented rigorous policies to turn Koreans into Japanese who would serve the emperor. The Manchukuo government was no exception. It participated in the assimilation policies from colonial Korea. It banned the use of the Korean language in Korean schools, forced Koreans to adopt Japanese style names, and required Koreans to sing in unison an oath of allegiance as imperial subjects (*huangguo chenmin*) and to worship at Shinto Shrines. After the war broke out, these policies became part of a broader policy of "Japan and Korea are One" (*naisen ittai*), which aimed to assimilate Koreans into Japanese.[30]

Another example of research that debunks the framework of colonial oppression and anticolonial resistance is Hyun-ok Park's *Two Dreams in One Bed*. Park investigates the triangular relationship of Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese, whose social and national positions remained unstable in colonizing Manchuria. Park argues that the transformations of ethnic and national identities were products of capitalist expansion. To demonstrate this, Park examines laws and state policies in Manchuria, focusing on the private ownership system and the social lives involved with it. When people negotiated internationalization and nationalization with capitalist expansion, according to Park, the latter thrived on and exceeded the former two. If we follow her argument, in other words, Korean peasants in Manchuria negotiated their national identity to accumulate wealth. To build up their own land and property, these Koreans became more capitalistic than nationalistic.[31]

[28]Aiko, "Japan's Korean Soldiers," 83–87; and Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 44–46.

[29]Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 43–44. *Shenbao* also reported several incidents of Korean soldiers' revolts in Japanese military units during the war. On Aug. 17, 1938, *Shenbao* reported that Korean soldiers revolted and disarmed in Nanjing. On Aug. 30, 1938, also in Nanjing, 7,000 of these Korean soldiers disarmed themselves and asked to return home. This ended in clashes, and many were wounded. According to *Shenbao* reports, similar incidents and clashes arose in Guilin and Guangzhou in 1939.

[30]Aiko, "Japan's Korean Soldiers," 83. These ideas of assimilating Koreans into the Japanese Empire began in 1910. Yet the ideas became rigorous policies during the war. For more information about the assimilation policies, see Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies*. Caprio's chapter on radical assimilation policies during the war explicates the development of the "Japan and Korea are One" ideology.

[31]Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*.

Questions of identities

To a certain extent, the story of the Anjia Farm supports Hyun-ok Park's argument that the transformations of ethnic and national identities in colonial Manchuria were products of capitalist expansion.[32] Gong Jin-hang, an entrepreneur from a wealthy merchant family, found Manchuria to be a land of opportunity and prosperity. Gong found approximately 10 people to buy shares in the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation, which he founded in Gongzhuling in 1934. He used his identity as a Korean and as a Japanese imperial subject to purchase the land from the Manchukuo government, which had basically extorted the land from the Han Chinese natives. He networked with other Japanese and Korean officials and entrepreneurs in Korea to learn ways in which to launch his business in Manchukuo. Gong profited by selling rice collected from the peasants on his farm to the Kwantung Army, by renting seeds and agricultural implements, and by selling millet to the peasants during the spring period of agricultural hardship. His capitalistic pursuits led him to negotiate his national identity as a formally colonized Korean and a Japanese imperial subject.[33]

Whether Gong was purely a capitalist who negotiated his national identity and became a pro-Japanese colonial subject, however, remains in question. While some nationalist historians in South Korea consider Gong and his manager Lee Sun-geun to be capitalist collaborators with the Japanese colonial government, many ethnic Koreans remember them differently. They are recalled as individuals who actively worked for Korean migrants or who enabled Koreans to retain their Korean cultural identities.[34] For example, S. Kim, who moved to a village on the Anjia Farm in 1939, recalls the time he was fifteen:

Q: The president of the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation was Gong Jin-hang. Lee Sun-geun served under him. And someone with the last name of Park was in the Office of Agricultural Affairs. Do you remember anyone else?

A: What I remember is that Park…. What was he? He was in charge of agricultural affairs, and he retired after liberation. He returned to North Korea then, and Gong Jin-hang returned to South Korea. I heard that Gong became an ambassador to France and that Lee Sun-geun became some kind of an official. Thinking about them today, they did many things for the Chaoxian *zu*.[35]

Kim's reference to "many things" reappears in the recollections of other ethnic Koreans about Gong and Lee Sun-geun. Although Gong supported the Japanese army by providing rice, people emphasize that he allowed the peasants to run night schools, where they could learn in Korean, which was illegal in the official schools in

[32]Ibid.
[33]Kim Wang-bae and Lee Soo-chul, "1930-nyŏndae Manju-ui Chosŏnjok ma-ŭl kongdongch'e," 326–331.
[34]The Anjia Farm is categorized as a pro-Japanese collaborative entity in some nationalist South Korean scholarship. In such rhetoric, however, Gong does not receive much attention because his politics in the postwar era did not stand out as much as those of his manager, Lee Sun-geun. The Institute for Research in Collaborationist Activities in South Korea put Lee's name on the list of antinational collaborators in Manchuria. There are two reasons for this categorization. Lee was a member of the Concordia Association of Manchukuo, and he actively gathered rice from the Korean peasants to support the Kwantung Army. His support of the military dictatorship as an academic politician also plays a part in this categorization.
[35]Kim To-hyong, *Singminji sigi chaeman Chosŏnin ŭi sam kwa kiŏk*, 96–97.

Manchukuo. Gong also established agricultural training schools, which helped these Koreans to improve their levels of rice production.[36]

Ambiguous identities and surviving the war

In Gong's case, it seems that he had multiple identities as a Korean capitalist, a Japanese collaborator, and a Korean ethnic community leader. For poor Korean migrants, however, multiplicity simply does not explain the complex intersections between ethnic and class identities. According to Wuchang City's official records, even in 1945, 91.7 percent of the Korean population on the Anjia Farm was categorized as poor peasants.[37] While the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation described the farmers on the Anjia Farm as "free independent farmers" (*jiyūjisakunō*), they were, in reality, tenants who rented the land from the corporation and had to pay back their debt. S. Kim remembers this reality of renting and farming the land in wartime Manchukuo:

Q: Did people work with pleasure, since they could develop their own lands? Because they were creating their own fields?

A: Of course. They worked to survive. In the past, we, Chaoxian *zu*, developed the wet fields in China. We took pride in the land. We rented the land and paid a certain amount in rent every year, and farmed the land. Back then, life was very difficult. Yet the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation came out [to rent out] the land to us. As the farmers were owners, they [worked] actively and farmed well. We were able to create land to farm. So, we dug the ditches and built banks. We considered the difficulties as pleasure then. With the dream of possessing land ownership, village farmers were very positive.[38]

Q: What did you eat then?

A: We were under the control of the Japanese Empire then. We shipped all the food. Peasants had nothing to eat. If we offered [food], we received maize flour as rations. Peasants did not have the right to eat the rice they produced. If you had to eat, you dug an underground hole and hid it [food] there. Later you could secretly grind it [the food] with a millstone and eat it little by little. It was because of the Japanese imperial control. They had a rations system. They took everything and provided rations.[39]

In addition, similar to the members of Chŏng's family, other people had to live as farmhands, because they could not pay rent or continue their mortgage payments on the land from the company. Interviewee Jeong, who had babysat in Korea since she was eight years old, says that she continued to babysit for Korean farmers on the farm as an 11-year old:

[36]Ibid.
[37]Kim Wang-bae and Lee Soo-chul, "1930-nyŏndae Manju-ui Chosŏnjok ma-ŭl kongdongch'e," vol. 5, 334.
[38]Kim To-hyong, *Singminji sigi chaeman Chosŏnin ŭi sam kwa kiŏk*, 98.
[39]Ibid., 101. Please note that in translating "nongbu" ("nongfu" in Chinese), I use "farmer" for cases involving operating and owning the land. This article focuses mainly on a laboring class who farmed without proper ownership or control over the land, so for these cases, I use the term "peasant."

Q: What did you do after you came here?

A: I took care of other families' babies here as well.

Q: You did not farm?

A: There was nothing to farm. When my second oldest sister came here to get married, she sent us some emergency funds to use as passage money. That is how we got here. We had nothing. Then we realized that the family of my second oldest sister's husband was poor as well. She was taken into the family as a future daughter-in-law. My father lived at his brother-in-law's house as a house worker. I babysat at other people's homes.

Q: You took care of babies and fed them?

A: I was too little to cook. I was not in a position to cook then. I just looked after the babies then; later when I got older, I cooked and fed them. . ..

Q: Were there many people who lived at and worked for other houses?

A: Right then, many people lived at other people's houses. . ..

Q: If you lived at another person's house, did you only get the room? Or did you get paid as well [for the household chores]?

A: Living at another's house, one just took care of the master's kids. Those things.

Q: Did you get clothes to wear [from the master]?

A: Yes. Where was the money? If [the master's] circumstances were good, they would have paid. [unclear pronunciation] People took care of the [master's] kids and wore clothes. Owing to circumstances, we just lived like that.[40]

Most of the villagers on the Anjia Farm, as in many other Manchurian villages where Korean migrants settled, were poor peasants who struggled to survive at a subsistence level. Theories of capitalist expansion, nationalist resistance, and colonial oppression and collaboration explain only limited parts of their existence. In reality, their lives were burdened far more by hunger.

The wartime context is obviously significant in analyzing these interview materials. It was a pressing time during which Manchukuo rigorously struggled to transform Koreans into Japanese mentally and physically, placing special emphasis on pressuring Korean peasants to offer rice to the soldiers of the empire and to prove their loyalty to it. Yet even when the interviewees were questioned about these food offerings in wartime Manchukuo, the answers often were not simply about difficulties in meeting the quotas but also about the tactics that the peasants used to survive. An example is found in an interview with Kim 00, who moved to a village in Mudanjiang City, Heilongjiang, in 1936. The interviewer asked if Manchukuo focused on forced offerings of food products, and Kim's response was that the state even collected rice straws to make floor mats for the Japanese. Then, while stating that Korean peasants were subject

[40]Ibid., 145–147.

to such mandatory offerings and collections, Kim explained how some poor Koreans dealt with hunger. Since their food rations were set at one-third rice and two-thirds millet, these Koreans exchanged their rice rations, which were valued two or two and a half times higher than millet. Kim claimed that millet was more glutinous and that a large amount of the abundant millet sustained hungry Korean youth and promoted their growth.[41] For Kim, the harsh war years brought to mind stories of survival at a subsistence level involving Korean everyday practices.

In considering the stories of Chŏng, Jeong, and Kim, the idea of ambiguous identities as tactics of survival for the poor Korean peasants in Manchukuo may be helpful. In examining the relationships between colonizers and colonized subjects, I have argued that the Korean migrants escaped the colonial and ethnic identities imposed upon them by the Japanese, not by leaving the state or rejecting the exclusive discourses produced for them, but by creating ambiguous identities as tactics for survival. Minle Korean ethnic minorities' memories of their encounters with the Japanese and Chinese demonstrate the continuation of these tactics even during the exigencies of war. Like other villagers in the early period of Manchukuo, these interviewees barely remember encounters with the Japanese in town.[42] A few Japanese lived in the urban areas as police officers or government officials. Yet, no actual interethnic relationship exists clearly in the interviewees' memories. The Japanese as colonizers were very unfamiliar to the Korean peasants. Instead, these ordinary peasants knew or encountered the Korean colonial authorities more than the Japanese.

The following group interview with 12 Minle villagers attests to this ambiguous relationship with the Japanese and Korean supervisors in their daily lives:

Q: Were Japanese here at the time?

A: Three Japanese were at the Wuchang County Government office. [Another interviewee continues.] A military station, local police office, bars, and restaurants, all sorts of things were here.

Q: Here in Wuchang County?

A: No, on the Anjia Farm, when the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation came here.

Q: In the company?

A: Those were not run by the company. At that time, when a big company entered a place, things followed. Bars and shops appeared. Koreans came to run shops and inns. [Another interviewee continues.] I thought the policemen were Japanese, but they were Koreans. [Another interviewee continues.] Korean policemen. [Another interviewee continues.] The chief was Korean.

Q: Oh, the chief was Korean. Then was the school principal Korean?

[41]Kang Tae-min, *Kiŏk sok ŭi Manjuguk*, 58, and 135–136. This oral history collection gives the interviewee's name as Kim 00.

[42]Ahn, "From Chaoxian ren to Chaoxian zu." The second chapter of the author's dissertation discusses memories of encounters between Korean migrants and the Japanese in the early days of Manchukuo.

A: Yes, he was. Yet the names were in Japanese. We could not find out their Korean names.[43]

While the interviewees knew that there were Koreans who had Japanese style names and worked for the Japanese Empire as police officers, their memories of their relationships with these colonial subjects seem to be fragmented. Only the fact that these police officers and the teacher were Korean exists in their memory. During the interview, the villagers did not recall any specific encounters with the Japanese.

A similarly ambiguous identification of the colonizer also occurred when the 12 interviewees discussed the establishment of the Anjia Farm:

A: How many people came to this village in the beginning?

Q: No, let me talk. In 1938, these people's [Gong and Lee's] company came to Gongzhuling … Then, if we talk about the background, people came from Korea to follow the Independence Movement in China, to find a way to eat and live. All these people [settlers in the farm] were descendants of the Independence Movement activists. It is just that they are not recognized well these days. As time went by, the number of people increased, people came from Korea, and then people who were left high and dry came through others' introductions. Someone said he or she came here after beating a Japanese to death. All sorts of people who made mistakes in the Japanese colony [Korea] came here. And people were hungry in Korea due to the food rationing system. How severe was the Japanese bastards' rationing system? At that time, the Koreans flooded in here. At that same time, Gong Jin-hang, who had studied in France and Germany, returned [to East Asia]. He had the idea that he could come here to have the dispersed Koreans, who had basic skills in and are capable of paddy field cultivation, live and survive together. And the wild fields here were good. So [he thought of] developing the fields. Then, during the Japanese imperial period, villages called *tun*s were also built by gathering dispersed peoples. Those were the conditions for building settlement villages. And, as they were Koreans, they could receive privileges from the Japanese bastards. They could purchase lands and land development rights with priority.[44]

Here, the memories are intertwined with the stories of anti-Japanese resistance, colonial privileges, and poverty. The Japanese colonial power worked with the Manchuria–Mongolia Industrial Corporation to push the Chinese natives out of the region. The Koreans, including Gong and the peasant settlers, gained privileges as the second-ranking ethnic group in Manchukuo. Yet the Koreans remained victims of Japan's colonization of Korea. All of these complexities burst from memory, showing the ambiguous relationships that the Korean peasants had with the Japanese and the Chinese groups on the farm.

[43]Kim To-hyong, *Singminji sigi chaeman Chosŏnin ŭi sam kwa kiŏk, kusul charyojip*, 45–46.
[44]Ibid., 27–28.

Conclusion

Previous work on Korean lives in wartime Manchukuo have focused heavily on either the history of Chinese and Korean Communist alliances in the Anti-Japanese War or the victimization of Koreans as colonized subjects of the Japanese Empire.[45] A few discussions about Koreans as agents of the imperial expansion exist as well.[46] Yet this article's brief examination of the memories of villagers about their lives in Manchukuo demonstrates that some Korean peasants were able to develop ambiguous identities as tactics of survival there. The stories avoid repeating or supplementing narratives of Korean migrants in Manchukuo that are framed merely as victimhood, resistance, and collaboration.

Clarifying "ambiguous identities" and "tactics of survival," the two historical apparatuses I have used in this article, will appropriately and strongly conclude my overall argument. First, "ambiguity" literally refers to multiple possibilities, uncertainty, and vagueness. Having an ambiguous identity indicates not only that the Korean migrants were characterized by uncertainty, but also provides multiple possibilities in terms of political, social, and cultural positions. In *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Balibar and Wallerstein argue for the existence of intrinsic ambiguities in the very concepts of race, nation, and class. Demonstrating how these ambiguous concepts function in dialectic relationships between universal ideologies and multiple or particular communities, they maintain that the internalization of ambiguities occurs in the very processes of social identity production. Through internalization, individuals find liberalizing tools in the ambiguous identities, which the "proletariat, or common peoples," and the "bourgeoisie, or world elites" together have created.[47] Here, I join such critical intervention by shedding an historical light on the ambiguous identities created by the Korean migrant peasants in wartime Manchuria. They were neither simple victims nor beneficiaries of the colonial power. They ambiguously positioned their identities to make a living, which was simultaneously made possible and difficult by Japan's colonial system.

These ambiguous identities constituted the Korean peasants' tactics for survival. Here, "tactics" is used in the sense of De Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics as two types of everyday practice. Through this distinction, De Certeau enables us to use "tactics" as an emancipatory tool in understanding the Koreans in Manchukuo. He states that strategies are available only to subjects of "will and power," so defined because of their access to a spatial or institutional location that allows them to objectify the rest of the social environment. Other people, although lacking a space of their own from which to apply strategies, are not merely passive objects subject to such strategists. On the contrary, they are active agents, who constantly manipulate events made "proper" by strategists to turn them into

[45]These approaches are predominant in the field. *Chaoxianzu Jianshi*, 132–169; Im Kye-sun, *Uri ege tagaon Chosŏnjok ŭn nugu ing'a*, 99–193; Armstrong, *North Korean Revolution*, 13–37; and Jin Cheng-gao, "Chung-Cho yŏnhap hangilt'u-chaeng kwa hyŏnsil-ŭi." Jin's chapter is helpful in understanding the multiple and politicized interpretations of Korean political struggles in Manchukuo.

[46]Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*; and Sun Chunri, *Zhongguo Chaoxianzu yiminshi*, 484–619. Both authors' observations on the increased numbers of Koreans and the development of Korean farmlands in Manchukuo suggest how Koreans were not only exploited by the Japanese Empire but also participated in the expansion of imperial control in Manchuria.

[47]Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*. The quotes are from Ahn, "From Chaoxian ren to Chaoxian zu," 4.

"opportunities." Nevertheless, their mode of practice is tactical rather than strategic. The possibility of the contestation of the social order, which is created through multiple strategies, is always implicit in the tactical practices of everyday life.[48] The stories of exchanging rice for millet, joining a collective farm, renting the distributed lands, and even babysitting for food and lodging, reveal these people as active agents who employed tactics in response to the oppressive strategies developed by wartime power holders in Manchukuo.

Like the Korean migrants whose minds and memories escaped the otherwise complete colonial penetration of their lives, this article challenges the studies of dichotomy between the colonized and the colonizer, and it brings the stories of daily survival into focus. While it is true that nationalist elites participated in anticolonial movements, not everyone's daily lives fit into the binary between colonial and anticolonial. Even during the exigent period of war, many Korean migrants in Manchukuo survived by farming as they did in the prewar years. Their position during the war was more ambiguous than the political and military struggles pressured them to be.

Romanization

In romanizing Korean and Japanese, I used, respectively, the McCune–Reischauer and Hepburn systems. Exceptions apply for familiar names and places, such as Seoul, and for words that appear differently in the Online Computer Library Center's catalog system.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Chong Eun AHN is an assistant professor in the Department of History at Central Washington University. Her doctoral dissertation, "From Chaoxian ren to Chaoxian zu: Korean Identity under Japanese Empire and Chinese Nation-State," examines identity formation of ethnic Koreans, who were treated as colonial subjects in the Japanese Empire and then categorized as ethnic minorities in the People's Republic of China. Her academic interests include East Asian history and culture and issues of colonialism, modernity, ethnicity, labor migration, and empires.

Glossary

Andong	安東
Anjia	安家
Antu	安圖
Changbai	長白
Chaoxian	朝鮮
Chapeng	茶棚
Chōsen sōtokubu	朝鮮總督府
Damyang	潭陽
Dongning	東寧

[48]De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix; and Ahn, "From Chaoxian ren to Chaoxian zu," 5–6.

Fengtian	奉天
Gong Jin-hang	孔鎭恒
Gongzhuling	公主嶺
Hedong	河東
Helong	和龍
huangguo chenmin	皇國臣民
Hunchun	琿春
Ji'an	集安
Jiandao	間島
Jiaohe	蛟河
Jiutai	九臺
jiyūjisakunō	自由自作農
Kaishantun	開山屯
Kantōgun	關東軍
Kim Yŏnsu	金季洙
Manmong sanŏp chusikhoesa	滿鮮拓殖株式會社
Mansen takushoku kabushikikaisha	滿鮮拓殖株式會
Mansŏn Ilbo	《滿鮮日報》
Meihe	梅河
Min'an	民安
Minle	民樂
Mudanjiang	牡丹江
naisen ittai	內鮮一體
nongfu	農夫
ōkokushinmin	皇國臣民
Rikugunshō	陸軍省
Samyang sa	三養社
Senman takushoku kabushikikaisha	鮮滿拓殖株式會社
Shangtian	上天
takumushō	拓務省
Tumen	圖們
tun	屯
Wangjiacun	王家村
Wuchang	五常
wuzugonghe	五族共和
xingnonghui	興農會
Xintun	新屯
Xita	西塔
Yingkou	營口
Yingxing	營興
zaimanchōsenjinshidōyōkō	《在滿朝鮮人指導要綱》
Zheng Panlong (Chŏng P'al-lyong)	鄭判龍
zu	族

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