LIQUID GEOGRAPHY: THE YALU RIVER AND THE BOUNDARIES OF EMPIRE IN EAST ASIA, 1894-1945

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Abstract

This dissertation examines imperial Japan's efforts to transform and control the Yalu River boundary between Korea and Manchuria (Northeast China) during the period 1894-1945. Following the Japanese colonization of Korea in 1910, the Yalu River, together with the neighboring Tumen River, formed the longest formal, non-maritime border of the Japanese Empire until its dissolution in 1945. Yet despite the Yalu's strategic significance in the imperialist politics of early twentieth-century Northeast Asia, its modern history has been surprisingly overlooked. I address this historiographical gap while making three key interventions in the larger scholarship on borders, climate history, and Japanese imperialism.

First, by drawing on archival materials in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English, I argue that dynamic environments like the Yalu are more than mere backdrops to border histories, but co-agents of border creation and contestation alongside local human residents. A focus on what I call the *liquid geography* of the Yalu border shows how the transnational flow of people, goods, and the river itself exposed the limits of the colonial state even while providing the material underpinnings for further imperial expansion. By establishing a network of border police and customs stations, Japanese officials tried to make the border into a type of selectively permeable membrane that would allow certain types of people and goods to cross while blocking others. Regulating cross-border trade as well as Korean and Japanese migration allowed officials to project power into Manchuria. Yet the heavily militarized border with China remained a place where smugglers and Korean and Chinese anti-Japanese guerrillas openly and violently clashed with Japanese authority. In addition, floods, ice, shifting riverbeds, and other features of the Yalu River's ecology subverted efforts to control the region.

Second, in analyzing the river as an agent of history, I propose a new, seasonal approach to history. Controlling the movement of peoples and goods across the Yalu meant contending with winter ice, summer floods, and other aspects of a seasonally changing riparian geography. Over the course of five chapters, this study examines how these cyclical transformations shaped border governance in such diverse areas as bridge and dam construction, policing against smugglers and anti-Japanese guerrillas, and border demarcation. Recapturing this seasonal contingency has become all the more important as anthropogenic climate change prompts its own set of concerns about water, ice, and shifting weather patterns worldwide.

Third and finally, I challenge conventional understanding of the political unity of the Japanese empire in Asia. Following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the creation of the puppet-state of Manchukuo, the Yalu River was putatively transformed from an international border into an intra-imperial boundary. Despite the official rhetoric of Korean-Manchurian "unity," continual disputes over smuggling regulation, fishing rights, and other issues underscored the persistence of border conflicts even within Japanese-controlled governments. I show how the internal contradictions of Japan’s imperial project, as well as its external challenges, were most glaringly exposed along fault lines like the Yalu River border.

DEDICATION

To my late mother

Hope this makes you proud

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Throughout this project I have incurred a massive debt of gratitude to friends and mentors near and far. At Stanford University I was fortunate to have brilliant scholars carefully guide me through the various twists and turns of historical writing. Jun Uchida gave me the intellectual freedom and encouragement I needed to pursue my research interests in seemingly unconventional directions. While I could never hope to match her erudition, I know my writing and scholarship is all the better for her sharp, critical eye. Yumi Moon has been an indefatigable leader for Korean Studies at Stanford. Her mentorship has magnified my appreciation for the field while compelling me to think critically about my contribution to it. Kären Wigen has also been generous, both with her time and red ink, in pushing me towards greater clarity and sophistication in my writing while demonstrating the perfect model of a well-rounded scholarly life. Thomas Mullaney supported my forays into modern Chinese history while pushing me towards greater conceptual ambition. At the same time Mikael Wolfe helped me imagine a history where things like rivers could also be important actors and agents of change. I also benefitted immensely from courses and conversations with other Stanford faculty, including Matt Sommer, Dafna Zur, Zephyr Frank, Keith Baker, Martin Lewis, Steven Carter, Momoyo Lowdermilk, and Laura Stokes.

Life at Stanford would have been impossible without many long hours of laughter, conversation, and commiseration with graduate student colleagues. I am especially grateful to David Fedman for encouraging me to think about the colonial Yalu as a possible dissertation topic and for continuing to be one of my greatest sources of support in my academic career. Koji Hirata spent many patient hours helping this *kōhai* try to navigate all the various aspects of grad school. Other comrades-in-arms in the East Asian history community at Stanford also provided

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Introduction

Oh, vast and boundless, 200-*li* long river! When did you start and when will you end? How many people have you saved and how many have you killed?

— *Sinŭiju taegwan* (1931)

In a December 1934 issue of colonial Korea's police bulletin *Keimu ihō,* police chief Nakamura Mika described the harsh wintertime conditions endured by female salt smugglers on the Sino-Korean border. According to Nakamura, if one closely observed the area near the railroad bridge that spanned the Yalu River early in the morning, one could "witness groups of ten to thirty old women wrapped up in rags to protect themselves from the cold." With bodies "seemingly frozen white," these women would carry "large bundles" on their backs across the frozen river.[1] The bitterly cold winters, which, in the words of another Japanese periodical, caused dogs to "lose the energy to bark" and the Yalu's water to freeze "to the color of a bayonet," were a staple feature of river life.[2] They were also a cause of regulatory concern for the colonial officials tasked with policing the border, as the cold winter climate facilitated the movement of people and illicit goods across the river's frozen surface.[3] As one newspaper sensationally declared, smugglers waited for the Yalu to freeze over as eagerly "as the Christians wait for the coming of their Redeemer."[4]

The colonial media and police officials alike portrayed the frozen Yalu River border as a "convenient road" freely traversed by opponents of Japanese rule.[5] But those who did make this

[1] Nakamura Mika, "Shingishū no mitsuyu," *Keimu ihō*, December 1934, 86.
[2] "Hokusen kokkyō keibi." *Asahi gurafu*, July 15, 1936, 7, 2.
[3] Heian Hokudō Keisatsu Buchō, "Keppyōki keibi ni kansuru ken." Heihoku hi 997 gō. National Archives of Korea.
[4] "Amnok kyŏlbing ttara kyŏnggye samŏm," *Tonga ilbo*, December 23, 1933.
[5] Kosako Shintarō, *Kokkyō no hana* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Shingishū Insatsu Kabushiki Kaisha, 1936), 1.

winter crossing spoke of a much more treacherous landscape. In 1933, a Korean housewife named Yi Ok-hyun (Yi Ok-hyŏn) traveled north across the Yalu border so that her husband, a Korean independence activist blacklisted by Japanese authorities, could find work in Manchuria (the historical term for Northeast China). After an initial attempt to cross the border by rail was frustrated by Japanese border police, Yi decided instead to traverse the frozen Yalu on foot. Years later Yi recalled the following:

> A passerby took us to a spot along the riverbank where people got to Manchuria by walking across the frozen Yalu River. A path stretched ahead of us, beaten down through the snow, exposing the slippery, treacherous ice. Lights blinking on the far shore guided us. I had on cotton socks, my feet were bitter cold, but somehow they did not freeze. I was terrified that the ice would crack beneath us.[6]

As Yi's experience illustrates, crossing the Yalu border involved not only anxious encounters with colonial police, but also the sheer challenge of navigating a waterscape that shifted between flowing, flooding, and freezing throughout the year. A few years before Yi made her crossing, another young Korean nationalist also allegedly traversed the frozen river into Manchuria, an experience he would recount years later to assert his anti-Japanese credentials.[7] This individual was Kim Il-sung, a guerrilla who would later become the first ruler of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and whose 1930s cross-Yalu raids would prove a thorn in the side of Japanese border police.

The saga of people like Nakamura, Yi, and Kim, and the icy river under their feet is central to the story that follows. This dissertation examines imperial Japan's efforts to transform

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[6] Hildi Kang, *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices from Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 81.

[7] In his official autobiography, published between 1992-1994, Kim recounts making a vow before crossing the frozen Yalu in 1926 to not return to Korea until it was independent. Kim Il-sŏng. *Kim Il-sŏng chŏnjip*, vol. 95 (Pyongyang: Chosŏn Nodongdang Ch'ulp'ansa, 2011), 96-97. Of course, such anecdotes must be taken with more than a heavy grain of salt, as Kim's autobiography contains much in the way of myth-making and fabrication. The verifiable details of Kim's youth are sparse, though the fact Kim did leave Korea as a young boy and spend much of his youth in northeast China is certain. For a more critical account, see Dae-sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 1-8.

and control the Yalu River boundary between Korea and northeast China during the period 1894-1945. Dividing Korea and China, the Yalu River, together with the neighboring Tumen River, formed the longest formal, non-maritime border of the Japanese Empire until its dissolution in 1945. Drawing on primary sources in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English, I argue that dynamic environments like the Yalu are more than mere backdrops to border histories, but co-agents of border creation and contestation alongside local human residents. A focus on what I call the *liquid geography* of the Yalu border expands existing border scholarship by showing how the fluid movements of peoples, goods, and the river itself exposed the limits of colonial authority even while providing the material underpinnings for further imperial expansion. It provides a transnational perspective on regional environmental history while highlighting the internal tensions, as well as external challenges, that beset the Japanese imperial state at its borders.

As part of this narrative I propose a new, seasonal approach to history. Controlling the movement of peoples and goods across the Yalu meant contending with winter ice, summer floods, and other aspects of a seasonally changing riparian geography. A seasonally-inflected history moves beyond simple linear narratives that chart inevitable paths to colonization, war, or environmental decline. Instead, it shows how historical actors interacted with their surrounding environments in the midst of natural cycles that were both recurring and subject to change over time. Recapturing this seasonal contingency has become all the more important as anthropogenic climate change prompts its own set of concerns about water, ice, and shifting weather patterns worldwide.

The Yalu as River and Border

The Yalu River (Chinese: *Yalu Jiang*; Korean: *Amnokkang*; Japanese: *Ōryokkō*) is one of the major rivers of Northeast Asia. It originates 2,500 meters above sea level at Mount Paektu (Chinese: *Changbaishan*) on the Sino-Korean border. It then flows approximately 800 kilometers (500 miles) westward into the Yellow Sea. The longest river on the Korean peninsula, the Yalu is almost twice as long as its longest counterpart in Japan, Shinano-gawa. For much of its course, the river carves deep, meandering canyons through the surrounding mountainous terrain before becoming progressively wider and slower-moving at its lower delta. The region around the river is characterized by a continental climate with extreme seasonal distinctions in temperature and precipitation. Frigid temperatures cause much of the river to freeze over in the winter while summers are marked by intense heat as well as seasonal floods caused by monsoonal climate patterns.[8]

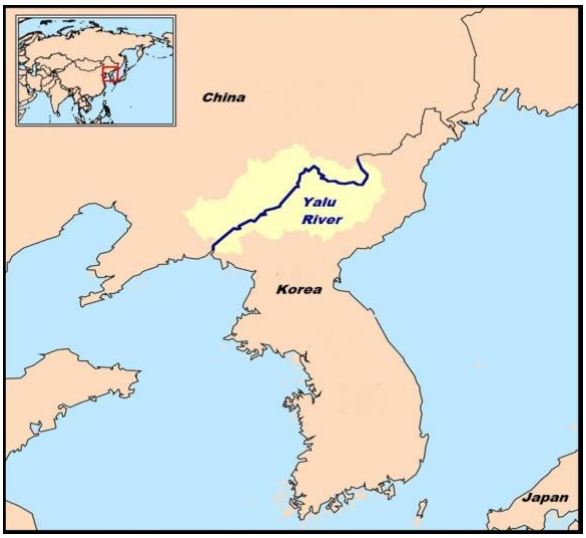

Figure 0.1: Map of the Yalu River. The Yalu's drainage basin is highlighted in white.

[8] "Amnokkang," Kukka chisik p'otŏl: Pukhan chiyŏk chŏngbo net. http://www.cybernk.net/infoText/InfoNatureCultureDetail.aspx?mc=BN0104&id=BN010200000628&rightType=%20&direct=1&direct=1 (Accessed April 13, 2018). For a detailed early twentieth-century source on Yalu geography, see Hermann Lautensach (Eckart and Dege translators), *Korea: A Geography Based on the Author's Travels and Literature* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1988), 244-253.

The Yalu River has also been the product of intense human interaction with the river environment. Since at least the fifteenth century the Yalu River and the neighboring Tumen River formed a contentious border between ruling dynasties in northeast China and Korea.[9] Both the Qing dynasty in China (1644-1911) and the Chosŏn dynasty in Korea (1392-1897) attempted to "seal off" (Chinese: fengjin, Korean: ponggŭm) the area immediately north of the river from Chinese and Korean migration. This was done to preserve both the sacred homeland of the Qing Manchu rulers, centered around the Changbai (Paektu) mountains at the headwaters of the Yalu, and the tenuous peace between Qing China and its Korean tributary state.[10] Officials on both sides of the river also prohibited cross-border travel and enacted various strict punishments, including death, for illegal border crossings.[11]

The threat of violent punishment for illegal border crossings failed to dissuade waves of Korean and Chinese migrants lured by the region's rich natural resources—especially ginseng, furs, and timber. In Kanggye province, a key area of ginseng production, Chosŏn guard posts were heavily staffed during the summer ginseng-harvesting season.[12] Chosŏn and Qing officials also expressed concerns about the wintertime ice, which they saw as a dangerous invitation for

[9] The issue of early modern Sino-Korean border conflict has been explored by a number of scholars. See Seonmin Kim, "Ginseng and Border Trespassing Between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea," *Late Imperial China* 28, no. 1 (June 2007): 33-61; Kwangmin Kim, "Korean Migration in Nineteenth-Century Manchuria: A Global Theme in Modern Asian History," in *Mobile Subjects: Boundaries and Identities in the Modern Korean Diaspora*, edited by Wen-Hsin Yeh (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2013): 17-31; Andre Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 26-46.

[10] Yamamoto Susumu, "Shindai Ōryokkō ryūiki no kaihatsu to kokkyō kanri, " *Kyūshū Daigaku tōyōshi ronshū* 39 (April 2011): 145-147.

[11] Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria," 225.

[12] Kang Sŏk-hwa. "Chosŏn hugi P'yŏngan-do chiyŏk Amnokkang byŏn ŭi pangŏ ch'egye ," *Han'guk munhwa* 34 (December 2004): 189.

illicit border crossings.[13] Migration to the Yalu borderlands eventually compelled reluctant Qing authorities to officially incorporate the region by establishing Andong county on the river's western edge in 1876.[14] But difficulties remained for both Korean and Chinese officials attempting to control the multiethnic frontier populations of the Yalu River Basin. Bandits, smugglers, and others threatened political centralization and border control in an area that had long existed at the periphery of Seoul and Beijing-based states.[15]

The late nineteenth century saw the entrance of a disruptive new element into the politics of the region: imperial Japan. After Japanese leaders embarked on ambitious modernizing programs at home following the 1868 Meiji Restoration, the Yalu River Basin emerged as an important frontier of the country's imperial expansion into Asia. Following successive victories in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japan occupied Korea and officially annexed it as a colony in 1910. Rather than sealing off the Yalu boundary, as the early modern Chosŏn and Qing had tried to do, the Japanese government completed the first permanent railroad bridge across the Yalu in 1911. As part of a broader campaign to extend its influence into southern Manchuria, the Government-General of Korea also encouraged trade as well as the migration of Koreans across the river. By the mid-1930s, the number of people who made daily journeys across the railroad bridge exceeded ten thousand.[16] By establishing a network of border police and customs stations, Japanese officials tried to make the border into a

[13] "K'arun ŭl sinch'ik haranŭn yebu ŭi jamun," *Tongmunhwigo*, May 15, 1688. National Institute of Korean History online database, http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?itemId=sa&setId=61182&position=38 (Accessed June 8, 2015).
[14] Wang Tongsheng et al., ed. *Yalu Jiang liuyu lishi ziliao huibian*, vol. 2 (Dandong, China: Dandong shi wei, 2007), 674.
[15] For an edited volume that examines the history of Northern Korea near the Sino-Korean border as a cohesive region, see Sun Joo Kim, ed., *The Northern Region of Korea: History, Identity and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).
[16] "Amnokkang ch'ŏlgyo ŭi ilil kyotong nyang," *Tonga ilbo*, March 5, 1935.

type of selectively permeable membrane that would allow certain types of people and goods to cross while blocking others. But as I will show, their efforts were far from successful. The heavily militarized border with China was a place where smugglers and anti-Japanese guerrillas openly and violently clashed with Japanese authority. In addition, floods, ice, shifting riverbeds, and other features of the Yalu River's ecology continued to defy efforts to control the region.

Liquid Geography

For many years, historians of imperial and national borders treated geographic and environmental concerns as ancillary to the border-creation process. By foregrounding the social, cultural, and diplomatic factors behind the delineation of international borders, pioneering scholars like Benedict Anderson and Thongchai Winichakul sought to denaturalize the idea of borders as intrinsic to the modern geo-body. They demonstrated instead how contemporary state cartographies, with their emphasis on fixed territoriality and sovereignty, emerged coterminously with the "imagined community" of the modern empire or nation-state.[17] As important as these studies were, it was only later that scholars, especially environmental historians, began to rethink the implications of borders as biophysical spaces—not only on the level of state-to-state interactions, but also for local communities and ecosystems caught between states' territorial demands and legal jurisdictions. Many environmental scholars have focused on issues of resource use and conservation, showing how the "struggle between national states for control of

[17] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006); Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994). Although these works were intended primarily as a critique of the nation-state rather than colonial boundaries, their insights have been applied to the case of many historical empires as well. For an example that looks at competing imperial claims to the Sino-Burmese borderland, see Eric Vanden Bussche, "Contested Realms: Colonial Rivalry, Border Demarcation, and State-building in Southwest China, 1885-1960" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2014).

natural resources such as land, water, and wildlife" was especially keen in these liminal zones.[18] This is especially true for early environmental histories of border rivers such as the Colorado in the United States and the Rhine in Europe, which focused largely on water management.[19] Yet while historians have begun to re-incorporate the material environment into studies of border landscapes, there remains a stark divide between natural resource histories, which assume the environment's prominence in human history, and histories of border policing or demarcation, which treat the environment largely as a static back-drop.

A new approach is necessary to understand how dynamic environments shape border histories. In this study I introduce the term *liquid geography* to describe how the fluid movements of peoples, goods, and the river itself complicated attempts to control the Sino-Korean border region. "Liquid" refers to the variable and porous nature of border environments like the Yalu River. Geography, with its original meaning of "description of the earth," extends this metaphor of border porosity and mutability to include the social and ecological dynamics of border regions. Liquid geography thus embraces all of the diverse human and nonhuman agents operating on state power at its borders. The idea that borders expose the limits of state power is not particularly new.[20] What distinguishes this study is the careful consideration given to the Yalu's own agency. Understanding how the liquid geography of historical borders like the Yalu

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[18] Andrew R. Graybill, "Boundless Nature: Borders and the Environment in North America and Beyond," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, ed. Andrew C. Isenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 669.
[19] On the Colorado, see April Summitt, *Contested Waters: An Environmental History of the Colorado River* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2013). For the Rhine, see Mark Cioc, *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography, 1815-2000* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2002).
[20] In his study of the US-Mexican borderland, for example, Elliot Young writes that borders are spaces where "the nation continues to be made, but it is also the place where it is unmade," while Kornel Chang's study of the US-Canadian borderland similarly emphasizes the "permeability of borders and the weakness of empires and nation-states at their perimeters." See Elliot Young, "Imagining Alternative Modernities: Ignacio Martinez's Travel Narratives," in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, eds. Samuel Truett and Elliot Young, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004): 175; Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 277.

challenged state authority requires equal attention to both their human and non-human components.

This study joins other recent studies that treat rivers and riparian landscapes as historical agents in their own right.[21] This ascribing of agency to rivers and other natural features, which carries connotations of intentionality and consciousness, has unsurprisingly met criticism.[22] But in making this rhetorical move, environmental historians are hardly unique. The practice of anthropomorphizing rivers like the Yalu is an old one in literary tradition, as seen in the epigram to this introduction. More importantly, there is analytic justification for viewing rivers as agents. The idea of non-human agency allows us to think about how power and the ability to enact change historically is diffused through natural as well as human structures. It also forces us to reconsider traditional ideas about human agency, which assume a human ability to form and make intentional judgments free of constraints posed by surrounding environments. As Linda Nash argues, "it is worth considering how our stories might be different if human beings appeared not as the motor of history but as partners in a conversation with a larger world, both animate and inanimate, about the possibilities of existence."[23] Human actors along the Yalu operated within a specific environmental context that inextricably shaped their power relationships.

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[21] Writing about the engineering of rivers in East and West Africa, Heather Hoag argues that while "people have shaped the continent's waterscapes, rivers have often resisted their efforts," while Micah Muscolino's discussion of Yellow River flooding during the Second Sino-Japanese War highlights the river's "distinctive agency" Heather J. Hoag, *Developing the Rivers of East and West Africa: An Environmental History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 8; Micah Muscolino, *The Ecology of War in China: Henan Province, the Yellow River, and Beyond, 1938-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 22.

[22] Some of this criticism from historians like William Sewell is discussed in Richard C. Foltz, "Does Nature Have Historical Agency? World History, Environmental History, and How Historians Can Help Save the Planet" *The History Teacher* 37, no. 1 (November 2003): 22.

[23] Linda Nash, "The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?" *Environmental History* 10, No. 1 (January 2005): 69

How does accounting for water's agency help us understand the workings of state power in a border context? To be sure, the transnational paths of many major river systems have prompted some environmental historians to consider transboundary engineering projects and the international networks of labor and expertise that undergird them. Yet the focus has remained primarily on large-scale river engineering projects rather than the politics of the river as a space for contested border crossings by smugglers, dissidents, migrants, and others.[24] Understanding the Yalu's role as a contested political boundary requires asking questions of a different order from those about dams, levees, and water use rights. Using the concept of liquid geography, this study adopts an integrative approach to examining border policing together with debates over river resources, revealing new ways of thinking about the relationship between state power and the natural world. One example of this is the necessary prominence given to the role of seasonal cycles in shaping the Yalu's politics.

Seasonality

Rivers pose both opportunities and challenges to imperial control. As Lauren Benton similarly notes in her study of early modern European empires and sovereignty, river systems held particular attraction for European explorers, state-builders, and conquistadors while also being sources of anxiety about the reaches of states' sovereign claims.[25] But understanding the

[24] This division is seen, for example, in histories of the Rio Grande, a US-Mexico boundary river long known for smuggling and illegal border crossings. A 2011 conference volume entitled *Reigning in the Rio Grande: People, Land, and Water* contains zero mentions of the word "smuggling" and only one mention of the word "police," while a 2015 history of Rio Grande smuggling contains no mentions of the words "environment," "ecology," "flood," "riparian" or other terms associated with river habitats. See Fred M. Phillips, G. Emlen Hall, and Mary E. Black, eds., *Reining in the Rio Grande: People, Land, and Water* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011); George T. Díaz, *Border Contraband: A History of Smuggling across the Rio Grande* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015). A much older work that does happen to discuss both aspects of the Rio Grande's history is Paul Horgan's *Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History* (New York: Reinhart, 1954).
[25] Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40-103.

imperial history of the Yalu River means grappling with another element not readily found in Benton's work or others: seasonal change.

Constructing bridges and dams and policing the movement of peoples and goods across the Yalu meant contending with winter ice, spring thaws, summer floods, and other rhythms of riparian geography. Border policemen, smugglers, fishermen, anti-Japanese guerillas, and other individuals encountered the Yalu border not only as checkpoints and watch towers, but also as a landscape that literally shifted underfoot with changes in the weather. These recurring rhythms and anxieties of border life have been altogether overlooked, however, in the existing literature on historical borderlands. Sensitivity to seasonality localizes human actors in a landscape rich with the visceral experiences of changing weather and seasons. In his famous work on the Mediterranean French historian Fernand Braudel analyzed seasonal cycles as defining features of historical experience.[26] But rather than replicate Braudel's singular approach, which treats seasons as unchanging recurring cycles that shape human action but rarely the other way around, this study also emphasizes the human agency in constructing meaning around seasonal cycles as well as humans' ability to alter the river's seasonal dynamics in fundamental ways.[27]

Attention to seasonality is vital for understanding the lived consequences of environmental change historically and in the present. The catastrophic and existential consequences of climate change, including violent natural disasters and sea level rise, have prompted their own set of anxieties about changing weather patterns today. They have also motivated climate historians to reconstruct a long-term genealogy of climate patterns and their

[26] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Volume 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 247-259.
[27] A similar critique of Braudel's approach to seasonality is found in Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009): 204-205.

effects on human history.[28] While building on such studies, I argue that linear narratives of environmental decline are insufficient for understanding how environmental changes are actually experienced. The annually recurrent and cyclical nature of seasons, especially in riverine environments like the Yalu where seasonal changes are so distinct, makes them critical for understanding the immediate impacts of more long-term processes of environmental change.

Restoring seasonal temporality to traditionally linear histories is especially important amidst ongoing discussion of the "Anthropocene." First proposed by chemist and Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen in 2000, the Anthropocene is a proposed geologic epoch that demarcates humankind's emergence as a primary agent of biologic and geologic change through processes of anthropogenic climate change, radioactive poisoning, and other major impacts on the environment.[29] As some historians have since argued, the Anthropocene challenges scholars to re-evaluate traditional methods of periodization and create new chronologies of social change based on natural processes.[30] Other scholars have argued for the need to "ground Anthropocene discussions that operate at a sometimes remarkably general scale without reference to places."[31] A focus on the Yalu's liquid geography addresses both issues. The fact that dam construction

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[28] Examples of this climate literature include Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and an essay by Bruce L. Batten, "Climate Change in Japanese History and Prehistory: A Comparative Overview," in *Occasional Papers in Japanese Studies*, Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Harvard University Number 2009-01 January 2009.

[29] Paul Crutzen, "The 'Anthropocene'," in *Earth System Science in the Anthropocene*, ed. Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft (Berlin: Springer, 2006), 13-18. Crutzen originally proposed a mid-eighteenth century beginning date for the Anthropocene around the start of the Industrial Revolution, though that has since been hotly debated by historians and scientists alike. The most recent push has been to date the advent of the Anthropocene to the mid-twentieth century and the testing of the first atomic bomb. See, for example, Jan Zalasiewicz et. al, "When Did the Anthropocene Begin?" *Quaternary International* 38, (5 October 2015): 204-207; Richard Monterasky, "First atomic blast proposed as start of Anthropocene," Nature International Journal of Science https://www.nature.com/news/first-atomic-blast-proposed-as-start-of-anthropocene-1.16739. Accessed February 22, 2018.

[30] Chakrabarty,"The Climate of History," 207-220; Ian Jared Miller "Writing Japan at Nature's Edge: The Promises and Perils of Environmental History," in Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adeney Thomas, and Brett L. Walker, eds., *Japan at Nature's Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014), 1-17.

[31] Matthew Evenden, "Beyond the Organic Machine? New Approaches in River Historiography," *Environmental History* 23, no. 4 (October 2018): 713.

caused parts of the Yalu to stop freezing after 1942, for example, changed border residents' very perception of the passage of time as well as the relationship between human agency and the environment.

The Yalu in Regional Historiography

Despite its battleground status in the imperialist politics of early twentieth-century Northeast Asia, the Yalu's modern history has been surprisingly overlooked. Scholars of modern Chinese history have only recently shifted attention on the country's northeastern borders.[32] In Korea studies, active interest in how the Chosŏn government managed border relations with Chinese regimes north of the Yalu is contrasted with a relative lack of scholarship on the region after Japanese annexation.[33] Scholars of Japanese history have also treated border zones like the Yalu as peripheral rather than central to the story of Japanese expansion. Existing scholarship more often focused on nodes of colonial power, including cities such as Seoul and Dalian, or lines of imperial penetration such as railroads.[34] Only recently have scholars begun to shift their

[32] Recent works include Victor Zatsepine, *Beyond the Amur: Frontier Encounters Between China and Russia, 1850-1930* (Vancouver: University of British Colombia Press, 2017), and Nianshen Song, *Making Borders in Modern East Asia: The Tumen River Demarcation, 1881–1919* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[33] Seonmin Kim, *Ginseng and Borderland: Territorial Boundaries and Political Relations Between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea, 1636-1912* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017); Kwangmin Kim, "Korean Migration in Nineteenth-Century Manchuria"; Andre Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria." The lack of interest in the Yalu is not just a feature of the English-language historiography. As noted by Zhang Zhongyue, scholars outside the United States have tended to devote more significant attention to the politics of the Tumen River boundary between China and Korea than the Yalu. This is due to the Tumen being the site of the contentious "Kando/Jiandao" boundary dispute and featuring a larger Korean migrant population that continued to pose assimilation challenges for China into the late twentieth century (see Zhang Zhongyue, *Qing dai yi lai Yalu Jiang liuyu yimin yanjiu* (Jinan Shi: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 2017)). For a recent English-language study of the Tumen's border politics, see Nianshen Song, *Making Borders in Modern East Asia.*

[34] See, for example, Todd Henry, *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese Rule and the Politics of Space in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Emer Sinéad O'Dwyer, *Significant Soil: Settler Colonialism and Japan's Urban Empire in Manchuria* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015). On railroads, see Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).

attention away from imperial centers and towards what David Ambaras calls the "frayed edges and fluid interstices" of Japan's colonial empire.[35]

Focus on the liquid geography of the Yalu contributes a transnational perspective to the environmental history of modern East Asia. Moving beyond the prevailing nation-state centered model of historiography that divides into distinctive "Chinese," "Japanese" or "Korean" narratives, this dissertation examines how attempts to control the Yalu border and extract valuable natural resources shaped ecologies across Northeast Asia. By felling trees that stood as a barrier against erosion, for example, Chinese and Korean timber-cutters exacerbated river floods that destroyed communities on both sides of the river, while Japanese attempts to police access to the river's fisheries resulted in a exploitative monopoly that depleted fish stocks and excluded Chinese fishermen. The Yalu also transformed regional ideas about "nature" and the environment. Along with recent surveys of colonial forestry, fisheries, and husbandry, this study claims that engagement with colonial environments was a critical component of Japan's modern ecological transformation.[36] Referred to as the "number-one river in Japan," the Yalu became a prominent symbol of the environmental opportunities and challenges facing the country's expansion as official and popular media contrasted its rich forests and access to Manchurian

[35] David Ambaras, *Japan's Imperial Underworlds: Intimate Encounters at the Borders of Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambrige University Press, 2018), 28. Other recent studies on imperial borderlands include Sakura Christmas, "The Cartographic Steppe: Spaces of Development in Northeast Asia, 1895-1945," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2015) and Paul D. Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire: Japan's Rule on Taiwan "Savage Border," 1874-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017). Some studies that have engaged with aspects of the colonial Yalu include Aaron Stephen Moore, "'The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia': Japanese Expertise, Colonial Power, and the Construction of Sup'ung Dam," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 72, No. 1 (2013): 115-139; Kanno Naoki, "Ōryokkō Saiboku Kōshi to Nihon no Manshū shinshutsu—shinrin shigen o meguru taigai kankei no hensen," *Kokushigaku* 172 (August 2000): 45-76; Chŏng An-ki, "20 segi ch'oyŏp Hwangch'op'y ŏng ŭi yŏngt'o punjaengsa yŏngu," *Yŏngt'o haeyang yŏngu* 13 (June 2017): 64-109.

[36] Fedman, "The Saw and the Seed: Japanese Forestry in Colonial Korea, 1895-1945" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2015); William Tsutsui, "The Pelagic Empire: Reconsidering Japanese Expansion" in *Japan at Nature's Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power*, ed. Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adeney Thomas, and Brett L. Walker (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014): 21-38; Sakura Christmas, "The Cartographic Steppe: Spaces of Development in Northeast Asia, 1895-1945."

trade with its dramatic climate and unruly populations.[37] Meanwhile, Korean and Chinese depictions of the river also emphasized its dramatic environment and the prevalence of multiethnic guerrilla resistance to Japanese rule.

In addition to providing a transnational perspective on regional environmental history, my project also challenges our conventional understanding of the political unity of the Japanese empire in Asia. Following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the creation of the puppet-state of Manchukuo, the Yalu River was putatively transformed from an international border into an intra-imperial boundary. How were local politics and communities affected by this sudden transformation in the river border's status? Scholars have long noted Manchukuo's ambiguous place within Japan's imperium and efforts to distinguish this nominally independent state from the formal colonies of Korea and Taiwan. Fewer have used multilingual archives to analyze the interrelationships among these constituent parts of the empire.[38] Despite the official rhetoric of Korean-Manchurian "unity," continual disputes over smuggling regulation, fishing rights, and other issues underscored the persistence of border conflicts even within Japanese-controlled governments. These tensions were exacerbated by the difficulty of dividing the Yalu's liquid geography into discrete Korean and Manchurian zones. Maintaining imperial unity along the Sino-Korean border remained a highly contested process throughout the period of Japanese rule.

[37] Nishiki Matsuo, *Gakushū ryokō bunko: shumi no chiri (kawa meguri)* (Tokyo: Kōseikaku Shoten, 1931).
[38] A recent study that also probes the imperial rhetoric of "Manchurian-Korean unity" is Aaron Moore, "'The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia."

Sources and Organization

Over the last several decades, flows of migration, colonization, decolonization, war, and bureaucratic procedure have deposited Yalu-related materials into libraries and archives throughout Northeast Asia. The story told here is limned from official documents produced by the Government-General of Korea and Chinese regimes in control of the northern bank of the river until 1931, as well as the records of the Manchukuo puppet-state created afterwards. I also draw on accounts of border raids, smuggling, and other aspects of Yalu politics which featured prominently in Korean, Chinese, and Japanese newspapers, magazines, and fiction published throughout this period. Finally, I use private memoirs as well as published oral histories for documenting the more elusive seasonal patterns of border life and the local impacts of border engineering and surveillance. Such records, especially those of former Korean and Chinese border residents, provide an important counterpart to the self-aggrandizing archive of officials who tried to erase local voices and violently impose their own sense of order on a recalcitrant border landscape.

The account that follows is organized into five chapters. We take up the story with the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), when Japanese military engineers hastily constructed temporary bridges across the river to transport troops and supplies. Before long, Japan's presence was literally cemented into the Yalu's shifting river banks with the completion of an iron railroad bridge in 1911. Bridge construction was a highly contingent process. As I will show, it met significant challenges from the Yalu River itself—in the form of flooding and changes in the river's course—in addition to resistance from a diverse range of human actors including local Chinese and Koreans, Russian troops, and American and British diplomats. Chapter two then considers how the river's social and natural ecologies shaped the

creation of Japan's new imperial boundary in Korea during the period of protectorate rule (1905-1910). By analyzing disputes over three different river resources—river islands, floating timber, and fisheries—the chapter broadens the discussion of border demarcation beyond the state level to show how a variety of local and regional actors, including the Yalu River itself, challenged Japan's attempts to push the outer limits of its emergent empire.

The next two chapters examine official attempts to curb smuggling and the violent raids of anti-Japanese guerrillas from the 1910s to the mid-1930s. Chapter three discusses the impact of the Yalu's seasonal changes on border surveillance and policing by competing Japanese and Chinese officials. From the 1910s until the 1931 Manchurian Incident, anti-Japanese dissidents made thousands of raids across the Yalu during the late spring and summer, a period known locally as the "thawing season." Japanese officials' aggressive policing of rebels during this same period, which included frequent trespassing into Chinese territory, incited the alarm of Chinese officials on the opposite side of the border. Following the creation of Manchukuo, the wintertime "icebound season" emerged as the season of greatest threat to Yalu border security in the eyes of Japanese officials who faced a reinvigorated anti-Japanese guerilla movement while trying to control both sides of the river. Chapter four then turns from anti-Japanese resistance to the illicit economies that also defined the region's liquid geography. This illicit trade occurred year-round, with smugglers using boats during the spring through fall and using sledges or simply crossing the river on foot during the winter. Repeated pleas by Chinese officials prior to 1931 for help cracking down on illicit trade fell on the deaf ears of Japanese authorities, who had every incentive to weaken Chinese sovereignty, while also enriching the Japanese merchants who profited from smuggling. Even after Japanese-controlled Manchukuo officials seized the Yalu customs, Japanese authorities in Korea only reluctantly began prosecuting illegal cross-border

trade. As this chapter shows, imperial unity between the Manchukuo and colonial Korean governments was not a given, but rather a gradual and fitful process. Cross-border tensions were exacerbated by the river's murky surface, which further challenged attempts to draw clear lines of economic sovereignty along the border.

The final chapter examines efforts to reshape the Yalu into a politically stable industrial corridor at the height of World War II in Asia (1937-1945), a process I refer to as "assimilating" the border. In contrast to the early years of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria that deepened border conflict, the outbreak of full-scale war with China in 1937 led to increased cooperation between authorities in Manchukuo and colonial Korea on a number of fronts, including smuggling enforcement, "bandit" suppression, and the industrialization of the Yalu corridor. Emblematic of this cross-border collaboration was the massive Sup'ung Dam, the second largest in the world at the time. Under such conditions, Japanese commentators spoke with increasing optimism about the "disappearing border" at the Yalu River. Yet despite the rhetoric of "Manchurian-Korean unity," the border never truly disappeared, as continued regional rivalries and Japan's own insistence on maintaining some semblance of Manchukuo sovereignty undermined cross-border cooperation. Customs taxes continued to be levied on both sides of the Korean-Manchurian border and border police were stationed until 1945. Meanwhile, the Yalu's mercurial nature continued to subvert Japan's imperial aims: smuggling increased in intensity, and floods and ice challenged hydroelectric projects even as dam construction forever altered the river's seasonal cycles. This final chapter is followed by a brief reflection on the legacies of the colonial Yalu in the post-1945 period, including the new contest for regional supremacy between American empire-builders and Chinese forces during the Korean War, and the contested liquid geography of Japan's postwar maritime borders.

Understanding the workings of imperial power at the Yalu entails grappling with a complex array of human and nonhuman actors. This interaction between the Yalu's dynamic river environment and the competing aims of local residents continues to define the boundaries of contemporary states in the region today. And as raging global debates about borders and their environments show, while the particulars of this case study may be specific to early twentieth-century Northeast Asia, its implications transcend narrow boundaries of time and space.

Chapter 1. Bridging the Yalu

Is it possible to erase a 499-mile long river from existence? A 1911 article in *Chōsen* magazine claimed that Japanese colonial engineers had, metaphorically speaking, done exactly that. A new railroad bridge spanning the Yalu River between Korea and Manchuria, the article opined, "completely obliterated" the "long channel" that historically separated the two regions.[1]

This bridge and its alleged border-smashing abilities provide a useful starting point for examining the paradoxes of imperial control along the Yalu River boundary. Previous ruling dynasties in China and Korea had perceived the river's very mobility and unpredictability as a desirable strategic feature, especially during a period when travel across the border was strictly proscribed. But as Japanese colonizers sought not only to shore up their control over Korea but also project power into Manchuria, bridge construction was seen as an essential means of eliminating natural obstacles to these ambitions. At the same time, greater movement of peoples and goods across the river amplified the challenges of control.

This chapter argues that Yalu bridge construction was part of an attempt by Japanese colonial officials and engineers to *sedentarize* and control the liquid geography of the Sino-Korean border. As used by scholars of state formation like James Scott, sedentarization describes the state-enforced settling of nomadic peoples, often through violent or coercive means.[2] By settling mobile populations, states sought to make them countable, taxable, and otherwise amenable to the goals of political centralization and control. This chapter extends the use of sedentarization to describe not only the stabilization of nomadic peoples, but of space itself. Just as centralizing states sought to control the movement of peoples to increase bureaucratic

[1] "Shuchō: Man-Sen no renraku naru," *Chōsen,* December 1911, 12.
[2] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*: *How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 1-2.

efficiency, by bridging the Yalu, Japanese engineers sought to provide a regulated, spatially fixed means of passage and transport over an otherwise dynamic landscape. This chapter begins with the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), when Japanese military engineers hastily constructed temporary bridges across the river to transport troops and supplies. It then traces how Japan's imperial presence was literally cemented in the Yalu's shifting river banks with the 1909-1911 construction of a railroad bridge linking Japanese-built railways in Korea and southern Manchuria.

Imperial sedentarization was a highly contingent process that met significant challenges from both the Yalu River and local human actors. In his study of river engineering and nation-building in Vietnam, David Biggs argues that the engineering of the Mekong Delta required "overlapping layers of negotiations between different groups of people and the environment they inhabited."[3] Similar methods of social and environmental compromise were undertaken by Japanese colonizers along the Yalu, though "negotiation" seems too neutral a term to describe a process that was often violent and exploitative. Colonial bridge construction followed in the wake of successive military campaigns, diplomatic wrangling, and the large-scale mobilization of manpower in the form of Japanese soldiers as well as Japanese, Chinese, and Korean laborers. Additionally, the Yalu River itself challenged Japanese sedentarization efforts by flooding, freezing over, unfreezing, and constantly shifting its course. The border river could be bridged, but it could not be so easily broken.

[3] David Biggs, *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2010), 6.

Bridging the Yalu Part I: The Sino-Japanese War

Japanese attempts to bridge the Yalu River began with temporary military bridges constructed during the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). As part of their bloody campaign against Qing China for regional supremacy, Japanese bridge builders mobilized physical and human resources in a battle with the river's fluid geography. Bridges allowed Japanese to transport troops and supplies across the river in a more spatially fixed and reliable way than other methods of crossing, including the use of ferry boats. But the makeshift nature of these military bridges also rendered them susceptible to ice, summer floods, and other seasonal transformations in the river's surface. The physical presence of these bridges would ultimately be fleeting. Yet they symbolically laid the first foundations of Japanese power in the shifting landscape of the Sino-Korean border, providing knowledge and experience that was mobilized in later efforts to control the region.

The latter half of the nineteenth century brought significant change to the once isolationist politics of the Yalu border. Under the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) in China and Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1897) in Korea, the previous approach to maintaining peace along the border had been to ban all settlement within a specified distance, initially set at sixty *li*, from the Yalu's northern bank.[4] But despite years of diplomatic handwringing and the threat of harsh punishment, including death, for illicit border crossers, little could stem the tide of growing settlement in the region. Migrants to the border were initially seasonal laborers, many from northern Korea or China's Shandong Province, that harvested the region's rich natural resources. But as resources such as wild ginseng and furs became overharvested and slowly less plentiful,

[4] Yamamoto Susumu, "Shindai Ōryōkkō ryūiki no kaihatsu to kokkyō kanri, " *Kyūshū Daigaku tōyōshi ronshū* 39 (April 2011): 145-147.

border migrants also began establishing permanent agricultural settlements along the river.[5] By 1876, Qing attempts to prohibit settlement along the Yalu River came to an official end. The decision to abandon former isolationist policies was prompted in part by the reality of this human wave of migration. It was also a nervous response to looming outside threats to Qing and Chosŏn sovereignty.

Amidst these changes was the troublesome emergence of a new contender for regional hegemony—imperial Japan. Although the unsuccessful Hideyoshi invasions of the late sixteenth century had taken marauding samurai nearly to the Sino-Korean border, for centuries afterwards the Yalu remained a distant landscape to the residents of the Japanese archipelago.[6] But after Japanese leaders embarked on ambitious new modernizing programs following the 1868 Meiji Restoration, the Yalu River Basin became an increasingly important frontier of the country's imperial expansion. Only decades after it had been the subject of unequal treaties with Western colonial powers, Japan imposed its first unequal treaty on Korea in 1876. Four years later, Japanese naval captain, intelligence officer, and ardent pan-Asianist Sone Toshitora's surveying mission to the lower Yalu resulted in one of the first modern Japanese maps of the river's course, complete with estimated depth marks and notes about the sovereignty of specific river islands. In their preface to the map, Sone explained that the Yalu's strategic importance meant that it "could not be ignored for even one day."[7]

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[5] The early modern history of this region and the relationship between border politics and resources such as ginseng is covered extensively in Seonmin Kim, *Ginseng and Borderland: Territorial Boundaries and Political Relations Between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea, 1636-1912* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

[6] A recent dissertation that analyzes the nexus of military supply lines that crisscrossed the Yalu during the Hideyoshi invasions and early seventeenth-century Manchu invasions of Korea is Masato Hasegawa, "Provisions and Profits in a Wartime Borderland: Supply Lines and Society in the Border Region between China and Korea, 1592-1644" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2013).

[7] Sone Toshitora and Itō Mōkichi, *Ōryokkō ryakuzu*, National Archives of Japan, 177-0380.

Japan's imperialist incursions were viewed with apprehension by Korea's long-time suzerain, China. Growing tensions and competition between Japan and the Qing culminated in the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). The proximate cause of the war was the refusal of Japanese military forces to withdraw from the Korean peninsula following their deployment in the aftermath of the 1894 Tonghak Rebellion. When the Qing sent troops to Korea to suppress this rebellion in response to a request from the Korean court, Japan also sent a contingent of troops, claiming it was allowed to do so under the terms of an earlier treaty with the Qing. But the strategic ambitions of Japanese leaders who engaged in the conflict were much larger, one key objective being the improvement of Japan's prestige among the Western colonial powers and the revision of the much-reviled unequal treaties imposed on Japan by the West.[8] A series of victories at land and sea quickly propelled Japanese troops up to the Yalu's edge, where Qing military commanders scrambled to prevent a Japanese invasion of the former Manchu heartland.

Only months after the prominent, Shanghai-based Chinese newspaper *Shen Bao* had proclaimed the need to punish Japanese "arrogance" in Korea, Qing leaders found themselves pushed from Korea to the Sino-Korean border.[9] Following the fall of the Qing garrison at the strategic northern city of Pyŏngyang, Qing soldiers withdrew to the Yalu's northern bank, where troops under the command of Qing general Song Qing quickly began constructing earthen walls and other fortifications against the expected Japanese advance.[10] In anticipation of a potential

[8] Stewart Lone, *Japan's First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China, 1894-1895* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 27.
[9] "Lun Zhongguo wei Chaoxian shi bu ke bu yu Riben yi zhan," *Shen Bao*, July 21, 1894.
[10] *Qing Guangxu chao Zhong Ri jiaoshe shiliao* (Beijing: Gugong bowuyuan, 1932), vol. 21, 38.

Japanese attempt to cross the river, Qing generals also ordered the destruction of boats that could be used to ferry troops.[11]

To Qing military leaders like Li Hongzhang, commander of the Beiyang Army, the Yalu was a critical, if imperfect, line of defense protecting the Qing's Manchurian frontier.[12] As Qing strategists noted, the Yalu was not a reliable barrier against Japanese invasion. With winter quickly approaching, they expressed their concern that a frozen Yalu could provide Japanese forces easy access to Qing fortifications.[13] The length of the river also made it difficult to defend. While certain parts of the Yalu were deep, its neighboring tributary the Ai River was shallow and easily forded.[14] Nevertheless, in its impressive breadth the Yalu remained a formidable obstacle that Qing forces hoped would at least temporarily deter invading Japanese forces.

As Japanese ground troops moved quickly northward, they made their own preparations for an inevitable encounter with Qing troops at the Yalu. Central to any effort to subdue the Qing positions would be the crossing of the river itself. To bridge the river Japanese First Army commander Yamagata Aritomo enlisted the help of military engineer Yabuki Shūichi. As commander of the First Army military engineers (*kōhei*), Yabuki supervised military river crossings in Japan during the suppression of the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877 and had also studied military engineering in France during the 1880s.[15] Arriving at the Korean city of Ŭiju on the banks of the lower Yalu on October 23, Yabuki spent the next morning surveying the river landscape.[16]

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[11] *Qing Guangxu chao Zhong Ri jiaoshe shiliao* , vol. 22, 7.
[12] Ibid., 13.
[13] *Qing Guangxu chao Zhong Ri jiaoshe shiliao* , vol. 20, 16.
[14] *Qing Guangxu chao Zhong Ri jiaoshe shiliao* , vol. 21, 38.
[15] Kinsei Meishō Genkōroku Kankōkai, *Kinsei meishō genkōroku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1935), 346-349. For an account of the Satsuma Rebellion river crossing allegedly related by Yabuki himself, see Tanaka Man'itsu, *Shisei no sakai*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1909), 301-326.
[16] *Kinsei meishō genkōroku*, 349.

The Yalu River near Ŭiju posed a unique set of topographical considerations to advancing Japanese soldiers. As the river neared its mouth at the Yellow Sea just thirty miles downstream, it split into multiple channels intersected by numerous small river islands. It was at this point that the Ai River also joined the Yalu's course. The transport of Japanese troops and supplies across the shifting banks of the delta would require the construction of multiple bridges as well as the fording of smaller rivulets. The bulk of Song's forces, numbering some 18,300 in total, were headquartered in Jiuliancheng, a fortress town across from the Korean walled city of Ŭiju. In anticipation of a Japanese river crossing, Song stationed a further 5,500 Qing troops at Shuikouzhen, a shallow portion of the Yalu 15 kilometers upstream where crossings could be made by foot. An advanced guard was also dispatched to Hushan, a Chinese mountain fortress directly across the easily fordable Ai River.[17]

To accomplish the river crossing, Japanese leaders decided upon a dual strategy of bridge construction and diversionary attack. On the morning of October 24, an advance force led by Third Division unit leader Satō Tadashi secretly forded the river near Shuikouzhen and began attacking Chinese troops.[18] With Qing forces distracted by Satō's forces, construction of floating bridges to bring the bulk of Japanese troops across the river began that same day.

Official Japanese accounts of the Yalu River crossing stressed the collective hardship and perseverance of the military engineers who assembled the requisite military bridges under Yabuki's command. As described in Yabuki's own report of the bridge construction, natural and technical obstacles were quickly overcome through a combination of Japanese resourcefulness, perseverance, and luck.[19] The stockpiling of materials to construct the bridges began the evening

[17] Kawada Etsu, ed. *Kindai Nihon sensōshi*: *Nisshin, Nichi-Ro sensō* (Tokyo: Dōtai Keizai Konwakai, 1995), 213.
[18] Lone, 38.
[19] Yabuki Shūichi, "Ōryokkō kakyō oyobi wataribune shōhō," JACAR (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records) C0606203920, 213-235.

of October 23, as darkness provided convenient cover for Japanese activities. By the next morning, Yabuki received orders to build two separate bridges. The first spanned a short, twenty-meter wide arm of the river and was completed in only an hour.[20] The second, however, required additional time and effort. Commencing construction at 8:00pm, the Japanese sought to make darkness their ally against detection by Qing forces.[21] Silence was also imperative to avoid alerting Chinese troops to their presence. One later account of the Yalu crossing related how attempts to quietly commence bridge construction were almost frustrated by an unexpected set of avian adversaries—a flock of startled wild geese that flew off around the time bridge construction began.[22]

Japanese soldiers encountered another obstacle when the iron boats they had brought to use as supports for their pontoon bridge were discovered to have warped over weeks of transport across the Korean interior. The added difficulty of lashing these warped boats together delayed the completion of the bridge until 6:00am, a full two hours after the 4:00am deadline originally set by Japanese military commanders.[23] In the process of tying and nailing the boats together, military engineers were compelled to partially submerge themselves in the frigid waters of the Yalu.[24] Yet even with the delay and cold, Japanese soldiers completed the bridge and quickly overwhelmed the Qing force at Hushan. When they arrived at the walled city of Jiuliancheng, they found that it had already been abandoned by Qing forces who had fled further northward.[25]

The suspenseful Yalu crossing gave rise to new narratives of battlefront heroics. While official reports like those penned by Yabuki stressed the ability of soldiers to overcome

[20] Ibid., 218.
[21] Ibid., 216.
[22] *Kinsei meishō genkōroku*, 350.
[23] Yabuki, 216.
[24] Ibid., 233.
[25] Kawada Etsu, ed. *Kindai Nihon sensōshi*, 213-214.

challenges in orderly fashion, later Japanese-language accounts dramatized the dangers and volatility of the Yalu River crossing while stressing the sacrifice of individual Japanese soldiers. As many scholars have previously noted, the Sino-Japanese War coincided with the rise of print media and popular nationalism in Japan. In an effort to sell more publications to patriotic and news-hungry readers in the Japanese metropole, periodical editors and book publishers began supplementing their war coverage with inspiring tales (*bidan*) of ordinary soldiers who distinguished themselves with their bravery on the battlefield. These soldiers became household names in Japan, giving a human face to distant continental conquests while also providing lucrative sales to the writers who circulated their stories.[26]

In the vein of these *bidan*, a story of the Yalu crossing reprinted in newspapers as far away as Aspen, Colorado and numerous unofficial war histories was the drowning of the patriotic Private Mihara Kunitarō.[27] As the story went, Mihara was a young soldier and ordinary "commoner" (*heimin*) from rural Tokushima prefecture. As military engineers prepared to bridge the Yalu, there was a call for soldiers to help measure the width of the river channel by swimming across the frigid water and laying a rope on the other bank. Courageously volunteering to complete the task, Mihara began the arduous swim across the river, all while trying to avoid the watchful eyes and ears of nearby Qing guards. By the time he reached roughly half the distance of the river channel, however, the frigidness of the water and the unexpectedly strong pull of the current had sapped his strength. Unwilling to call for help lest his cries betray the position of his comrades, Mihara was quietly subsumed by the river's flowing current.[28]

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[26] Saya Makito, *The Sino-Japanese War and the Birth of Japanese Nationalism*, trans. David Noble (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2011), 67-68.
[27] Shimizu Yoshihiro, *Shintai gunjin yōbun* (Osaka: Hamamoto Meishōdō, 1895), 194-195; Hattori Seiichi, *Tsūzoku seishin senki* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Tosho Shuppan, 1897), 97-99; "Brave Japanese Soldiers," *Aspen Daily Times*, January 31, 1895.
[28] Hattori Seiichi, *Tsūzoku seishin senki*, 97-99.

Inspired by Mihara's devotion, an onlooking Sergeant Miyake Heikichi volunteered to complete the task and successfully swam across the river, allowing Japanese military forces to complete the pontoon bridge and lead their forces to victory in what became known as the Battle of Jiuliancheng. Woodblock prints from the period depict the stoic Miyake tying a rope to his chest and braving the river's frigid water out of patriotic duty and in memory of his fallen comrade.[29]

Narratives of Private Mihara's tragic death stand in stark contrast with tamer official accounts of the Yalu crossing. Yabuki's report does not mention either Mihara or Miyake by name, while a contemporaneous account by a fellow Japanese officer lists zero casualties incurred during bridge construction.[30] Whether Mihara's story was an embellishment of actual events, or whether official accounts felt compelled to downplay unnecessary loss of life is uncertain. This story highlights, however, many of the obstacles facing military engineers in their attempt to construct pontoon bridges across the Yalu, including the frigid temperatures of the late autumn river and the presence of watchful Qing troops on the other bank. The bridging of the Yalu required battle with geographical as well as human adversaries, a process repeated on numerous occasions as Japanese forcibly expanded into continental Asia.

Once completed, pontoon bridges across the Yalu provided a valuable military transport route for Japanese forces penetrating further into the Manchurian interior. Over the course of the war, approximately 154,000 Japanese and numerous Korean and Chinese laborers were mobilized to transport food, clothing, armaments, and other supplies from bases in Japan and Korea to the battlefront.[31] Goods moving from occupied positions in Korea to battlefields in Manchuria inevitably flowed across the Yalu River, where bridges hastily built in the heat of

[29] "Nisshin sensō chūyū bikan kōhei ittō gunsō Miyake Heikichi shi," http://www.yamada-shoten.com/onlinestore/detail.php?item_id=43028 (accessed April 1, 2019).
[30] Yabuki, "Ōryokkō kakyō oyobi wataribune shōhō," 228.
[31] Lone, 75-77.

battle were modified, supplemented, and otherwise refurbished to serve as conduits for military supplies.[32] Yet the makeshift nature of these military bridges posed other logistical challenges to the maintenance of Japanese supply lines across the Yalu's seasonally changing landscape. Unlike the permanent metal bridge structures that transported later travelers across the river, pontoon bridges floated precariously at the waterline. Thus, when winter carved the Yalu's smooth surface into a craggy landscape of floating ice, it would take additional effort to ensure that the bridges were not destroyed.

A series of articles published in the *Asahi shinbun*, a major Japanese newspaper, relayed to metropolitan readers the struggles of soldiers to clear ice from the Yalu bridges.[33] Based on the report of 6th Army Division military engineer Imasawa Yoshio, one article described how ice began appearing on the Yalu in late November, putting pressure on the pontoons and causing some of them to break and float away. Soldiers were stationed all across the bridges, making repairs and breaking up the large blocks of ice. Iron anchors and chains were used to strengthen the structure of these bridges. To install these anchors and perform other necessary repairs, soldiers entered the frozen river, which, the newspaper recorded, caused them to lose sensation in their limbs. As one article stated, the Yalu was but one of the many continental rivers Japanese soldiers had forded over the course of the conflict, and other rivers brought additional geographic challenges.[34] But the uniqueness of the Yalu lay in its position at the boundary between two strategic zones of new-found Japanese imperial interest, Korea and Manchuria. Military bridges gave Japanese authorities a reliable method of transporting military supplies across the border, making them necessary to maintain even at the cost of great human effort.

[32] "Ryūhō ni taisuru Ōryokkō kakyō sakugyō," *Asahi shinbun*, February 13-15, 1895.
[33] Ibid.
[34] "Ryūhō ni taisuru Ōryokkō kakyō sakugyō," *Asahi shinbun*, February 13, 1895.

The bridging of the Yalu had effects that outlasted war's end and the removal of these temporary bridges. As Korea became firmly enmeshed in Japan's growing sphere of informal empire, the Yalu assumed further strategic importance. The conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War saw the retreat of active Japanese military power from the Yalu, but small populations of Japanese merchants, timber-cutters, and others remained.[35] The Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895) which officially concluded the war stated that Korea would be considered a fully autonomous and "independent" state, though in reality "independence" also meant the strengthening of Japanese influence on the peninsula.[36]

Nevertheless, the weakening of Qing power in the region did invite a new imperial contender into the region—Russia. The Yalu became a strategic frontier for Russian expansionists, who viewed the rich forests of the upper Yalu River Basin in particular as a critical resource base to fuel their ongoing expansion into Manchuria.[37] Only a decade after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, Japanese knowledge of the river's geography gained from the Battle of Jiuliancheng was called upon again in a new battle for regional hegemony with Russia. Japanese forces once again crossed the Yalu, though this time makeshift pontoon bridges would be quickly followed by plans for more permanent symbols of Japan's imperial presence on the river.

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[35] "Seikan kokkyō chihō no kinkyō," *Asahi shinbun*, March 9, 1897.
[36] Kirk Larsen, *Traditions, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850-1910* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 237-239.
[37] Ian Nish, "Stretching out to the Yalu: A Contested Frontier, 1900-1903," in John Steinberg et al., *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 45-64.

Bridging the Yalu Part II: The Russo-Japanese War

The Yalu River Basin first entered into the strategic calculus of Russian empire-builders soon after the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War. In 1896, recently defeated Qing statesmen sought to check Japanese expansion in northeast China by allowing Russia to build an extension of the Trans-Siberian Railroad across Manchuria.[38] Similarly, the Korean monarch King Kojong sought to use Russian power as a balance against a newly invigorated Japan. In a desperate bid for his life following the Japanese assassination of his wife Queen Min, Kojong fled to the Russian embassy in Seoul. Grateful for Russian protection but also compelled to heed his protectors' demands, Kojong began granting a number of key economic concessions to Russian politicians and businessmen. Among the concessions Kojong granted was the rights to rich stands of virginal timber along the upper reaches of the Yalu and Tumen River basins to Russian businessman Y.I. Briner.[39] Due to centuries of deliberate isolation by governments in China and Korea, the dense pine forests of the upper Yalu little resembled other locations in Korea and Manchuria, where centuries of intensive human settlement had resulted in widespread deforestation.[40] The Russian government quickly purchased this concession from Briner, seeing the region both as a source of valuable timber for Asian expansion but also as a foothold for securing Russian power in Korea.[41]

[38] S.C.M. Paine, "The Chinese Eastern Railway from the First Sino-Japanese War until the Russo-Japanese War," in *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China: An International History*, ed. Bruce A. Elleman and Stephen Kotkin (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2010), 16.
[39] Vladimir M. Vonliarliarskii, "Why Russia Went to War with Japan: The Story of the Yalu Concession," *The Fortnightly Review*, May 1910, 820.
[40] For a longue durée view of deforestation and other environmental problems in historical China, see Robert Marks, *China: Its Environment and History* (Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). For a view of historical forest depletion in Korea, especially as it was perceived by Western and Japanese observers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see David Fedman, "The Saw and the Seed: Japanese Forestry in Colonial Korea, 1895-1945" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2015), 76-105.
[41] Vonliarliarskii, 825.

This purchase attracted immediate attention from Japanese leaders, who not only feared this threat to Japan's position in Korea but were also beginning to express similar interest in the Yalu's sylvan bounty. Japanese lumbermen began to trickle into the region following the Sino-Japanese War. The first Japanese surveys of Korea's forests also took place during this same conflict.[42] Cartography was an early battleground upon which these competing imperial claims to the Yalu were made. As scholars have previously argued, the surveyor's tools and charts were weapons in the carving out of new imperial spheres across the globe during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[43] The Yalu River Basin was no exception to this rule, as a team of Russian surveyors covered the region in 1899.[44] The Japanese Navy also sent surveyors to the mouth of the river in 1900 as part of a larger cartographic survey of Korea's western coast. The experience of the Japanese surveyors, however, illustrated their still-tenuous foothold in the region. Despite assurances from the Korean court that their survey would be free of local resistance, Japanese military leaders instructed surveyors to exercise "caution" after receiving reports that Japanese lumberjacks sailing on the river had been attacked and threatened by Qing troops.[45] While Japanese engagement and interest in the Yalu River Basin was much greater than before their victory in the Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese military was unable to unilaterally exert its will in the region.

By 1903, Russian forces began earnestly exploiting their claims to the Yalu and its forests. In April, Japanese diplomats in Korea received reports that Russian troops had crossed

[42] Fedman, "The Saw and the Seed," 55.
[43] For a study of the 1910-1918 Japanese cadastral survey in colonial Korea that references several major representative works on colonial cartography, see David Fedman, "Triangulating Chōsen: Maps, Mapmaking, and the Land Survey in Colonial Korea," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 2 (March 2012): 1-28. https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/e-journal/articles/final_fedman_0.pdf.
[44] Vonliarliarskii, "Why Russia went to War with Japan," *The Fortnightly Review*, June 1910, 1032,
[45] "Ōryokkō fukin no jōkyō," JACAR C08040842200, 957-965.

the river and set up a timber camp in Yongamp'o, a Korean village near the river's mouth.[46] Reports published in the Shanghai-based newspaper *Shen Bao* described the motley, multi-ethnic makeup of this border camp as comprising sixty Russian soldiers, large numbers of Korean coolies, and 140-150 Chinese "bandits."[47] Bandits were a regular fixture of the social ecology of the frontier Yalu region, and in 1901 had even succeeded in briefly occupying several settlements in Andong County.[48] Bands of roaming "mounted bandits" (*mazei*) were hired to fight for both sides of the Sino-Japanese War, and they also found ample employment in the later Russo-Japanese War.[49] It was little surprise that Russians also relied on their mercenary services to enhance Russian power in the region.

Russian troops sought to establish stable lines of transport and communication across the Yalu as they moved increasingly between the Manchurian and Korean banks. In 1903, Russians built a telegraph across the river as well as military bridges.[50] Much as Japanese had done during the Sino-Japanese War, Russians also used bridge construction to sedentarize the shifting liquid geography of the river. In the meantime, they also patrolled against Japanese threats to their economic influence in the region. A 1903 article in a contemporary Korean newspaper described a tense meeting in Ŭiju between Russian soldiers, their bandit mercenaries, and Korean officials over the presence of local Japanese timber-cutters. After invoking treaties made with the Korean government to justify their presence, Russian officials blamed their Korean counterparts for the harmful and continued presence of Japanese timber-cutters in the region. As the Russians stated: "Japanese continue to appear in numerous places, hurting our business while harming the

[46] Nish, "Stretching out to the Yalu," 57.
[47]"Zhi Yalu Jiang yan an qing xing," *Shen Bao,* August 10, 1903.
[48] "Andong luan hao," *Shen Bao*, July 20, 1901.
[49] Phil Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 216.
[50] "Zhi Yalu Jiang yan'an qingxing"; "Eren she dian," *Shen Bao*, July 1, 1903."Ōryokkō funabashi tekkyo," *Tōkyō asahi shinbun*, April 18, 1904.

interests of both Russia and Korea. The fact that this has not been stopped is due to your negligence."[51]

Alarmed by Russia's actions, Japanese officials in Korea first sought to retaliate through diplomatic means. Fearing Russia's aim to, as one historian describes, "seal the Yalu River by occupying both banks," Japanese called for the opening of new treaty ports in Yongamp'o and Ŭiju on the Korean side of the river.[52] Supporting Japan's claim was its ally Great Britain, with whom it had recently concluded an official treaty of alliance in 1902. The call for treaty ports on the Yalu resonated with an ongoing Western push for an "open door" to trade in China.[53] Diplomatic measures failed to adequately defuse developing tensions between Russia and Japan, however, as newspapers in Japan carried increasingly numerous and sensational reports of the developing "Yalu River Crisis."[54]

The "Yalu River Crisis" was just one of the many diplomatic conflicts over the Russian strategic position in Manchuria and Korea that led to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. On February 8, 1904, three hours before Japan's official declaration of war was received by the Russian government, Japanese naval forces launched a surprise attack on Port Arthur, a strategic and heavily fortified Russian port on the Liaodong Peninsula in southern Manchuria. In the immediate weeks following the declaration of war, Japanese military leaders feared a Russian occupation of northern Korea.[55] Russian leaders decided instead, however, to concentrate their troops, much as Qing military forces had done a decade earlier, along the northern bank of the

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[51] "Ŭiju jŏngbo," *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, July 10, 1903.
[52] Nish, 58.
[53] Ibid. In 1903, the United States also pressed the Qing to open the city of the Andong on the Chinese side of the river as a new treaty port, though the US was reluctant to join the Anglo-Japanese call for ports on the Korean side of the river: Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhae." Ryūgan hokai hōni taisuru Beikoku kōshi no taido no ken, "Chu-han Ilbon Kongsagwan kirok, v. 19, no. 671.
[54] Fedman, "The Saw and the Seed," 89.
[55] Richard Harving Davis et al., *The Russo-Japanese War: A Photographic and Descriptive Review of the Great Conflict in the Far East* (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1904), 2.

Yalu. Quickly abandoning the lumber camp in Yongamp'o and destroying their bridges across the river, Russian troops of the Second Siberian Army Corps, under the command of General Mikhail Zasulich, split into two contingents: one stationed at Andong, where Zasulich expected Japanese forces to make the river crossing, and another at Jiuliancheng, the same walled fortress where Song Qing's army had defended against a Japanese advance ten years earlier. Zasulich's orders from chief Russian military commander Aleksey Kuropatkin were to avoid making a decisive military stand at the Yalu, holding the Russian position only as long as it took to assess the size of the Japanese advance and inflict significant losses.[56]

Japanese strategy during the first months of the war mirrored that of the earlier Sino-Japanese War. Not content to simply solidify Japan's position on the Korean Peninsula, Japanese military leaders also sought to secure a foothold in southern Manchuria, particularly the Liaodong Peninsula, which had been occupied by Japanese during the Sino-Japanese War but later abandoned after a "Triple Intervention" of diplomatic pressure from Russia, France, and Germany. To accomplish this, Japanese leaders decided that the First Army would cross the Yalu from Korea to engage with Zasulich's troops, while the Second Army would land at the Liaodong Peninsula to begin a siege of the Russian stronghold at Port Arthur, a two-prong strategy also used during the Sino-Japanese War. Echoes of the earlier conflict were also seen in the decision to cross the Yalu not at Andong, where Russian forces were expecting a crossing to occur, but in the supposedly familiar riparian landscape near Jiuliancheng.[57]

[56] John W. Steinberg, "Operational Overview," in John W. Steinberg, et al, *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective : World War Zero* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 110-112.
[57] Kawada Etsu, ed. *Kindai Nihon sensōshi*, 486.

Japanese military engineers soon realized, however, that the Yalu River they confronted in April 1904 shared little in common with the river bridged by Japanese forces only a decade earlier. As one Japanese officer related to a foreign military observer:

> "We thought at first the reconnaissance would have been easy, as we crossed the river at the same place in 1894, but the changes had been too great. Our carefully prepared map was useless, as channels had changed; spots where fords had existed required bridging, and points out of range of the right bank were now within range of it, so our labour and money had been wasted."[58]

Natural shifts in the river channel over the years as well as seasonal fluctuations frustrated engineers' attempts to capitalize on previously acquired experience. As contemporary reports noted, springtime runoff from melting ice upstream raised water levels higher than those encountered a decade earlier in late autumn.[59]As a result of unforeseen changes in the river's topography, military engineers found they had insufficient supplies to build the necessary bridges. In this respect, however, they received unwitting help from their enemies. In the Yongamp'o lumber camp abandoned earlier by retreating Russian forces, Japanese soldiers found anvils and forges which, along with other materials gathered from Ŭiju, helped make up for their material deficiencies.[60]

Although the Yalu's unpredictability presented a significant geographical barrier to advancing Japanese troops, in other respects they enjoyed tangible advantages over defending Russian forces. The 42,000 Japanese troops led by First Army commander Kuroki Tamemoto easily outnumbered the 19,000 Russian troops under Zasulich's command, which were spread all over the Yalu's Chinese bank.[61] In addition, Japanese benefited from Russian racial hubris.

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[58] General Staff, War Office, *The Russo-Japanese War: Reports from Officers Attached to the Japanese Forces in the Field*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Ganesha Publishing, 2000), 53.
[59] "Ōryokkō kakyō no shukō," *Tōkyō asahi shinbun*, May 7, 1904.
[60] *The Russo-Japanese War: Reports from Officers*, 53.
[61] Steinberg, 110.

Believing the Japanese incapable of mounting a well-orchestrated attack, Russian officers took little pains to conceal their positions.[62] Russian ignorance also allowed Japanese scouts to easily disguise themselves as local Chinese and conduct reconnaissance missions on the opposite side of the Yalu. As young officer Jimon Tarō recorded with surprise in his diary, "even though they [disguised Japanese scouts] passed by Russian cavalry on two separate occasions, they were never subjected to any kind of inspection."[63]After gathering critical information about Russian defenses from repeated scouting missions, Japanese troops quickly occupied three strategic river islands between the Korean and Chinese banks of the Yalu: Kurido, Kŏmjŏngdo, and Ŏjŏkdo. At 4:00am, April 26, a small contingent of Japanese troops traveled to Kurido by boat, driving away Russian sentries from the lightly defended island. Around the same time, a battalion from the Second Division seized Kŏmjŏngdo.[64]

With these two islands now in Japanese possession, military engineers began surveying the channels between the islands and the main banks for bridge construction. Leading them was forty-seven year old Kodama Tokutarō, a native of Wakayama Prefecture trained as a military engineer at the Imperial Japanese Army Academy.[65] The construction of a first bridge spanning the gap between Kŏmjŏngdo and the Korean bank of the Yalu began on April 26.[66] The bridge soon came under heavy artillery fire from Russian forces, who relentlessly pounded at the engineers who worked on the bridge over the next few days. As a result of this barrage, the 258 yard-long trestle bridge took some 45 hours to complete, and three Japanese military engineers died in the process. Once finished, however, the bridge was never actually used to transport

[62] Etsu, *Kindai Nihon sensōshi*, 486.
[63] Tamon Jirō, *Tamon Jirō Nichi-Ro sensō nikki* (Tokyo: Fuyō Shobō, 1980), 37.
[64] *The Russo-Japanese War: Reports from Officers*, 53.
[65] Ōryokkō kakyō: shireikan Kodama rikigun shōshō," *Tōkyō asahi shinbun*, May 6, 1904.
[66] *Reports from Officers*, 54.

troops across the river. The whole process was a strategic diversion—while Russians expended their ammunition on this dummy bridge and gave away the position of their guns, other Japanese military engineers stockpiled materials for the bridges that would actually be used by the First Army to cross the Yalu.[67]

In the space of just ten years the natural and human geographies of the Yalu River had changed dramatically, necessitating an entirely different approach to bridging the river. Between April 27 and April 30, a total of nine additional bridges were built across the various channels of the Yalu and neighboring Ai River (figure 1.1).[68] The majority of these were trestle bridges composed of fir trunks bound together with straw rope and bolted together with iron nails and supported by wooden trestles that were sunk into the river bottom. The largest of the nine bridges, which spanned the main Yalu channel at 380 yards long, utilized 50-feet long pontoon boats that were transported by ship to northern Korea as well as 30-feet long boats procured locally.[69] During the bridging process, a small flotilla of Japanese naval gunboats also traveled up the river from its mouth at the Yellow Sea to provide support for the First Army advance by bombing Russian positions downstream.[70]

[67] Ibid.
[68] Mishima Sōsen, *Nichi-Ro gekisen Ōryokkō* (Tokyo: Kinkōdō Shoseki, 1904), 101.
[69] *Reports from Officers*, 39.
[70] Etsu, 486.

Figure 1.1: Detail from Japanese map showing the sites (marked by red lines) where the First Army crossed the Yalu.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_Battle_of_Yalu_River.jpg

Once constructed, these bridges seemingly promised a stable path across the river. Yet while nail, plank, and boat had reduced the volatility of the river's flowing liquid surface, the life-death contingency of crossing a river in the heat of battle remained. For Japanese soldiers preparing to cross over these newly constructed bridges, the Yalu River was an unavoidable reminder of the foreignness and danger of the wartime landscape they encountered. "I was taken aback by how large the Yalu River truly was," recorded officer Jimon Tarō in his journal." At the same time, I was frightened by the thought of how we were supposed to cross that large river

right in front of the enemy."[71] The immensity of the landscape and the scale of the conflict was also expressed in the diaries of military doctor Mizokami Sadao: "The landscape was so continental. It was the first time I truly realized that we Japanese were simply frogs in a well."[72]

On April 30, the First Army officially crossed the Yalu River, quickly overwhelming the outnumbered and outgunned Russian defending forces. International media expressed amazement at the discipline of Japanese soldiers, who according to the racial logic of the time were thought to stand little chance against the Russian Imperial Army. Japanese commentators hailed military engineers as heroes who "set the path for the whole army to follow."[73]

De-emphasized in many of these accounts, of course, were the violence and deaths, both military and civilian, behind the military triumphs. Five thousand Russian soldiers and two thousand Japanese soldiers were killed or injured during the course of the "Battle of the Yalu River."[74] Civilian populations along the river were also hard-hit by the violent repercussions of this battle. While Chinese and Korean governments had both officially declared their neutrality in the conflict, they were powerless to shield their subjects from the fallout of imperialist war waged on their own soil. The Russian military had exercised effective control over northeast China since first stationing troops there in 1901 to protect Russian rail lines and had begun moving into northern Korea by 1903. Only days after the declaration of war Japanese forces had swiftly moved to invade and occupy Korea. As one Seoul-based Korean newspaper related, Russian troops torched Korean farmers' homes and stole livestock, clothes, and other goods in their retreat across the Yalu from the Japanese.[75] Similar brutalities were also perpetrated by

[71] Tamon Jirō, *Tamon Jirō Nichi-Ro sensō nikki*, 36.
[72] Mizokami Sadao, *Nichi-Ro sensō jūgunki: gun'i no jinchū nikki* (Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 2004), 41.
[73] Mishima Sōsen, *Nichi-Ro gekisen Ōryokkō*, 98.
[74] Steinberg, 112.
[75] "Abyŏng p'oksang," *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, May 11, 1904.

Japanese soldiers. Traveling through the war-ravaged landscape of northern Korea and the Yalu delta, famous American author and Russo-Japanese war correspondent Jack London wrote:

> "Northern Korea was a desolate land when the Japanese passed through. Villages and towns were deserted. The fields lay untouched. There was no ploughing nor sowing, no green things growing… I rode down upon the sandy islands of the Yalu. For weeks these islands had been the dread between-the-lines of two fighting armies. The air above had been rent by screaming projectiles. The echoes of the final battle had scarcely died away. The trains of Japanese wounded and Japanese dead were trailing by."[76]

The Japanese crossing of the Yalu was hardly a process of simple technological progress and prowess, as portrayed by Japanese sources, but a bloody campaign that belied the supposed glory of imperial conquest. Japanese media sources downplayed this destructive violence beyond the battlefield. Western media sources also replicated many of these biases by basing their coverage of the Yalu battle on the censored and triumphalist frontline military reports produced by the Japanese victors.[77] The prejudices of these outside media sources, combined with limited local sources from the Yalu River Basin, which at this point remained a peripheral frontier within Korea and China, makes it difficult to know the full extent to which the "Battle of the Yalu River" impacted local populations. What is clear, however, is that the Japanese military crossing of the Yalu was part of a process that violently transformed the social and natural geographies of the region. The rapidity of Japanese military success at the Yalu would not be repeated in further land campaigns against the Russians. The road to a final Japanese victory would include protracted and blood-filled campaigns such as the five-month siege of Port Arthur, demonstrating the incredible violence and loss of life that underwrote Japanese conquest abroad.

[76] Jack London, "The Yellow Peril," http://london.sonoma.edu/Writings/Revolution/yellow.html. (Accessed April 1, 2019).
[77] This frustration with wartime censorship of foreign military correspondents is seen in the writings of Jack London. See Nathaniel Cadle, *The Mediating Nation: Late American Realism, Globalization, and the Progressive State* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 171.

The 1904 "Battle of the Yalu River" (*Ōryokkō kaisen*) precipitated a shift in river bridging strategies that mirrored Japan's increasingly permanent colonial presence on the Sino-Korean border. For military planners seeking a quick and efficient military supply route into the Manchurian interior, the hastily-built trestle and pontoon bridges of a former period failed to provide a sufficiently stable channel of transport. Just months after the battle's end, the Japanese military began drawing plans for an iron railroad bridge across the river border. This bridge would link newly-built Japanese railroad routes in southern Manchuria and Korea, weaving these regions further into the fabric of overseas empire.[78]

The push for a more permanent and predictable means of passage across the river acquired further momentum after Japan coerced the Korean court into signing the Japan-Korea Protectorate treaty in December 1905. With the conclusion of this treaty, the ruling Great Han Empire in Korea nominally maintained its sovereignty, but in practice all decisions regarding foreign affairs, and eventually all domestic administrative and military decisions, were made by the Japanese.[79] The creation of the Korean protectorate made the Yalu into a literal edge of empire, and as the expansionist logic of empire dictated, solidifying the imperial border meant being able to efficiently and quickly transport goods and people across it. Such a strategic calculus had little tolerance for the uncertainties and contingencies of wind, currents, and shifting river banks.

Construction of the Yalu River railroad bridge, completed in 1911, signaled an even more protracted commitment to sedentarizing the landscapes of the Sino-Korean border than the

[78] Chōsen Sōtokufu Tetsudōkyoku, *Ōryokkō kyōryō kōji gaikyō* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Tetsudōkyoku, 1911), 3.
[79] For a detailed study of the diplomatic processes leading up to the conclusion of the Protectorate treaty and the later 1910 annexation of Korea, see Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

military bridges that preceded it. Challenges encountered by bridge builders included diplomatic protests from Western powers, ice, floods, the task of mobilizing massive amounts of international labor and expertise, and the deployment of new pneumatic caisson technologies to transport workers below the river's surface. Once completed, the bridge was hailed by Japanese commentators as a critical "link between Europe and Asia" that allowed for continuous rail travel from the tip of the Korean peninsula to Europe through Manchuria and Siberia, as well as a monument to the accomplishments of their burgeoning continental empire.[80] At the same time it was decried by Chinese and Korean nationalists as another means of perpetuating Japanese exploitation and violence in the region.[81]

Bridging the Yalu Part III: Railroad Bridge

Railways were integral to the penetration of Japanese imperial power into Korea and southern Manchuria.[82] Colonial railways readily served the dyad of Japanese commercial and military interests Peter Duus has described as "the abacus and the sword," though it was ultimately the "sword" that provided the greatest impetus for the construction of steel railway lines over the Yalu.[83] Japanese railway construction in Korea began in 1903 with work on a rail line between Pusan on the southern coast and the Korean capital of Seoul. Spurred by the wartime need to quickly transport troops and supplies to the warfront, between 1904-1906 the Japanese Imperial Army's Provincial Military Railroad Department oversaw the completion of this rail line as well as the construction of an additional route linking Seoul to the Yalu border. In

[80] *Ōryokkō kyōryō kōji gaikyō*, 3.
[81]"Jian zhu Yalu Jiang tieqiao zhi guanxi," *Wanguo shangye yuebao*, 14, 1909, 57.
[82] For a few examples of pre-existing scholarly literature on Japanese colonial railways, see Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), and Chŏng Chae-jŏng, *Ilche ch'imnyak kwa Han'guk ch'ŏlto: 1892-1945* (Seoul: Seoul Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 1999).
[83] Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910*.

Manchuria, Japanese engineers also built a light rail connecting Andong on the Chinese side of the Yalu with previously-constructed Russian railway routes at Mukden (Shenyang).[84]

Elite military planners in Japan saw a railroad route through Korea, across the Yalu and into Manchuria as imperative to Japan's national survival. These military planners included figures such as Yamagata Aritomo, the former samurai and Meiji oligarch who commanded the First Army troops that crossed the Yalu during the Sino-Japanese War, and Terauchi Masatake, an Army general who later became the first Governor-General of Korea. Following the Japanese military's close victory in the Russo-Japanese War, these strategists remained convinced that Russia was planning a revenge campaign. In a 1907 Army manifesto circulated among elite government officials, Yamagata and others advocated a "northern advance" (*hokushin*) approach to national defense.[85] This plan called for the strengthening of Japanese positions in northern Manchuria in case of a Russian counterattack. Essential to this plan, they argued, was the completion of a unified railway line across Korea and Manchuria which could quickly transport troops to continental battlefields.[86] Begun while the Russo-Japanese War was still raging, plans and surveys for the Yalu River railroad bridge continued in the following years as a matter of perceived military necessity.

Selection of the site for a permanent bridge across the Yalu took place in June 1904. Led by military engineer Yamagoe Tomisaburō, the location chosen by military surveyors was several miles downstream of Jiuliancheng, the site where previous military bridges had been built and where Russian and Japanese artillery fire had reverberated just two months earlier.[87] Here the river converged into one main channel rather than the delta-like configuration of

[84] *Shingishū shi* (Osaka: Shōbunkan Insatsujo, 1911), 8.
[85] O'Dwyer, *Significant Soil: Settler Colonialism and Japan's Urban Empire in Manchuria*, 74.
[86] "Nihon teikoku no kokubō hōshin," JACAR C08040842200.
[87] Nagano Fukai, "Ōryokkō kyōryō, Chōsen hoteru oyobi Keijō eki no kenzō ni tsuite," *Chōsen*, October 1, 1923.

multiple channels and river islands that characterized the river near Ŭiju and Jiuliancheng. The decision to build the bridge here consequentially reshaped the social geography of the lower Yalu.

Following in the wake of railroad construction along the Yalu was a host of Japanese fortune-seekers and colonists. On the Korean side of the river, the frontier town that sprung around the terminus of a new railway line to Seoul was dubbed Sinŭiju or "New Ŭiju." Built entirely on the Yalu's marshy floodplain, this new colonial city was made possible by the erection of a large embankment to shield the town against the Yalu's periodically rising water levels.[88] Although the levee's protection would prove less than perfect, Sinŭiju soon superseded Ŭiju as provincial capital and the economically most important city in surrounding North Pyŏngan Province. [89]

Directly across the river from Sinŭiju, a new Japanese settlement was also forming in close proximity to the Chinese city of Andong. According to a 1931 Chinese-language Andong County gazetteer, Japanese military authorities compelled Andong city officials to arrange the purchase of land near the river bank to house the settlement. Chinese farmers initially refused to yield their land, until they were coerced to do so at gunpoint by Japanese soldiers.[90] Japanese accounts of the settlement's creation told an entirely different story of grateful Chinese authorities "granting" the Japanese military land after Japanese improved the city's roads.[91] Regardless of the settlement's disputed origins, it would acquire important status as a rail terminus. Like Sinŭju, the Japanese settlement at Andong also featured a large embankment to

[88] Wada Takashi, *Shingishū shi* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Shimada Sōbunkan, 1911), 9-10.
[89] For a discussion of Sinŭiju's history as well as prominence in the regional timber trade, see Fedman, 206-219.
[90] Yu Yunfeng, ed. *Andong Xian zhi*, 1931, reprint in *Zhongguo difangzhi ji cheng: Liaoning fu xian zhi li, 16* (Nanjing: Fenghuang Chubanshe, 2006), 23.
[91] Antō-ken Shōgyō Kaigisho, *Antō shi* (Antō [Andong]: Antō-ken Shōgyō Kaigisho, 1920), 2.

protect it against flooding. Following the end of the Russo-Japanese War and the withdrawal of occupying Japanese military forces, treaties with the Qing government cemented this settlement's status as a treaty port and zone of Japanese extraterritorial privilege in China. Its Japanese population also grew exponentially—from 850 immediately before the Russo-Japanese War to 5,922 by September 1906.[92] The growth of colonial settlements at Sinŭiju and Andong added a new element to the already volatile, multi-ethnic mix of peoples at the Yalu River border. It was between these two newly-formed colonial enclaves at Sinŭiju and Andong that bridge construction was to take place.

As railway projects created new nodes and lines of Japanese imperial power, preparations were made for a railroad bridge that linked them over the Yalu River's shifting liquid surface. Beginning in February 1905, military engineers undertook systematic surveys of the river's depth and discharge.[93] These studies confirmed what had already been sensed over the course of two previous military crossings, namely the volatility of the river's flow and shifts in the riverbed. In April, engineers conducted boring tests at five different points along the riverbed. The use of a boring machine on the river bank posed little difficulty, but as engineers moved into the middle of the river, the depth of the water and strength of the current forced them to use two Japanese cargo boats tied together to stabilize the machine. These tests determined that a rock stratum, which had to be reached to provide stability for the bridge's foundations, lay between 72-85 feet below shifting successive layers of water, sand, and gravel.[94] Other tests to measure tidal action, temperature variation, and levels of previous floods further highlighted the climatic and geographic obstacles to bridge construction. As Japanese engineers recorded, the temperature

[92] "Lü zhu Andong Ri-ren zhi zeng jia," *Shen Bao*, December 7, 1906.
[93] Railway Bureau Government-General of Chosen, *Report on the Construction of the Yalu River Bridge* (Ryūzan [Yongsan]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Tetsudōkyoku, 1914), 5.
[94] Ibid., 6.

variation between winter and summer along the Yalu could be as great as 140-150 degrees Fahrenheit. The differences in river height during high and low tides was also determined to be between 12 and 17 feet, a figure determined only after tidal markers installed by the Japanese were initially destroyed by river ice in December 1905 and subsequently reinstalled.[95] The freezing of the river for 3-4 months of the year was a regular occurrence, closing the river to waterborne traffic and opening it instead to horse-drawn sleds and pedestrian traffic. But even in this time of seeming fixedness of the river's surface, surveyors recorded the maximum daily movement of the river's icy surface at 7.2 feet.[96]

After these initial surveys, plans for the Yalu Railroad bridge submitted by the Japanese Army to the Minister of State in July 1905 called for six 300-feet long sections and six 200-feet long sections. These sections would be supported by twelve masonwork and concrete piers for a combined length of approximately 3,000 feet. The planned budget for this bridge was approximately 2.33 million yen, a hardly insignificant sum for the time.[97] Yet the alacrity with which Japanese Cabinet approved these plans in October 1905 illustrates the degree to which fears of Russian military invasion propelled the opening of imperial coffers already strained by expensive overseas military campaigns.[98] Blueprints for the bridge's design, completed between 1905-1906, drew on international as well as Japanese expertise. For design of the bridge's steel girders, the Japanese Protectorate government in Korea solicited the help of Philadelphia-based American railway engineer G.U. Crawford.[99] Plans for the bridge also included eight-foot wide

[95] *Report*, 7-8
[96] Ibid., 7.
[97] Asano Shunkō et al., *Hazamagumi hyakunenshi* (Tokyo: Kabushiki Kaisha Hazamagumi, 1989), 172.
[98] *Report*, 4.
[99] Ibid., 16.

pedestrian pathways on both sides of the steel girders, which were explicitly designed to accomodate artillery during wartime.[100]

Despite engineers' careful anticipation of the Yalu River's variability, their plans failed to account for the turbulent international politics of the border. In 1903, one year before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, American officials in Beijing concluded a treaty with the Qing court that authorized the opening of Andong as a foreign treaty port.[101] Due to war's outbreak, the first American consul in Andong, Charles J. Arnall, did not actually assume his post until 1906. Arnall was a committed advocate for the American principle of "Open Door" access to trade in China, which soon led him into conflict with Japanese authorities over their plans to build a Yalu River railroad bridge.[102] Arnall feared that the fixed nature of the bridge downstream from Andong would sever the city's access to the sea. This would harm the economic fortunes of the newly-opened treaty port, or worse, leave its foreign trade entirely in Japanese hands. Sharing Arnall's fears about the deleterious impact of bridge construction were British diplomats, who also had a stake in ensuring that Chinese importers of British goods had ample access to the newly-opened treaty port. Their suggestion to Japanese authorities was to alter plans for the bridge to include a section that would swing open to river traffic.[103] This opening section of the bridge would provide a literal "open door" to the upper Yalu, allowing ships to periodically pass through while preserving the functionality of the bridge as a means of

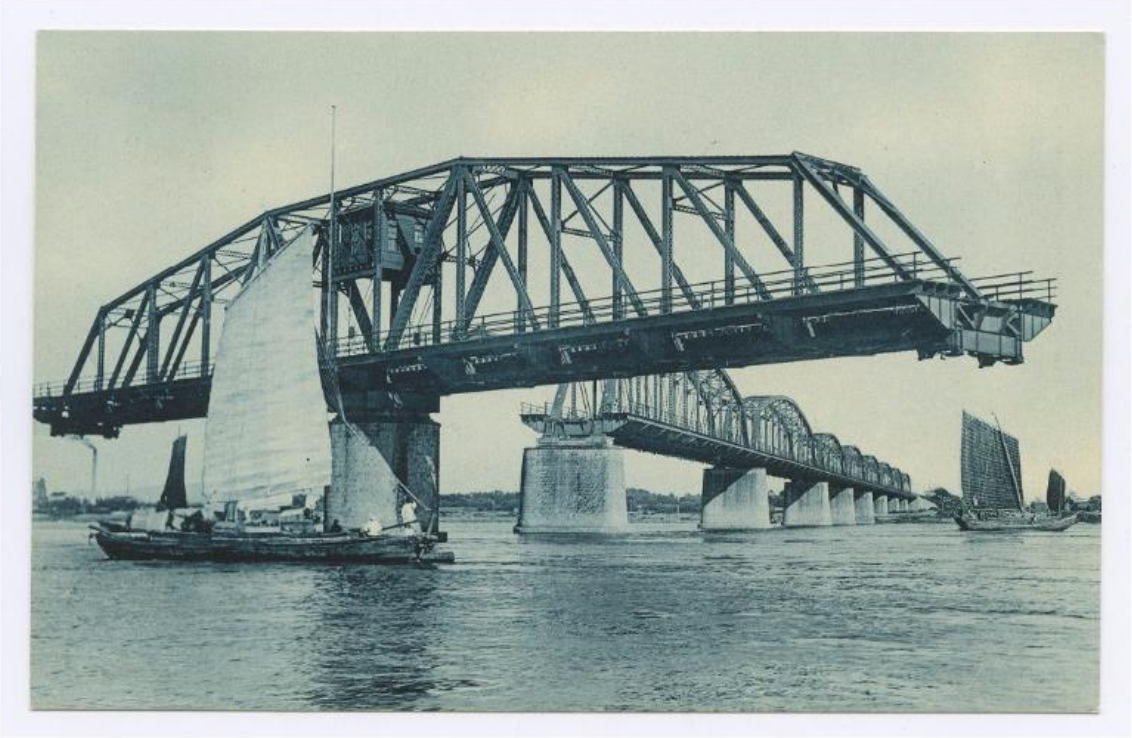
[100] "Ōryokkō tetsudō kakyōsetsu keikaku ni kansuru ken," JACAR, C03027073100 , 526.
[101] For a full, English-language version of the 1903 treaty, see John Van Antwerp MacMurray, ed., *Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894-1919* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1921), 423-432.
[102] First articulated in US Secretary of State John Hay's 1899 "Open Door Note," the "Open Door Policy" referred to the proposal to keep China open on an equal basis to foreign trade rather than dividing the country into separate spheres of foreign interest. For a recent reappraisal of Open Door Policy and its consequences for US-China relations, see Gordon H. Chang, *Fateful Ties: A History of America's Preoccupation with China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 103-109.
[103] This discussion of this controversy is derived from the account provided in John Espy Merrill, "American Official Reactions to the Domestic Policies of Japan in Korea, 1905-1910" (PhD. diss., Stanford University, 1954), 247-259.

rail transport. Japanese officials were initially reluctant to accommodate Anglo-American requests on the issue. American officials criticized Japanese diplomats' capriciousness, quoting them as alternatively stating "on the one hand, that there was not enough upstream traffic to warrant the extra expenditure on a draw-bridge and, on the other, 'that the passage of junks would require it to be open too much of the time.'"[104]

Japanese engineers eventually acquiesced to Anglo-American diplomatic pressure on the bridge issue, modifying existing blueprints in November 1908 to include an opening section (see figure 1.2).[105] American officials cited begrudging Japanese diplomats as believing that "a fixed bridge would not seriously interfere with any major amount of navigation on the river and that they were giving in to a foolish request on the part of the foreigners merely to save an argument."[106] In the terse wording of a contemporary Japanese Cabinet document, the changes were made for "diplomatic considerations" (*gaikō jō no jijō*).[107] This would not be the first time that diplomatic conflict followed in the wake of Yalu bridge construction, as a dispute later broke out between Japan and the Qing government over the bridge and river sovereignty.[108]

[104] Ibid., 252.
[105] *Report*, 4.
[106] Merrill, 253.
[107] Ōryokkō tekkō sekkei ni kansuru ken," November 20, 1908, in *Kōbun zassan: Meiji 41-nen, dai-23 ken*. National Archives of Japan Digital Archive. https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/DAS/meta/listPhoto?KEYWORD=&LANG=eng&BID=F0000000000000009783&ID=M0000000000000246978&TYPE=&NO=.
[108] *Report*, 5.

Figure 1.2: Japanese postcard depicting completed Yalu River railroad bridge with opening section.



Source: Skillman Library at Lafayette College Digital Scholarship Services, East Asia Image Collection. http://digital.lafayette.edu/collections/eastasia#sthash.heVarDWW.dpufhttp://digital.lafayette.edu/collections/eastasia/imperial-postcards/ip0500.

The construction of the Yalu River Bridge began in August 1909. With modified blueprints in hand, Japanese engineers from the Railroad Bureau of the Japanese Protectorate Government in Korea officially supervised the project. But the actual task of gathering materials and mobilizing the thousands of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese laborers that ultimately worked on the bridge fell to a host of contractors. The largest of these contractors was Hazama-gumi, a Japanese civil works construction company heavily involved in the earlier construction of

railroad routes during the Russo-Japanese War.[109] On August 1, 1909, workers began moving materials to a selected site along the Korean side of the river bank. Work on the first set of bridge foundations could not start until August 20 due to seasonal flooding. Once the rain-engorged waters receded, construction commenced on the first six foundation piers (pier here referring to a support for the end of adjacent spans in the context of bridge construction).[110]

Critical to the preparation of these foundations was the use of a new technology for Japanese engineers, pneumatic caissons. Pneumatic caissons were sealed, watertight retaining structures used to penetrate below the Yalu River's muddy riverbed and were entered by means of a pressurized air lock. First pioneered by early nineteenth-century French civil engineers, the use of pneumatic caissons was ubiquitous in many of the great bridge engineering projects of the nineteenth century, including the famous Brooklyn Bridge completed in 1883. The Yalu River bridge project represented only the second time that Japanese engineers had ever used fixed pneumatic caissons for bridge construction. Their first attempt was during the building of a smaller railroad bridge over the Ch'ŏngchŏn River in Korea, an experience which was seen as an important trial run for the subsequent Yalu project.[111] As a result of the novelty of this particular technology, Japanese engineers turned once again, as they had in the case of the design of bridge's steel girders, to foreign expertise. This time the outside assistance came not from a Western source, but from a Chinese contractor named Yang Guodong who oversaw the procurement of laborers to work on these caissons.[112] While pneumatic caisson technology was novel in the context of Japanese civil engineering, Chinese engineering projects had been

[109] For a detailed description of the relationship between the Yalu River bridge construction project and Hazama-gumi, see the company's official history: *Hazamagumi hyakunenshi*, 166-178.
[110] *Report*, 21.
[111] Ibid., 38.
[112] Chōsen Sōtokufu Tetsudōkyoku, *Ōryokkō kyōryō kōji hōkoku* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1912), 61.

employing such technology for over a decade.[113] According to Japanese engineers' reports of Yalu River railroad bridge construction, among the previous examples of pneumatic caisson use they consulted was the 1907-1908 construction of the Liao River railway bridge by the Sino-British Imperial Railways of North China.[114] It was likely in light of this experience that Japanese engineers relied on Yang's help, a presence that subverted Japanese depictions of the bridge as a purely Japanese technical accomplishment.[115]

Bridge construction reports give detailed accounts of the Chinese workers who descended into the airtight caissons and labored under the shifting, muddy banks of the river. As reports related, two "gangs" of 8-20 laborers worked together in one caisson, filling large buckets with mud and sand that was then lifted through an airtight lock back up to the surface of the water. These gangs alternated eight-hour shifts that rotated at 6:00am, 2:00pm and 10:00pm, working an average of twelve excruciating hours a day, shoveling and lifting soil.[116] Once enough soil within the caisson had been excavated, it was then filled with concrete to provide foundational strength for the bridge pier.[117]

A pervasive Orientalism in the language of surviving Japanese reports portrays caisson workers as anthropomorphic machines whose "incredible labor power" needed to be tempered by Japanese overseers' superior methods of management and concern for hygiene.[118] Regarding the

[113] An early, if not the earliest, example of the usage of this technology to construct a railroad bridge in China is the 1894 completion of the Luan River railroad bridge in Hebei. Dou Baogao," Zhongguo xiujian zuizao de tieluqiao: Luan He Daqiao," *Guangminwang*, http://history.gmw.cn/2011-11/10/content_2943669.htm (accessed April 29, 2016).
[114] *Report*, 38. For a brief description of the construction of the Liao River bridge, see "The Liao River Railway Bridge, Manchuria," *Engineering*, January 21, 1910, 71-73.
[115] *Report*, 1.
[116] Ibid., 58.
[117] Ibid., 60.
[118] The phrase "incredible labor power" is borrowed from Annika A. Culver's analysis of Japanese artistic representation of Chinese coolies in the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. See Annika A. Culver, *Glorifying the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 107.

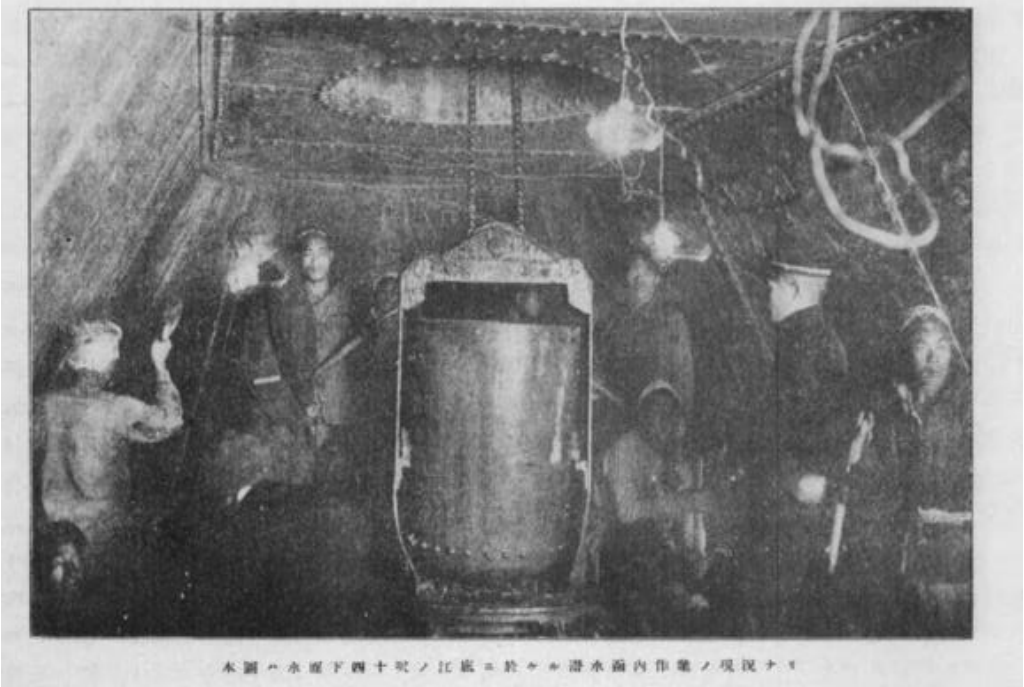
selection of these laborers, Japanese reports stated that they were a "special class" that was "accustomed" to the hard work within the caisson. The head coolie was “carefully selected, as his ability had a great influence on the progress of the work.”[119] A perennial concern for overseers was a condition they called "caisson disease," which resulted from variations in air pressure between the surface of the river and inside the caisson. Typical symptoms included ear pain, difficulty hearing, and increased fatigue.[120] To guard against this, Japanese overseers regulated the types of workers employed in the caissons. They were to be less than twenty-five years old, as their frames were said to be more "elastic" and thus allowed for better blood circulation in the pressurized environment of the caisson. When outbreaks of "caisson disease" still occurred, Japanese overseers blamed them on the workers themselves rather than their working conditions. "Chinese coolies," reports concluded, were "indifferent to the concept of hygiene (*eisei*) and cared little about their health, being the kind of race that refuses to acknowledge anything else in the face of money."[121] More likely, Japanese stipulations for caisson laborers, which included prohibitions against being "weak or fatigued" in addition to twelve-hour work days, incentivized these workers to simply ignore symptoms of discomfort resulting from air pressure until they became serious.[122]

The private sources of Japanese engineers indicate the very real physical dangers that accompanied caisson work (figure 1.3). In an October 26, 1909 diary entry, engineer Koike Shinichi described leading two Japanese customs officials on a tour of the bridge construction site. Koike's curious guests expressed interest in entering one of the caissons to see ongoing foundation work. Upon entering the air lock, however, the visiting officials complained about ear

[119] *Report*, 59.
[120] *Report*, 68.
[121] *Ōryokkō kyōryō kōjihōkoku*, 171.
[122] Ibid., 170.

pain caused by the change in air pressure. Finally, after one of the officials began "turning pale white," their descent into the caisson was quickly abandoned.[123]

Figure 1.3: Photograph from an official bridge construction report. According to the caption: "This picture shows caisson work being conducted forty feet below the surface of the water."



Source: *Ōryokkō kyōryō kōji hōkoku,*118.

The ultimate reward for Chinese laborers engaged in this dangerous work, one which Japanese customs officials were unable to withstand for even a few seconds, was a ten-hour wage of 0.55 yen, only slightly greater than the rate paid for normal unskilled laborers on the construction site.[124] In addition, discipline was enforced by the seven overseers and interpreter who regularly alternated roles in directly supervising the excavation work within the caisson.[125]

[123] Jūgatsu nijūrokunichi [October 26, 1909], Nikki: Jū Meiji 42 nen 7 gatsu 11 nichi itaru onaji 43 nen 12 gatsu 31 nichi. Koike Shinichi shi shiryō, Kanagawa Prefectural Archives.
[124] *Report,* 111. This was the wage given to caisson laborers during the first months of bridge construction from August-December 1909. Afterwards they were paid only .450 yen for ten hours of work. See Ibid.
[125] *Report,* 59.

While only a minority of workers employed on the Yalu bridge construction site shared the experience of working below the river's surface in narrow iron chambers, the back-breaking and poorly remunerated nature of their work can be said to be typical of the majority of laborers on the site.

After the completion of the first six piers in December 1909 by means of pneumatic caissons, the freezing of the river halted bridge construction.[126] Work stoppages for the winter-time "frozen-over period" and summertime flooding were a perennial feature of bridge construction. As engineers later noted, while completion of the Yalu River railroad bridge would technically take slightly over two years, climate allowed for active construction to occur only sixteen months of this period.[127]Although the completed railroad bridge provided year-round transport across the river, its construction was firmly tied to the traditional seasonal cycles of life and activity along the river.

At the same time that winter obstructed bridge construction, diplomatic tensions were once again mounting over Japanese authorities' boundary-crossing intentions. While Anglo-American concerns about the bridge were largely mollified following modifications for a section that swung open to river traffic, Qing authorities expressed vocal concern over what they deemed an obvious threat to their sovereignty over the northern half of the river. As a telegraph sent to the Governor-General of the Three Northeastern Provinces (the late Qing administrative name for Manchuria) expressed, bridge construction was a matter that "sorely affected" Qing border defense, especially as the river had traditionally been a natural "moat" between China and Korea.[128] Soon after construction began in August, the Qing sent a petition to the Japanese

[126] *Report*, 2.
[127] Ibid., 113.
[128] Guo Tingyi et al., *Qing ji Zhong Ri Han guanxi shiliao*, v. 10 (Taibei Shi: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1972), 6997.

consul in Andong, Koike Chōzō, asking that construction be stopped until a formal diplomatic agreement could be reached between the two countries. Qing officials also requested that Japanese authorities immediately remove a survey marker that had been erected on the Chinese side of the Yalu.[129] Japanese officials responded by claiming that bridge construction was permitted under earlier treaties allowing for completion of the Andong-Mukden railroad route. Qing officials were unconvinced, and an initial round of negotiations fell through after both sides were unable to reach an agreement. An editorial in the English-language *Japan Times* castigated Japanese authorities' "unpardonable negligence" for their inability to secure an earlier agreement from Chinese officials, which the newspaper blamed on their "rather optimistic view" that China would accede to bridge construction simply because of obvious trade benefits.[130] Finally, in March 1910, just as the ice over the frozen Yalu was beginning to thaw and break loose, Qing and Japanese diplomats reached an agreement that allowed for bridge construction to continue. As part of the terms specified by the agreement, customs inspections for incoming rail traffic were to be conducted on both the Chinese and Korean sides of the Yalu. In addition, the Qing government was given the option of purchasing the side of the bridge in the Chinese half of the river in fifteen years along with the rest of the Mukden-Andong line.[131]

Construction resumed following the thaw in Sino-Japanese diplomatic tensions and Yalu River ice, though the Yalu's seasonal variations continued to determine the pace of the construction work. Excavation of each of the twelve foundation piers in the middle of the riverbed proceeded until September 1910 and then paused for a few months during the summer flooding season. During this process, materials were moved by hand trolley, junk, and tow boat

[129] Chōsen Sōtokufu Tetsudōkyoku, *Chōsen testudōshi* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Tetsudōkyoku, 1929), 470.
[130] "The Yalu Bridge and China's Protest," *The Japan Times*, January 30, 1910.
[131] "Ōryōkko kakyō ni kansuru nisshin obegaki," JACAR, B13090915800.

to each of the floating "caisson islands" of wood scaffolding erected during the process of foundation excavation.[132] Wintertime brought another cessation in construction, during which preparations began for erection of the large steel girders, imported from the United States, that provided the main framework for the bridge. Girder installation entailed the creation of large wooden frameworks that could be used to hold each 200-foot or 300-foot span in place until construction had advanced enough for it to support itself. The material of choice for these timber frameworks was pine trees harvested from the dense forests of the upper Yalu River Basin.[133] Standing on these timber frameworks, laborers lifted the giant steel beams into place for the bridge girders and riveted them together. Riveting gangs were typically composed of small groups of Japanese and Korean blacksmiths who used a pneumatic riveter also imported from the United States as well as a larger number of temporarily employed Chinese and Korean laborers.[134]

Whether or not the workers laboring on the bridge had any awareness of the larger ecological consequences of their actions, the harvesting of timber from the upper Yalu River Basin to build their frameworks and scaffolds was inextricably linked to the summer floods that threatened to wash away these same temporary structures. The most dramatic of these floods occurred on July 19, 1911, when intense rains caused the river level to rise seventeen feet and swept away one of the steel girders into the river. Although the wooden framework was quickly rebuilt and parts of the steel girder recovered downstream, other steel parts had to be ordered from Japan to rebuild the washed out section.[135] Engineering reports portrayed these floods as unavoidable natural features of the riverine environment, but as observers in the region later

[132] *Report*, 75.
[133] Ibid., 104.
[134] Ibid., 96-97.
[135] Ibid., 113.

noted, they had undoubted anthropogenic characteristics. Deforestation in the upper Yalu River Basin caused increased amounts of eroded soil and rainfall to drain into the river, exacerbating the effect of floods downstream.[136] As the case of flooding demonstrates, Yalu railroad construction and forestry were integrated together in a system of resource extraction that remade the natural ecology of the river basin at the same time bridge construction was reconfiguring the region's social and commercial geographies.

Completion of the Yalu River railroad bridge entailed significant financial costs as well as considerable labor and loss of life. Following the installation of steel girders, the finishing touches on the bridge included the installation of pedestrian pathways on both sides of the bridge and electric traffic signals for trains.[137] Altogether, the project was accomplished significantly under budget−a feat Japanese reports claimed, in self-congratulatory tone, reflected "the excellent plans made by the engineers concerned," although unspoken factors such as cheap colonial labor also played a substantial role in achieving these "savings."[138] When compared to other railroad bridges built in colonial Korea, however, the Yalu project was expensive. Such an observation bears true even when accounting for the Yalu's status as the largest river in the peninsula. For example, the Japanese-built railroad bridge over the Ch'ŏngch'ŏn river stretched a total of 2,582 feet, or 82 percent of the total length of the Yalu bridge, but only cost 52 percent as much at 894,738 yen.[139] Engineers attributed the greater cost of the Yalu bridge to the swinging section, a concession to Anglo-American diplomatic pressure, as well as the pedestrian pathways abutting the bridge, a concession to the concerns of Japanese military strategists.[140] There were

[136] *Andong Xian zhi*, 22.
[137] *Report*, 99-103.
[138] Ibid., 5; *Ōryokkō kyōryō kōji hōkoku*, 4.
[139] *Ōryokkō kyōryō kōji hōkoku*, 293.
[140] Ibid., 295.

also the human costs of bridge construction, including the death of a Japanese laborer who was struck in the head by a falling timber beam while disassembling the framework on one of the steel girders.[141]

Human and financial costs were downplayed in the triumphalism that permeated bridge construction reports. In the words of one overview published and translated into English by the Railway Bureau of the Government-General of Chōsen (Korea), "The successful completion of the bridge, the mission of which is to assist in facilitating communication between Europe and Asia, has amply demonstrated our technical ability to the world." As the publication of this translated report demonstrates, pride over the bridge's completion was proclaimed to a global as well as regional audience. Masking the transnational expertise, technology, and labor that went into bridge construction, this report proudly emphasized the environmental challenges of the river that Japanese engineers had overcome: "great depth, strong tidal flows, terrible floods, and ice—a truly uncommon conjunction of difficulties."[142]

Completion of the bridge was marked with a grandiose "opening ceremony" (*kaitsūshiki*) that brought colonial dignitaries to the frontier railroad town of Sinŭiju on the Korean side of the river. Presiding over the ceremony was Terauchi Masatake, then serving as the first Governor-General of Korea. Terauchi's prominent presence at the ceremony reflected not only his personal investment in this strategic lifeline to Manchuria, but also the Japanese annexation of Korea just one year prior. Bridge building had begun in 1909 under the auspices of the Japanese Protectorate Government in Korea and the ostensible sovereignty of the Korean government. According to one report, the Korean monarch even visited the construction site in January 1910

[141] Ibid., 253.
[142] *Report,* 1.

to supervise ongoing efforts.[143] But the reality even during this period was that the Yalu River railroad bridge was a thoroughly Japanese initiative, and with the pretense of Korean sovereignty over the peninsula obliterated by 1911, Japanese attendees at the event in Sinŭiju were hailing it as a landmark of Japanese imperial engineering. Speeches at the opening ceremony by Terauchi, chief bridge engineer Yamada Kamechi, and chief of the Railway Bureau of the Government-General of Korea Ōya Gondaira were followed by the distribution of prizes to the main contractors and cheers of "banzai" to the Meiji Emperor.[144] Providing additional entertainment to the gathered assemblage were fifty Korean female entertainers or *kisaeng*, specially sent from Seoul by rail for the occasion.[145]

The spanning of the Yalu River with a permanent railroad bridge marked a transformation in how commerce and international sovereignty was negotiated at the Sino-Korean border. With evident pride, engineer Koike Shinichi remarked in his journal how the bridge had completely "dismantled" the old Sino-Korean boundary.[146] But of course, the international border had far from disappeared. Just two days after the opening ceremony, Japanese and Chinese diplomats inked the last of a series of important agreements concerning the transit of goods across the bridge. The treaty allowed for the inspection of goods by customs officials on both sides of the river while reaffirming Chinese sovereignty over the western half of the river.[147]

Chinese and Korean media responses to the bridge's completion reflected ambiguous attitudes towards its potential consequences. On the one hand, the Shanghai-based *Shen Bao*

[143]"Amnokkang chŏlgyo Ibo nyŏn pisa," *Tonga ilbo*, July 15, 1934.
[144] "Amnokkanggyo kaetongsik," *Maeil sinbo*, November 1, 1911.
[145] "Kaet'ongsik yŏhŭng gwa kisaeng," *Maeil sinbo*, November 1, 1911.
[146] Jūiichigatsu ichinichi [November 1, 1911], Jūyō nikki: Meiji 44 nen. In a later diary, Koike Shinichi also describes receiving a commemorative gold watch as part of the completion festivities. Jūiichigatsu yokka [November 4, 1911].
[147] *Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894-1919*, 914-916.

noted that the rail route across the Yalu was of "tremendous importance to transportation between Asia and Europe" and was "destined to become the most frequently used avenue of travel between Japan and Europe."[148] But Chinese writers were also aware that Japanese rail construction represented a potentially dangerous extension of Japanese power into southern Manchuria. As one magazine writer argued earlier in 1909, if the Qing were not careful then the region would become "like Korea."[149] In Korea, where Japanese censorship strictly limited the types of media voices that could be publicly articulated, the Korean-language mouthpiece of the Government General published an editorial on the opening of the Yalu River railroad bridge that expressed amazement at the rapid pace of transportation now allowed between Korea and Europe. Yet it also stated that Koreans had an "anxious relationship" with the Manchurian-Korean railroad line, which could be used either to import materials that would impoverish them as a people or to export natural and man-made products that could enrich them. The newspaper used this fact to call for the development of native industry and the reform of "outdated" Korean habits rather than critique Japanese colonialism, but underlying this critique was the idea that rail construction reinforced powerful systems of capitalistic production that were not entirely within Korea's control.[150]

The Yalu River railroad bridge marked the culmination of repeated Japanese military efforts to strategically sedentarize the variable landscape of the Yalu River. The steel passage across the river became a stable, all-weather means of transport across an environment that otherwise unpredictably swelled and receded, froze and unfroze. Unlike previous military bridges that floated precariously at the water's surface, the railroad bridge transported travelers

[148] "An feng tielu yu Ou Ya jiaotong zhi guanxi," *Shen Bao*, November 2, 1911.
[149] "Jianzhu Yalu Jiang tieqiao zhi guanxi."
[150] "Amnokkang kagyo kaet'ong," *Maeil sinbo*, November 1, 1911.

above the river, offering them an elevated view of the landscape contested by successive ranks of Chinese, Russian, and Japanese engineers, soldiers, and laborers. The bridge became a cornerstone to subsequent Japanese efforts to further control the unruly liquid geography of the Yalu River border. Featured on Japanese postcards, travel books, and photograph collections of Korea and Manchuria, it also became one of the most prominent aesthetic symbols of the Japanese presence along this frontier edge of empire.[151]

Conclusion

Threads of steel, cement, and commerce wove the Yalu firmly into the fabric of Japan's overseas empire. Following the bridge's completion, the number of people and amount of goods that traveled by rail across the Yalu increased exponentially. According to Japanese reports, the value of cross-border trade entering Sinŭiju doubled in two years from 1.89 million yen in 1911 to 4.04 million yen by 1913.[152] Increased trade and traffic along the Korean-Manchurian rail route was fostered and incentivized by imperial policies. A 1913 agreement between the Government-General of Korea and the fledgling Republic of China led to the reduction of customs rates on goods traveling by rail between Korea and Manchuria by nearly one-third.[153] This agreement was vigorously promoted by Governor-General Terauchi, who campaigned for uniting the formal Japanese colony of Korea with Japanese economic interests in Manchuria.[154] In 1910 a single train made an average of 7.4 one-way journeys between Seoul and Sinŭiju each day, but by 1917, there were on average 12.3 daily trips.[155]

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[151] Kate L. McDonald, "The Boundaries of the Interesting: Itineraries, Guidebooks, and Travel in Imperial Japan" (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2011), 39-41.
[152] Shingishū Zeikan, *Shingishū minato no ippan* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Shingishū Zeikan, 1932), 3.
[153] O'Dwyer, 75.
[154] Kanno Naoki, "Chōsen-Manshū hōmen kara mita Terauchi Masatake zō no ichi danmen: Ōryokkō Saiboku Kōshi nado to no kankei o tsūjite," *Higashi Ajia kindaishi* 16 (March 2013): 97-99.
[155] O'Dwyer, 120.

Despite bureaucratic efforts to economically integrate Korea and Manchuria, the Japanese dream of "obliterating" the Yalu border remained little more than an imperial fantasy. Important as the railroad bridge was to regional trade and colonial ambition, it represented only one small channel of imperial control in a continuously shifting river and border ecology. Boat traffic continued to be an important means of transport across the river. Moreover, with the annual freezing over of the river each winter, sledges, carts, and pedestrians could also engage in what colonial police viewed as a subversive "freedom" of movement on the river's surface.[156] Following the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, opponents of the new colonial regime fled en masse to Manchuria, where they made periodic raids on Japanese outposts in Korea. Smuggling also flourished along the 500-mile border. As police reports noted, smugglers mostly avoided the heavily guarded railroad bridge between Andong and Sinŭiju, preferring instead to ply their trade along less monitored parts of the river.[157] As will be analyzed in subsequent chapters, "obliterating" the Yalu border would involve far more than just building a single bridge.

[156] Heian Hokudō Keisatsu Buchō, "Keppyōki keibi ni kansuru ken." Heihoku hi 997 gō. National Archives of Korea.
[157] Nakamura Mika, "Shingishū no mitsuyu," *Keimu ihō,* January 1935, 94-95.

Chapter 2: Defining the Yalu Border

In a preface to the 1910 book *The Yalu River: The Manchurian-Korean Border Situation* (*Ōryokkō: Man-Kan kokkyō jijō*), Japanese Army major Ōsaki Mineto proclaimed that the "waters of the Yalu" were "intimately connected" to the growth of Japanese national power.[1] Ōsaki's statement, published on the eve of Japan's annexation of Korea, clearly revealed the reaches of Imperial Japan's continental ambitions. Yet it was also slightly illusory in its depiction of the border river. Ōsaki and others familiar with the region were keenly aware that the Yalu was more than simply a blue ribbon of water dividing the territorial maps of Manchuria and Korea. Indeed, what the river carried above and below its liquid surface mattered as greatly to border politics as the flowing water itself. Suspended sediment, floating logs, or meandering fish may not seem the worthy subjects of imperial competition. But as aggregate parts of a complex river ecosystem, they all complicated efforts to define new boundaries of Japanese power at the Sino-Korean border.

In the case of the historical Yalu, the accumulation of river sediment in newly-formed islands, the scattering of fallen logs by floods, and the movements of fish populations posed both opportunity and obstacle to the ambitions of competing Japanese and Chinese empires. Around the same time Japanese Army officials were drafting plans for a new iron railroad bridge, Japanese authorities also sought to intervene in long-standing Sino-Korean disputes over Yalu river islands, create new rules for the dredging of scattered timber, and enforce strict limits on the activities of Chinese fishermen. These efforts sought to strengthen Japanese hegemony over the border region following creation of the Korean Protectorate in 1905, which ceded control

[1] Ōsaki Mineto, *Ōryokkō: Man-Kan kokkyō jijō* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1910), 1.

over Korea's foreign relations to Japan. While Japanese intervention in Sino-Korean border disputes was ostensibly done on behalf of the Korean government, in practice these efforts were crucial in demarcating new boundaries of Japanese power.

Yalu border conflicts during the formative Korean Protectorate period (1905-1910) helped define the imperial power in the region for years afterward. The river's sedimentation, ice, floods, and fish were at the forefront of violent battles between Japanese colonizers and members of local frontier society. Reed harvesters, timbermen, fishermen, and other members of local frontier society resisted Japanese attempts to control their livelihoods. An additional complicating factor for border diplomacy was the vigilante activity of Japanese "continental adventurers" (*tairiku rōnin*), who pushed Protectorate officials to greater intervention by forming alliances with local collaborators along the border. The border-crossing social practices of these local communities, punctuated by the seasonally changing flow of the Yalu, made up a complex liquid geography that defied ready manipulation or control. By examining disputes over river islands, flooded timber, and fisheries, this chapter shows that while the ambiguity of the Yalu borderline made it easier for Japanese to insert themselves into the region, it also invited resistance from those who contested these new attempts at imperial boundary-drawing.

The Question of River Island Sovereignty

On July 12, 1907, the Qing Foreign Ministry received an anxious telegraph from Manchurian Viceroy Xu Shichang. The source of Xu's alarm was a series of violent incidents over the harvesting of reeds on two small, uninhabited islands in the lower Yalu River delta collectively named Hwangch'op'yŏng (Chinese: Huangcaoping, literally "field of yellow grass"

黃草坪).[2] Beginning in September 1906, when local Koreans led by an opportunistic Japanese settler forcibly harvested reeds from the islands, and culminating later that year with the Japanese military's use of the islands as a site for "field exercises," Hwangch'op'yŏng had been a site of recurring international tension.[3] Quoting an official in the Chinese border city of Andong, Xu wrote that unless the Yalu border was clearly defined, it would be "impossible" to avoid further conflicts over the marshy, 2-3 square *li* space (figure 2.1).[4]

Figure 2.1- Period map of lower Yalu delta showing position of Hwangch'opyŏng (red circle outline added by author)

Source: *Chōsen tōchi shiryō,* vol. 9*: Enkyō kankei*, 158.

[2] Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Waijiaobu: Chaoxiandang, "Qing cui Ri shi pai Han yuan yu difangguan huitong lu kan Huangcaoping wei tang jiexian," 02-19-007-01-007.
[3] Kim Chŏng-ju, ed. *Chōsen tōchi shiryō*, vol 9*: Enkyō kankei* (hereafter abbreviated as *CTS*) (Tokyo: Kankoku Shiryō Kenkyūjo, 1970-1972), 90.
[4] "Qing cui Ri shi pai Han yuan yu difangguan huitong lu kan Huangcaoping wei tang jiexian." Measurement comes from *CTS*, 70.

The forces that thrust these reed-covered islands to the forefront of Sino-Japanese border politics involved changing conceptions of border sovereignty and the shifting geography of the Yalu River itself. For centuries, diplomatic relations between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea had been predicated on the relative stability of the Yalu River border. This was not the case with the entire Sino-Korean boundary, as demonstrated by the northeastern border at the Tumen River. Decades of Korean migration to the Yanbian or Kando region north of the Tumen by the late nineteenth century had made it a cultural and ethnic, if not political, extension of the Korean peninsula. A 1712 Qing mission failed to clarify the river's exact source, and it was not until 1909, after prolonged negotiations between the Japanese protectorate government and Qing officials, that the northeastern Sino-Korean boundary was clearly defined.[5]

But if historical travelers to the Tumen River Basin found it difficult to determine where exactly Chosŏn Korea ended and the Qing empire began, the Yalu River boundary seemed more clear cut. Diplomatic and tributary missions between the two countries followed a well-worn path across the Yalu from the northern Korean border city of Ŭiju. Travelers along this route frequently commented on the distinct cultural landscapes they encountered upon crossing the river.[6] Such differences were not simply natural occurrences, but rather the result of deliberate isolationist policy between the two countries. Qing law initially prohibited most travel and settlement within a sixty-*li* buffer zone north of the river, and with some modification this policy remained in place for centuries afterwards.[7] Both the Qing and Chosŏn governments proscribed

[5] For a detailed study of Tumen River border demarcation, see Nianshen Song, *Making Borders in Modern East Asia: The Tumen River Demarcation, 1881–1919* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[6] Marion Eggert, "A Borderline Case: Korean Travelers' Views of the Chinese Border (Eighteenth to Nineteenth Century)," in *China and Her Neighbors: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century*, ed. Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997): 66-77.
[7] Nagai Risa, "Taiga no sōshitsu," in *'Manshū' no seiritsu: shinrin no shōjin to kinda ikūkan no keisei*, Yasutomi Ayumu and Fukao Yōko, eds. (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2009), 52.

harsh punishments, including death, for those who disobeyed border policy.[8] Of course, communities on both sides of the river were not content to simply stay put and meekly obey official proclamations. Scholars such as Kwangmin Kim and Seonmin Kim have documented local residents' frequent border crossings to harvest ginseng, furs, and timber—violations that perpetually frustrated Qing and Chosŏn officials.[9] Yet despite such frustrations, the Yalu River continued to be understood as an adequate boundary between the two countries. Moreover, the preservation of a borderland buffer zone, however violated, precluded any need to more precisely define where exactly the border was situated within the river.[10]

Within this context of Qing-Chosŏn border diplomacy, river islands were more troublesome as potential hide-outs for illicit border-crossers than as sites of contested sovereignty. The island of Sindo at the Yalu's mouth, for example, was from an early point inhabited by Koreans and traditionally considered within Korean jurisdiction.[11] At repeated points throughout the Chosŏn dynasty, Chinese migrants traveled to the island to engage in fishing or to harvest timber from prohibited regions elsewhere along the border.[12] In response to repeated Korean entreaties, in 1803 the Qing emperor Jiaqing issued an official proclamation banning Chinese travel to the island. The Qing ruler also promised to punish officials who negligently permitted border crossings to happen.[13] Korean officials would cite this edict in later

[8] Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 225.
[9] Seonmin Kim, "Gingseng and Border Trespassing Between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea," *Late Imperial China* 28, no. 1 (June 2007): 33-61; Kwangmin Kim, "Korean Migration in Nineteenth-Century Manchuria: A Global Theme in Modern Asian History," in *Mobile Subjects: Boundaries and Identities in the Modern Korean Diaspora*, ed. Wen-Hsin Yeh (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2013), 17-37.
[10] As explained by Yamamoto Susumu in his study of Qing-Chosŏn border politics, the primary concern of Qing and Chosŏn officials was less clear-cut border demarcation than the policing of the countries' isolationist frontier. Yamamoto Susumu, "Shindai Ōryōkkō ryūiki no kaihatsu to kokkyō kanri, " *Kyūshū Daigaku tōyōshi ronshū* 39 (April 2011), 147.
[11] *CTS*, 69.
[12] See, for example, *Chŏngjo sillok,* March 6, 1786 (CJ 21.03.06).
[13] "Kokkyō fukin tōsho sasu ni kansuru chōsa: Kōsōhei," National Archives of Korea, CJA0002277, 548-549.

negotiations over Hwangch'opyŏng as evidence of the Qing court recognizing their control over the river and its islands. The original circumstances behind the proclamation, however, demonstrated that the Qing was more interested in preserving peace between the two countries than asserting sovereignty claims to spaces within the Yalu River.

Attitudes towards Yalu river islands quickly changed in the wake of foreign invasion and mass migration to the region during the mid-late nineteenth century. On the Chinese side of the river, the threat of Russian and Japanese invasion caused Qing authorities to reverse their former isolationist policies and actively encourage Han Chinese colonization of the region.[14] As Han settlers from the Shandong peninsula and other parts of northern China poured into the Manchurian frontier, the Qing government officially incorporated the areas north of the Yalu into counties beginning in the 1870s. Meanwhile, imperialist threats from the West and Japan encouraged the ruling Taewŏngun in Korea to station additional troops on Sindo in 1868 as part of a larger bid to improve Chosŏn's coastal and border defenses.[15] In order to fund the increased military presence along the lower Yalu, Chosŏn officials declared the river islands surrounding Sindo to be "public lands" and the property of the Chosŏn government, with taxes and tenant revenue from these islands helping to sustain Chosŏn border defense.

This political redefinition of the Yalu border coincided with portentous changes in the Yalu River channel. Chief among these changes was the emergence of river islands like Hwangch'op'yŏng. As the river gradually eroded its banks and deposited accumulated sediment along the lower Yalu delta, previously submerged sandbars grew in size and became more prominent river islands. The largest and most contested of the newly-formed islands was

[14] For studies on the Han colonization of Manchuria, see James Reardon-Anderson, *Reluctant Pioneers: China's Northward Expansion, 1644-1937* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005).
[15] *CTS*, 91.

Hwangch'op'yŏng. Hwangch'op'yŏng was technically composed of two closely adjoining islands known as So-Hwangch'op'yŏng (Lesser Hwangch'op'yŏng) and Tae-Hwangch'opyŏng (Greater Hwangch'op'yŏng), though official discourse typically grouped the two together under one term.[16] Testimony from local Korean and Chinese residents stated that the islands first began appearing above the river's surface around the 1860s-1870s.[17] Initially they would disappear at high tide, only becoming a fixed feature of the Yalu's visible landscape after significant flooding in 1887-1888. [18]

Hwangch'op'yŏng's emergence just as the Qing and Chosŏn governments revised their frontier policies led to clashes over the islands' sovereignty. At stake in this debate was the question of who would be allowed to control the valuable reeds that grew in abundance on the islands' marshy surface. These reeds, which grew throughout the Yalu estuary, were grouped by contemporaries into two varieties: *tianshuiru* (freshwater reed) and *yanshuiru* (saltwater reed).[19] Harvested in the late fall and winter, their durable bark was valued for use in a number of products—including baskets, shoes, roofing material, fuel, and material for straw mats.[20] In 1871 Chosŏn officials declared Hwangch'op'yŏng's reeds to be state property, charging license fees to Korean harvesters in order to fund new military installations on Sindo. But in 1883 Qing officials protested, claiming that Koreans were illegally crossing the border by harvesting reeds on the islands.[21]

In 1896, the Chinese Governor of Dongbiandao ("Eastern Circuit"—a political unit encompassing the region along the northern bank of the Yalu) authorized a group of businessmen

[16] "Kokkyō fukin tōsho sasu ni kansuru chōsa," 545-546.
[17] "Ōryokkō ishū no shozoku ni kansuru keisō ikken: Dai-ikkan," JACAR (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records) B03041224100, 595-596.
[18] "Kokkyō fukin tōsho sasu ni kansuru chōsa," 545.
[19] Antō Shōkō Kōkai, *Antōshō no iseki* (Antō: Antō Shōkō Kōkai, 1942), 8.
[20] Ibid, 1.
[21] "Kōsōhei gaikyō," unpublished manuscript, University of California, Berkeley library.

led by local Chinese resident Wang Choushan to plant and harvest reeds on Hwangch'op'yŏng. In exchange, Wang was to pay an annual tax of 1200 *diao* on his island holdings.[22] Chinese reed cultivators working on the islands encountered the fierce opposition of local Koreans, however, and the former sandbar once again became the subject of diplomatic debate. In negotiations with the Qing, Korean officials claimed that the islands fell under the jurisdiction of Sindo, pointing to the 1803 imperial proclamation preventing illicit border crossings on Sindo as evidence of Korea's longstanding control over Hwangch'op'yŏng and other islands in the Yalu delta. Qing diplomats countered these claims by arguing that Wang had been granted legal authorization to collect the islands' reeds. Qing officials also cited a 1779 Qing gazetteer, the *Shengjing tongzhi*, which stated that Korea's territory began to the south and east of the Yalu, suggesting that the river itself, including its islands, fell completely under Chinese jurisdiction.[23]

Attempts to conclusively resolve the Hwangch'op'yŏng issue were postponed by the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. In November 1904, only months after this imperial contest between Russia and Japan brought bloodshed directly to the Yalu's banks, the Japanese Ambassador to the Qing urged the Qing and Chosŏn governments to delay discussion of ongoing territorial issues until after the war's end.[24] Korean officials attempted to forge ahead with their attempts to resolve the issue, even going as far as to send an unsuccessful diplomatic mission to the lower Yalu in May 1905. But the sovereignty question remained unresolved until after the war's end, when Japanese officials decided to intervene in the long-standing dispute for the benefit of their own expanding empire.[25]

[22] "Kokkyō fukin tōsho sasu ni kansuru chōsa," 546.
[23] *CTS*, 20; "Kōsōhei gaikyō."
[24] *CTS*, 67.
[25] "Kokkyō fukin tōsho sasu ni kansuru chōsa," 552.

The actions of Korean collaborators provided a convenient pretext for Japan's initial involvement in the Hwangch'op'yŏng conflict. Whereas many in Korea saw the signing of the December 1905 Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty as a damning loss of national sovereignty, others, especially along Korea's northern border region, saw a chance to enlist Japanese military power for their own profit.[26] In May 1906, An Kyŏng-ha, a Korean resident of the border town of Yongamp'o, received permission to harvest reeds on Hwangch'op'yŏng from the Korean *Nongsangongbu* (Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry). Collaborating with An were two Japanese settlers, Mine Hachirō and Kitamura Keisuke, who together organized the *Chŏksik Hyŏphui* (Colonization association). [27] Between September 24-25, the Chŏksik Hyŏphui contracted with a local Japanese businessmen, Kondō Seikei, to lead a group of Korean laborers to Hwangch'op'yŏng to harvest reeds growing on the islands. This action fueled protests from Qing authorities, who claimed that Kondō had forcibly stolen the reeds from their original Chinese cultivators. The initial response by Japanese authorities was to mitigate potential conflict by suppressing the Chŏksik Hyŏphui's claims and putting an end to Kondō's unilateral reed harvest.[28] But the attitudes of Japanese authorities eventually shifted as they saw a chance to intercede to Japan's benefit in this long-simmering border dispute.

On November 15, 1906, Kwan Chung-hyŏn, the pro-Japanese head of the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry which originally authorized the Chŏksik Hyŏphui's claims, raised the issue of Hwangch'op'yŏng in a high-level meeting between Korean Cabinet ministers and the Japanese Resident-General, Itō Hirobumi. Kwan explained that these "small islands in

[26] For more on the politics of collaboration in Protectorate-era Korea, see Yumi Moon, *Populist Collaborators: The Ilchinhoe and the Japanese Colonization of Korea, 1896-1910* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).
[27] "Kokkyō fukin tōsho sasu ni kansuru chōsa," 552.
[28] Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Waijiaobu: Chaoxiandang, "Yalu Jiang xiayou zhang tan Huangcaoping wei cao bei Jinteng qiang yun," 02-19-006-01-027.

the middle of the Yalu River" were originally Korean territory, but due to Korea's "weakness" the islands had been occupied by the Qing. Kwan then asked for Itō's help intervening in the dispute. Itō responded affirmatively by requesting that Kwan send him materials buttressing Korea's claim to the islands. He also promised to have the Japanese consul to Andong, Okabe Saburō, appointed to an additional position as Resident of Sinŭiju that would allow him to negotiate on Korea's behalf in the dispute. [29]

Itō's decision to authorize Japanese intervention in the Hwangch'op'yŏng dispute reflected a growing consensus among Japanese authorities that these small, marshy islands held the key to solidifying Japanese influence in the region. Just as coterminous plans for an iron railroad bridge sought to project Japanese power across the Yalu into Manchuria, officials also realized that control of the river itself was vital to Japan's territorial ambitions. Between May-August 1906 Narita Sei, a Japanese military officer stationed in Andong, conducted a thorough survey of the lower Yalu delta that was later sent to Tsuruhara Sadakichi, General Affairs Secretary of the Residency General in Seoul. [30] Included in Narita's report was a history of the Hwangch'op'yŏng territorial dispute.[31] In an addendum to his report, Narita elucidated the difficulties facing attempts to resolve the border island issue while simultaneously offering a new interpretation of Hwangch'op'yŏng's significance beyond reed cultivation. Narita noted that Hwangch'op'yŏng's close proximity to the Chinese bank split the river in such a way that all river traffic was compelled to travel on the east side of the islands. If the islands could successfully be brought

[29] *Tōkanfu bunsho*, volume 10, section 6, no. 12, "Kankoku shisei kaizen ni kansuru kyōgikai dai jūni kaigi roku." This and all other references to the *Tōkanfu bunsho*, hereafter abbreviated as TBS, are from the National Institute of Korean History online database: http://db.history.go.kr/. Titles of individual entries are romanizations of the Korean titles assigned by the compilers, except in cases where a Japanese title is present, in which case a romanization of the Japanese is used.
[30] *CTS*, 29.
[31] For a detailed discussion of implications of Narita's 1906 survey of the lower Yalu, see O Pyŏng-han, "1906-nyŏn Ilbongun Andonghyŏn kunjŏngsŏ ŭi hagu chosa sŏnggyŏk kwa ŭiŭi," *Hanguk kŭnhyŏndaesa yŏngu* 80 (March 2017): 69-95.

under Korean control, then a significant portion of the lower Yalu River shipping route would also fall within the control of Korea, and by extension, officials in the Japanese Protectorate government. "The issue of Hwangch'op'yŏng sovereignty may seem unimportant," Narita explained, "but as it is connected to the question of Korea's potential possession of the lower Yalu river route, I believe that it must be quickly resolved."[32] Just a month later, Narita's conclusions were echoed in a telegraph from Andong consul Okabe to Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Tadasu that was also sent to Resident-General Itō. Although Hwangch'op'yŏng seemed to be "little more than an uninhabited, reed-covered sandbank," Okabe similarly argued it held the key to controlling the lower Yalu river route. With an eye towards future trade opportunities and the extension of Japanese imperial hegemony along the river, Okabe stated: "I believe these small islands bear immense value to our empire."[33]

With the upper echelons of the Protectorate Government united behind the need to intervene in the Hwangch'op'yŏng dispute, the question now became one of appropriate tactics. The bulk of this decision-making fell to Andong consul Okabe, the person initially suggested by Itō as a suitable intermediary in the dispute.[34] In a November 16, 1906 telegraph to General Affairs Secretary Tsuruhara Sadakichi, Okabe offered his assessment of the Hwangch'op'yŏng situation and the most appropriate means for Japanese authorities to respond. According to Okabe, Chinese "precedent" to ownership of the islands' reeds, though "regrettable," had to be recognized as stronger than pre-existing Korean claims to the islands. Okabe thus suggested that the sovereignty issue be momentarily set aside while he tried to purchase the rights to the islands' reeds from Chinese interest-holders. If local Chinese could first be convinced to

[32] *CTS*, 71-72.
[33] TBS 3:2:185, "Hwangchŏp'yŏng chugwŏn munje e kwanhan kŏn."
[34] "Kankoku shisei kaizen ni kansuru kyōgikai."

relinquish their claim to the islands' reeds, Okabe reasoned, then the bargaining position of Korea (and by extension Japan) in future sovereignty disputes would be considerably strengthened.[35]

Okabe's initial attempts to convince Chinese stakeholders to sell their claims to Hwangch'op'yŏng's reeds met with little success.[36] By December, Okabe identified a joint-stock company with thirty-four local stockholders as main claimants to the islands' reeds. Realizing that it would be difficult to convince each of the stockholders to sell their shares on an individual basis, Okabe focused his efforts on persuading the company's general manager, Sun Jingtang. Sun, a local landowner who had already invested thousands of yen into the islands' reeds, rebuffed Okabe's offer, declaring that not only was Hwangch'op'yŏng Chinese territory, but Koreans and Japanese had no business interfering in the islands' management.[37] In Okabe's eyes, Sun's obstinance was not just as an act of individual resistance but a direct response to pressure from the Qing state. In a January 28, 1907 telegraph to Tsuruhara, Okabe blamed the unwillingness of Sun and other stockholders to sell their claim to the islands' reeds on Chinese authorities' determination to prevail in the ongoing sovereignty dispute.[38]

Unable to achieve his desired resolution of the Hwangch'op'yŏng issue through more peaceful means, Okabe turned instead to violence. The timing of this decision coincided with the arrival of winter, the prime harvesting season for reeds and a time when the normally uninhabited islands would be traversed by hundreds of reed gatherers. The coming of winter also meant Hwangch'op'yŏng's increased accessibility to the Korean and Chinese sides of the now-frozen Yalu River, as well as a ready supply of local labor during what was otherwise an

[35] TBS 3:2:183, "Yongamp'o taean Hwangchŏp'yŏng wi yech'wigwŏn e kwanhan kŏn."
[36] *CTS*, 90.
[37] Ibid.
[38] TBS 3:2:185, "Hwangchŏp'yŏng kaltae yech'wigwŏn maesu kŏn."

agricultural slack-season. With conditions ripe for confrontation, Okabe recruited the help of local Japanese to forcibly drive Chinese reed harvesters from the islands. When these Japanese arrived at Hwangch'op'yŏng at the head of a group of nearly a hundred Korean laborers, however, they were soon repelled by a determined force of approximately three hundred scythe-wielding Chinese reed harvesters.[39]

Rebuffed in his initial attempt to forcibly settle the Hwangch'op'yŏng question, Okabe tried to once again drive out Chinese reed harvesters by recruiting the help of local Japanese settlers Nonaka Yūichi and Shibata Rinjirō. Nonaka and Shibata had previous experience organizing armed bandits to fight against Russian forces during the Russo-Japanese War.[40] Shibata's additional membership in the Genyōsha league of violent ultra-nationalists marked them both as "continental adventurers" (*tairiku rōnin*), a term applied to a loosely associated group of Japanese Pan-Asianists, entrepreneurs, spies, and agent provocateurs who variously supported both revolutionary movements in Asia and the advance of Japanese colonialism on the continent. Eiko Siniawer groups such adventurers among the "violence specialists" who she argued formed a "deeply rooted element of modern Japanese political life," especially during the Meiji period as the use of formal and informal violence went hand in hand with Japan's imperial expansion in Korea and Manchuria.[41] As Okabe's recruitment of Shibata and Nonaka shows, such "violence specialists" were also a volatile component of Sino-Japanese competition over the Yalu River Basin. Invading Hwangch'op'yŏng with a combined force of approximately one hundred Korean laborers at their command, Shibata and Nonaka tried to forcibly turn the tide of the ongoing dispute. Chinese reed harvesters proved once again successful at repelling such

[39] *CTS*, 90.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Eiko Maruko Siniawer, *Ruffians, Yakuza, Nationalists: The Violent Politics of Modern Japan, 1860–1960* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 1. For her discussion of *tairiku rōnin,* see pages 53-57.

advances, however. The Japanese-Korean force met the fierce resistance of Chinese reed harvesters who had armed themselves this time with firearms as well as scythes.[42]

The successful Chinese repulsion of two waves of militia violence led Okabe to make a final appeal to the Japanese military. On surreptitious orders from Okabe, troops stationed in the Japanese concession in Andong decided to engage in outdoor "field exercises" on Hwangch'op'yŏng. In reality, the "field exercises" were little more than an excuse to occupy the islands by force. With two autocannons in tow, the garrison destroyed eighteen Chinese reed harvesters' huts, allowing Korean harvesters to follow and access the islands' reeds in their wake. When part of this garrison traveled from the islands to the home of Sun Jintang, however, he calmly rebuffed the force of Japanese threat. According to a later report by Okabe, Sun asked the assembled troops why they had come, and that "if they had come for the islands, I am already an old man of sixty...even if I die, I will not let the islands fall into the hands of another."[43]

When successive violent raids failed to convince Sun and other stakeholders to relinquish their claims to the islands, Okabe at last resorted to imprisoning Sun and meeting with the other reed cultivators on a one-by-one basis. After a violent argument erupted between Sun and local Japanese and Koreans claiming access to the islands' reeds, Okabe used this as a pretense to pressure local Chinese officials to imprison Sun. With Sun behind bars, Okabe unsuccessfully tried to convince the other stake-holders to sell their claims to the islands' reeds.[44] In the meantime, Nonaka and Shibata purchased thirty junks, which they used to collect reeds gathered by the Chinese laborers and move them to the Korean side of the river.[45]

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[42] *CTS*, 90.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 91.
[45] "Kokkyō fukin tōsho sasu ni kansuru chōsa," 557.

The forceful actions of Okabe and his Korean and Japanese collaborators caused understandable alarm for Chinese authorities and diplomats. Telegrams from officials in Manchuria to the Qing Foreign Ministry identified the ill-defined Sino-Korean border in particular as the source of the repeated violence. In a July 12, 1907 telegram, Andong officials argued that the threat of violence would be unending until the island sovereignty question was settled and the Yalu border definitively defined.[46] Yet Japanese authorities were reluctant to agree to Qing demands to clearly define the border until they could shore up their own claims to Hwangch'opyŏng. In a May 1907 telegram to Seoul, Japanese ambassador to the Qing Abe Moritarō suggested delaying negotiations until after local Japanese authorities settled greater numbers of Koreans on the islands or undertook other means to strengthen their bargaining position.[47]

As the thorny question of border demarcation remained unresolved, local Qing officials began to press for more immediate, practical compromises on the issue of Hwangch'op'yŏng's lucrative reed harvest. On April 23, 1907, representatives from the Andong Governor and Japanese consul in Andong met on Hwangch'op'yŏng and came to an agreement to split the remaining proceeds from the reed harvest between officially-designated Korean and Qing representatives.[48] With further conflict averted, the Andong Governor raised the possibility of continued joint administration of the islands in another meeting with Japanese officials nearly six months later on October 17.[49]

[46] "Qing cui Ri shi pai Han yuan yu difangguan huitong lu kan Huangcaoping wei tang jiexian."
[47] TBS 10:4:13, "Kōsōhei-tō mondai ni kansuru ken."
[48] Yi Chusŏn, "Ōryōkkō chūshū o meguru kanshin keisō to teikoku Nihon: Kōsōhei no jirei o chūshin ni," *Nihon rekishi* (763) (December 2011): 62.
[49] TBS 4:7:174,"Hwangch'opyŏng ro suhwak kongdong kwalli ha e hanbun yŏngyu cheŭi kŏn."

In his detailed Japanese-language study of the Hwangch'op'yŏng dispute, Yi Chusŏn points to such compromises to express doubt as to whether Qing authorities regarded the question of Hwangch'op'yŏng sovereignty as ultimately important to their strategic interests.[50] Analysis of Qing correspondence, however, suggests that the proposal for joint administration was born more out of pragmatic calculation than indifference. In their own correspondence local officials recognized that the island dispute was a "major international issue" (*wei guoji yi da wenti*).[51] But at the same time, Qing administrators expressed greater concern over protecting the livelihood of local reed harvesters threatened by Japanese and Korean violence than enforcing Chinese territorial claims.[52] The Qing state, which would collapse only two years later and give way to the short-lived Republic of China, was also beset with a number of external and internal crises that necessitated uncomfortable compromises with Japanese power. Rather than reading the Qing approach to Hwangch'op'yŏng as evidence of disengagement, it might be more accurate to describe it a calculated concession in the face of a powerful rival.

In a telegram relating the details of this meeting, Okabe described how he "agreed on the surface" with the Andong Governor's call for joint administration of Hwangch'op'yŏng.[53] In the meantime, however, Okabe continued to plot means by which the (ostensibly) Korean claim to Hwangch'op'yŏng could be strengthened. One step was to find new local collaborators. An Kyŏng-ha's Chŏksik Hyŏphui helped initiate Japanese intervention in the island dispute, but they were deemed less reliable collaborators after they expressed a willingness to negotiate with Chinese stakeholders.[54] Okabe instead turned to representatives from the Ilchinhoe, a pro-

[50] Yi Chusŏn, 64
[51] "Fengtian xing Sheng gongshu wei Andong tianshuigou wei tang bei Ri-ren zhanju chi Dongbiandao du chi ban shi," Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC010-01-032347.
[52]"Qing cui Ri shi pai Han yuan yu difangguan huitong lu kan Huangcaoping wei tang jiexian."
[53] "Hwangch'opyŏng ro suhwak kongdong kwalli ha e hanbun yŏngyu cheŭi kŏn."
[54] "Hwangchŏp'yŏng kaltae yech'wigwŏn maesu kŏn."

Japanese Korean reformist organization with strong ties to the Sino-Korean border region. Although traditional assessments of the Ilchinhoe stress their collusion with Japanese power and active support for colonization, recent revisionist scholarship by Yumi Moon also highlights their populist agenda, which included campaigns to resist taxation and organize new tenant relationships on "public lands."[55] Hwangch'op'yŏng's status as public land formerly claimed by the Korean royal family likely helped attract the Ilchinhoe's interest in this dispute. In addition, Yi Chusŏn speculates that the appointment of Ilchinhoe head Song Pyŏng-jun as Minister of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry also influenced the choice of Ilchinhoe as Okabe's local collaborators.[56]

In July 1907, an agreement on Hwangch'op'yŏng reed harvesting was drafted between Ilchinhoe representative Kim Chin-tae and Japanese continental adventurer Shibata Rinjirō.[57] This contract called for the joint investment of 12,000 yen into the settlement of Hwangch'op'yŏng by Koreans who would engage in rice agriculture, fishing, and the collection of stray floating timber from logging sites upstream. This plan outlined not only the Korean colonization of the islands to help settle the long-standing sovereignty question, but also the ecological transformation of Hwangch'op'yŏng through the construction of irrigation ditches, levees and other infrastructure necessary to accommodate rice cultivation.[58] Ilchinhoe resentment at the unequal terms of the agreement, however, which specified that 8,000 of the 12,000 yen in starting capital would be provided by Ilchinhoe members while designating Shibata the primary contract-holder, led its signers to later renegotiate the terms.[59] In a November 12 Seoul-based

[55] For more on the Ilchinhoe's anti-tax campaigns, see Moon, 194-214.
[56] Yi Chu-sŏn, 64.
[57] *CTS*, 136-137.
[58] Ibid.
[59] *CTS*, 163.

conference between Okabe, Shibata, Ilchinhoe chief Kim Yong-ku and Ilchinhoe advisor Uchida Ryōhei, a more equal contract was agreed upon by the two sides, though the absence of any Chinese negotiators from the bargaining table remained salient.[60]

The fate of Hwangch'op'yŏng colonization would be settled in an unexpected way, however, by a diplomatic about-face that followed Okabe's temporary departure from his post as Andong consul. Soon after his meeting with the Ilchinhoe in Seoul, Okabe left Korea to briefly return to Japan. Further planning for Hwangch'op'yŏng fell in the interim to the Andong vice-consul and other Japanese officials in Andong and Sinŭiju, who together attempted a new break-through in negotiations for the islands' control.[61] Their plan called for neither the involvement of the Ilchinhoe nor the violent occupation of the islands. Neither did it involve the joint administration suggested by the Qing, as the Japanese goal of achieving hegemony over the Yalu river route remained constant. Instead, these officials sought to recognize the Qing desire for access to the islands' valuable reeds while extracting an implicit recognition of Korean sovereignty by having the primary Chinese stakeholders pay an annual tax to local Korean authorities.[62] At a March 1908 meeting between Chinese claimants and Japanese officials, an agreement was reached to have Chinese stakeholders pay the Korean Protectorate government an annual sum of 2,000 yen in exchange for ten years of uninhibited access to the islands' reeds.[63] This decision was further reaffirmed in a July meeting with the Governor of Andong, who agreed that joint administration of the islands was no longer necessary under the terms of this new agreement.[64]

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[60] Ibid, 165-167.
[61] Yi Chu-sŏn, 64-65.
[62] *CTS*, 173-179.
[63] TBS 5:12:23, "Hwangch'opyŏng sojae nojŏn kyŏngyŏnggwan munje haegyŏl e kwanhan kŏn."
[64] "Kokkyō fukin tōsho sasu ni kansuru chōsa," 560.

In exchange for temporarily forfeiting Korean claims to the islands' reeds, Japanese authorities secured implicit Qing recognition of the Korean claim to sovereignty over Hwangch'op'yŏng. Thus ended several decades of tense and violent disputes over the pair of river islands since their first appearance in the sandy Yalu delta—at least for a moment. Following the Japanese colonization of Korea in 1910 and the fall of the Qing Empire in 1912, the issue of Hwangch'op'yŏng sovereignty would periodically resurface as a point of tension in Sino-Japanese relations. Heightening these tensions was the steady narrowing of the river channel separating the islands from the Chinese bank through increased sedimentation. In 1926, Japanese officials in the region even reported a "scheme" by local Chinese to artificially fill in the remaining gap with stones, thus conjoining the islands to the Chinese side of the river and negating Japanese claims to the territory.[65] In response to these and other concerns, colonial officials in Korea began exercising more direct control over the harvesting of the island's reeds in 1928. The Hwangch'op'yŏng question would remain in flux until 1962, when any and all doubts about sovereignty were officially resolved by a treaty between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and People's Republic of China that officially recognized Korean control of the islands—a diplomatic victory for local Korean interests that must be seen at least partially as a legacy of Japan's imperial intervention.[66]

Studies of Sino-Korean border politics under Japanese colonial rule typically focus on the Tumen River border and the question of Kando, drawing attention to the 1909 agreement that saw Japanese officials forfeiting Korean claims to the lands north of the Tumen in exchange for railroad concessions linking Korea to Manchuria. Discussion of this event in Korean nationalist

[65] "Ōryokkō Ni-Shi kakkai mondai ikken fu tosenjō mondai, tōsho mondai, JACAR, B03041228700.
[66] For an excellent summary of the Hwangch'op'yŏng dispute from its origins in the late Qing to its Cold War-era resolution, see Chŏng An-ki, "20 segi ch'oyŏp Hwangch'op'y ŏng ŭi yŏngt'o punjaengsa yŏngu," *Yŏngt'o haeyang yŏngu*.13 (June 2017, 64-109).

circles especially underscores the Korean loss of territorial claims to Kando as part of a larger loss of sovereignty under Japanese rule.[67] But as the case of Hwangch'op'yŏng suggests, Protectorate officials' strategic calculus meant pressing some territorial claims along the Sino-Korean border just as they were forfeiting others.

Of course, intervention in the Hwangch'op'yŏng dispute, while ostensibly done in the name of the Korean government, was actually done to assert Japanese control over the Yalu river trade route. But controlling the border meant asserting power over more than just river islands. The same year that Protectorate authorities were trying to resolve the Hwangch'op'yŏng dispute, other border conflicts were erupting along the Yalu's upper reaches. The main protagonists here were a multiethnic cast of timber-cutters at the heart of the early twentieth-century Yalu River Basin's most profitable industry. As was the case with marshy river islands, a potent combination of the Yalu's dynamic geography and the fractious social ecology of the Sino-Korean borderland contributed to this border dispute. This time however, the item of competition was not sandy river islands, but fallen logs thrown into disarray by the Yalu's frequent summertime floods.

Timber and the Yalu Boundary

The extensive forests of the upper Yalu River Basin comprised a rich and hotly contested prize in the imperialist politics of early twentieth-century Northeast Asia. The expansive stands of pine, fir, and other trees that awed travelers to the region were a direct legacy of centuries of Qing isolationist policy that sought to restrict migration to the region.[68] But while early modern empire-building had encouraged the forests' growth, modern imperial regimes' insatiable appetite

[67] Song, *Making Borders in Modern East Asia*, 267.
[68] Kanno Naoki, "Ōryokkō Saiboku Kōshi to Nihon no Manshū shinshutsu—shinrin shigen o meguru taigai kankei no hensen," *Kokushigaku* 172 (August 2000): 47.

for natural resources led to their rapid exploitation. Conflicts over Russian Yalu timber concessions were one of the contributing causes of the Russo-Japanese War, and no sooner had Japanese forces driven Russian troops from the region then they began asserting their own monopoly over local timber-felling.[69]

At the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese leadership moved quickly to solidify control over the Yalu's forests. Through a combination of brute force and bribery, Japanese Army officials created a "military-use timber garrison" (Gunyō mokuzai shō) in Andong to supply timber for railroad construction and other ongoing military projects in southern Manchuria. In addition to these local measures, top Japanese leaders also undertook heavy-handed negotiations with their Qing counterparts in Beijing. In a private October 23 telegram to Japanese Foreign Minister Komura Jutarō, Army General Terauchi Masatake urged officials to quickly negotiate a permanent Japanese presence along the Chinese side of the Yalu. This should be done, Terauchi argued, both for military "defense" and to provide valuable capital for future economic projects in southern Manchuria.[70]

Terauchi's ambitions were fulfilled in the form of a 1905 Sino-Japanese agreement regarding Japan's extraterritorial privileges in Manchuria. Negotiated in the wake of Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War (and Chinese officials' inability to say otherwise), article ten of this agreement outlined the creation of a joint Sino-Japanese corporation that would control forests within sixty *li* of the Yalu's Chinese riverbank.[71] Reports in the Japanese press heralded the region's sylvan riches, proclaiming the "untouched forests on the banks of the Yalu" a new

[69] Ōryokkō Saiboku Kōshi, ed., *Ōryokkō ringyō shi* (Antō [Dandong]: Ōryokkō Saiboku Kōshi, 1919), 46.
[70] Naoki, 54-55.
[71] "Memorandum on: The Yalu River Timber Concession," Box 115, "China: Yalu River Timber Concession, Memo On, 1921," Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck papers, 1900-1966, Hoover Institution Archives.

source of economic wealth and power for Japan's growing presence in Asia.[72] Japanese military forces continued to oversee the timber industry on the Manchurian side of the river until May 14, 1908, when another Sino-Japanese treaty led to the creation of the quasi-governmental Yalu River Timber Company (C: Yalu jiang caimu gongsi J: Ōryokkō Saiboku Kōshi). This treaty stipulated that the company's starting capital would be 3,000,000 yen, supplied equally by the Chinese and Japanese governments. Five percent of the company's profits would be paid as a direct royalty to the Qing government, while the company's leadership would ostensibly be in the hands of the local Qing Governor and two directors, one Japanese and the other Chinese. [73] On paper, such provisions allowed for the equal input of both sides in the company's management. In reality, however, the Yalu River Timber Company remained a largely Japanese-managed operation run by government-selected directors under the oversight of the Japanese consul in Andong.[74]

Japanese colonial authorities made similar arrangements to control forests on the Korean side of the Yalu. In 1907 the Protectorate Government created a system of Forest Management Bureaus (J: eirinshō; K: yŏnglimch'ang). These constituted a network of field offices and processing stations created to oversee the direct management of National Forestlands (kokuyūrin). [75] As was the case with the Yalu River Timber Company, the Forest Management Bureaus were presented as a collaborative transnational operation: in this case between the Japanese Protectorate leadership and the Korean government, which retained nominal control over domestic affairs. In reality, both the Forest Management Bureau and the Yalu River Timber

[72] David Fedman, "The Saw and the Seed: Japanese Forestry in Colonial Korea, 1895-1945" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2015), 110.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Naoki, 53-56.
[75] Fedman, 182.

Company were a means of strenghtening Japan's timber hegemony over the Sino-Korean borderland.

Running like a pulsing artery through the sylvan heart of the Sino-Korean borderland, the Yalu fulfilled a critical role in the local timber industry as a means of transport. During peak timber-harvesting season in the winter, timber-cutters would transport fallen logs by sledge over the frozen earth and stockpile them near the banks of the Yalu and its various tributaries. With the thawing of the river in the spring, these logs would then be tied up into large rafts and floated downstream to the major trading ports of Andong and Sinŭiju at the mouth of the river (see figure 2.2). But while the Yalu's role in the local timber industry was indispensable, the river's friendliness to this commerce was also climatically contingent. If the ice on the river melted too early or if too little rain fell during the spring, water levels would be too low to allow the floating of log rafts, thus crippling the timber trade for that year. Conversely, an overabundance of rain, which was common during the summer, had the threatening potential of breaking apart and scattering already assembled timber rafts and log stockpiles.[76] The seasonal precarity of the Yalu's lumber economy is captured in the words of a contemporary British trade report: "an unlooked-for thaw in the early spring, a dry, early summer, with a consequent insufficient supply of water in the upper reaches to float the rafts down, and floods in July or August are all varying unknown quantities with which to be reckoned in any lumber district; but the Yalu seems particularly well endowed in this respect."[77] There was also the problem of treacherous rapids. Despite Japanese attempts to remove boulders, build levees, and otherwise improve the river

[76] Nishida Mataji and Nakamuta Gōrō, *Ōryokkō ryūiku shinrin sagyō chōsa fukumeisho* (Tokyo: Nōshōmushō Sanrinkyoku, 1905), 25.
[77] Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, *Decennial Reports on the Trade, Industries etc of the Ports Open to Foreign Commerce and on the Condition and Development of the Treaty Port Provinces: 1902-1911, Volume 1: Northern and Yangtze Ports* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1913), 103.

course, timber rafters still appealed to the "water god" for help traversing the river's turbulent waters.[78]

Figure 2.2- A lone raftsman pilots a timber raft down the upper Yalu.

Source: Ishimaru Ginichi, *Kokkyō shashin daikan* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Ōkō Nippōsha, 1929).

In addition to environmental obstacles, Japanese forest imperialism also encountered the fierce resistance of migrant Chinese timbermen, known locally as *muba*. Since the late nineteenth, century migrant seasonal laborers from the Shandong Peninsula, most of them single men, provided the back-breaking labor necessary to harvest the upper Yalu's rich timber reserves. This work was typically done by crews of five to eight timbermen working under the direction of a foreman (*batou*).[79] The border-crossing proclivities of *muba* and their hard-edged resistance to outside control led to recurrent confrontations between timbermen and border officials. During the late nineteenth century, Chinese lumberers frequently crossed over the Yalu

[78] Ishimaru Ginichi, *Kokkyō shashin daikan* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Ōkō Nippōsha, 1929).
[79] Nishida, , 24; "Ōryokkō Saiboku Kōshi gyōmu kansa hōkokusho," JACAR, B09040887600, 11.

border to collect timber scattered by floods or even harvest trees from Korean forest stands. This incited the anger of Korean officials, who labeled the offenders *mokpi* or "timber bandits."[80] Japanese officials also adopted the term "timber bandit" to castigate Chinese woodcutters for their hard-edged resistance to the Japanese monopoly over the Yalu timber industry.[81] Starting in 1906, when the logging monopoly was still under the control of the "military-use timber garrison", a coalition of Chinese timbercutters began launching armed attacks against Japanese timber raftsmen. After one high-profile attack in May 1906, when a group of *muba* allegedly fired upon a Japanese raftsman and seized his raft, Japanese military officials responded by demanding a hefty reparation of 25,000 yen from Qing administrators and assurances that logging operations would be protected from future attack. After trying to defend the attack as a mistaken salvo against Korean timber smugglers, Qing officials reluctantly supplied the sum demanded. [82] This incident would hardly be the last case of *muba* violence, however, against Japanese timber raftsmen.

The determined resistance of Chinese timber-fellers, the disruptive hydrology of the Yalu River, and the sylvan ambitions of imperial Japan collided with particularly explosive consequences around the issue of scattered timber. In April 1909 the newly-created Yalu River Timber Company inked an agreement with the Korean Protectorate's Forest Management Bureaus (*eirinsho*) regarding the disposal of fallen logs that were scattered by the river's frequent floods. The new agreement sought to strengthen Japanese control over the regional logging industry by dictating that all scattered timber that floated over to the Korean side of the river

[80] Yumi Moon, "From Periphery to a Transnational Frontier: Popular Movements in the Northwestern Provinces, 1896-1904" in Sun Joo Kim, ed., *The Northern Region of Korea: History, Identity, and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 204-205.
[81] "Mokuhi jiken songai baishō," JACAR, C03020446700.
[82] Ibid.

should be collected by the Forest Management Bureau, while scattered wood on the Chinese side of the river belonged to the Yalu River Timber Company.[83] While the new regulations ostensibly allowed for independent timbermen to reclaim fallen logs that had brands or other clear marks of ownership once they had been gathered, the process was more bureaucratic than the previously laissez-faire system of fallen log reclamation. In addition, the routine levying of fees for the cost of organizing these logs and transporting them to designated holding sites before they could be reclaimed further engendered lumber cutters' resentment. [84] As a result, the question of collecting logs scattered by floods became a touchstone for mounting muba resistance to the Japanese lumber monopoly.

Springtime flooding in late May 1909 provided the final catalyst for this latent rage to detonate. On May 31, 1909, two Chinese timbermen crossed the Yalu River near Chunggangjin to collect timber that had been scattered by heavy rains only a few days earlier.[85] They were promptly met by Japanese military police—a prominent fixture of the border region since the Japanese dissolution of the Korean Army two years earlier in 1907. Reports differ on the events that followed. Japanese military police officials claimed that one of the two timber-cutters was arrested but escaped soon after, while Chinese officials claimed that the arrested lumberer, Wang Bingtai, was tortured and held indefinitely by Japanese authorities.[86]

On June 10, nearly two weeks after Wang's arrest, a group of Chinese timber-cutters attacked and kidnapped six Japanese timbermen employed by the Forest Management Bureau. The Japanese lumberers, contract employees from traditional Japanese logging regions like Kiso

[83] Government-General of Chosen, *The Third Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Korea (1909-1910)* (Seoul: Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1910), 12.
[84] Guojia tushuguan gujiguan, ed., *Guojia tushuguan guancang Qingdai minguo diaocha baogao congkan*, v.30 (Beijing: Beijing Yanshan chubanshe, 2007), 460; Naoki, 58.
[85] TBS 10:1:77, "Mokuha Ō Heitai no ken."
[86] Ibid; "Ikadanorifu sōnan dai-kyuu kai hōkoku."

and Yoshino, were traveling downstream on rafts made from scattered logs that had floated over to the Korean side of the river when they were attacked by Chinese timbermen armed with guns and pole knives.[87] After tense exchanges between Japanese and Chinese authorities, the governor of the Chinese border county of Linjiang helped negotiate the release of the Japanese timbermen several days after their initial capture. On June 13, Chinese timber-cutters also destroyed a branch office of the Yalu River Timber Company at Mao'ershan. By targeting both the Japanese timbermen employed by the Forest Management Bureau and the Yalu River Timber Company, Chinese timbermen demonstrated their resentment at these twin entities of Japanese lumber hegemony along the Yalu.

The outbreak of violence along the upper Yalu provoked accusatory exchanges between Chinese and Japanese officials as well as finger-pointing within the Japanese Protectorate bureaucracy. Chinese officials identified the violence as a predictable consequence of long-standing *muba* resentment towards Japanese timber imperialism. A July 5 telegram from the Viceroy of the Three Eastern Provinces to the Qing Foreign Ministry explained that the capture of five Japanese lumberjacks was "all due" to the Forest Management Bureau's charging of fees to dredge and collect Chinese-felled timber as well as their arrest of Wang.[88] Such violence was not entirely unanticipated. As early as January 1909, an American diplomat in Andong quoted a Chinese Yalu River Timber Company official who predicted "serious disturbances" and "armed resistance" from Chinese timbermen with the arrival of the rafting season.[89] This idea of official foreknowledge became a sticking point for Japanese officials, some of whom claimed that local

[87] "Ōryokkō eirinsho kankei zassan Dai-ichi ken bunkatsu 3," JACAR, B04011183700. Paek Ŭl-sŏn, "Kankoku kokuyūrin ni okeru basshutsu, ikurin jigyō no tenkai katei ni kansuru shiteki kenkyū," *Hokkaidō Daigaku Nōgakubu enshūrin kenkyū hōkoku* 47, No. 1 (1990): 14.
[88] Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Waijiaobu, "Yalu Jiang Ri ren she jing qing yan jie Ri shi zhuan ling chetui bing jiang Wang Bingtai shihui," 02-30-002-01-009.
[89] "Memorandum on: The Yalu River Timber Concession,"

Qing police and county officials were encouraging, if not directly instigating, the *muba* violence for their own benefit.[90]

Among Japanese officials in Korea, internal reports chided the Forest Management Bureau and Yalu Timber Company for their overly-aggressive pursuit of scattered timber. A June 14, 1909 report by one Japanese police official further identified the Forest Management Bureau's practice of drilling holes in scattered logs as another source of *muba* resentment, a criticism also raised by Chinese authorities. Japanese raftsmen drilled these holes in order to tie logs together and float them downstream to designated collection sites. But in the eyes of Chinese *muba*, the allegedly careless drilling of these holes irrevocably destroyed the resale value of this timber.[91] A July 7 Japanese military police report called for a return to "previous custom" that would allow for the unregulated collection of scattered timber as a means of quelling *muba* violence, a step that if followed would have threatened forestry officials' Yalu timber monopoly.[92] In the meantime, large numbers of Japanese military police and troops were deployed to the upper Yalu in the name of protecting Japanese interests—a move that amplified pre-existing tensions along the border.[93]

Japanese forestry officials themselves vehemently denied their own culpability in the outbreak of violence. A June 26 telegram from Forest Management Bureau chief Tokio Zenzaburō to Japanese Resident General Sone Arasuke defended the actions of his subordinates by explaining that modifications to scattered logs were necessary in order to float them downstream, and that Chinese timbermen for their part had stolen over 15,000 *shaku* (roughly

[90] TBS 10:20:48 "Amnokkang sangnyu esŏ ŭi Ch'ŏngin p'okhaeng e taehan chosa pogo kŏn"; TBS 10:1:80 "Shinkoku mokuhi bōryoku tenmatsu."
[91] TBS 10:20:45, "Ikadanorifu sōnan dai-kyuu kai hōkoku."
[92] TBS 6:1:471, "Shinkoku hatō mokuha nado bōryoku jiken no genin ni tsuite."
[93] "Yalu Jiang Riren she jing qing yan jie Ri shi zhuan ling chetui bing jiang Wang Bingtai shihui,"

equivalent to 450,000 feet) of scattered timber from the Forest Management Bureau over the course of the previous year. Furthermore, Tokio argued that there was "no specific evidence" to support the Chinese account linking Wang 's detention by Japanese authorities to the outbreak of violence, claiming that this was merely a "pretense" invented by Chinese officials to conceal their own negligence.[94]

Chinese timber-cutters' dissatisfaction and further large-scale flooding ignited another wave of violence along the Yalu later that summer. On July 31, 1909, the Seoul-based *Hwangsŏng sinmun* (Capital Gazette) reported successive days of heavy rain along the Sino-Korean border region.[95] Around two weeks later on August 15, a small group of Chinese lumberjacks fired upon Korean timbermen near Cho'san County and stole their rafts. Two days afterwards, Chinese lumberers on a raft bearing the insignia of the *Mushang gonsuo*, a *muba* union, captured a raft and tools belonging to a Japanese Forest Management Bureau technician and a fellow Korean employee. Confrontation between the parties involved resulted in heavy injuries, with the Forest Management Bureau claiming that both men had been cruelly bound and beaten after they tried to reclaim the raft.[96]

As repeated confrontations occurred between timbermen along the Yalu border, sensationalized reporting on the ongoing violence appeared in media outlets throughout China, Japan, and Korea. Such coverage reflected the ethnic biases of these media organs, with the Chinese press offering a more sympathetic portrayal of the Chinese timbermen's plight while Japanese media and censored Korean newspapers stressed their uncontrolled violence. A June 20, 1909 article in the Shanghai-based *Shen Bao*, for example, reported the hardships and

[94] "Ikadanorifu sōnan dai-kyuu kai hōkoku."
[95] "Amnokkang hongsu sokpo," *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, July 31, 1909.
[96] "Shinkoku mokuhi bōryoku tenmatsu."

poverty *muba* were enduring under the Yalu River Timber Company monopoly as reasons for their protest. [97] In contrast, an August 22 article in the *Japan Times* noted that Chinese timbermen were "acting in an outrageous manner," while a report published two days earlier in the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* described how the "extreme violence" of timbermen was "causing widespread fear" among the local population.[98] Reports of "riots" along the Yalu even reached the pages of the London-based *Times*, demonstrating the extent to which Yalu timber politics reverberated on a larger stage.[99]

The divergent attitudes displayed in these media reports closely mirrored those held by Japanese and Chinese officials in negotiations over scattered logs. A July 14, 1909 telegram from Viceroy Xu to the Qing Foreign Ministry emphasized the need to protect the livelihoods of Chinese timbermen while resisting the "bullying" of the Forest Management Bureau.[100] Meanwhile, in an August 25 piece of correspondence with the Resident General, Andong consul Okabe stated disparagingly that the *muba* were little more than "timber bandits" threatening the peace and stability of the border region.[101]

Noticeably absent from high-level discussions and media reports were the voices of Chinese timbermen themselves. When *muba* were discussed, it was often in collective terms that emphasized their large numbers (nearly 20,000 according to more sensationalized reports) and volatility rather than their individual role in the complex politics of the Yalu River border.[102] Illiterate and impoverished, these timber-fellers used collective violence and protest as one of the

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[97] "Yalu Jiang linye weilai zhi fengchao," *Shen Bao* , June 20, 1909.
[98] "Disturbance on the Yalu," *The Japan Times*, August 22, 1909. ; "Mokpa p'oktong," *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, August 20, 1909.
[99] "The Questions Between China And Japan," *Times*, August 3, 1909.
[100] Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Waijiaobu, "Yalu Jiang Riben yinglinchang laoqu piao mu chun yong qiangying shouduan yi chou shanhou fangfa," 02-30-002-01-009.
[101] TBS 10:1:60, "Ōryokkō hyōryūboku seiri ni kanshi Tohendō dōtai to shōgi no ken."
[102] "Mokuha yizen fuon," *Asahi shinbun*, September 1, 1909; "Timber-feller's Disturbance," *Japan Times*, August 26, 1909

limited range of "weapons of the weak" available to them in the face of Japanese timber imperialism.[103]

The obstinate resistance of Chinese timbermen eventually compelled Japanese officials to renegotiate with their Chinese counterparts on the timber raft issue. The first set of negotiations took place after the earliest wave of June attacks. A July 6 agreement between the Japanese consul at Andong, the Governor of Dongbiandao and the Yalu Timber Company put a one-year moratorium on the Yalu Timber Company's monopoly over lumber sales on the Chinese side of the river. While this addressed ongoing resentment over the Yalu Timber Company's actions, noticeably absent from this agreement was any discussion of the flooded timber question, which had wider, cross-border dimensions.[104] In the wake of additional outbreaks of violence in August 1909, the same group of officials and representatives from the Yalu Timber Company concluded an additional agreement with the Korean Forest Management Bureau on the collection of scattered logs on August 29, 1909. This agreement clarified the procedures by which individual Chinese timbermen could reclaim logs dredged by the Yalu River Timber Company or Forest Management Bureau. Japanese officials also agreed to hire more Chinese timbermen to float timber rafts down the river. [105]

While new negotiations over Yalu flooded timber only temporarily unseated Japanese control over the Yalu timber industry, they demonstrated that the defining of new borders of Japanese power in the Sino-Korean borderland would not go uncontested. Just as had been the case with Hwangch'op'yŏng negotiations, Japanese imperial officials compromised their initial ambitions in the face of fierce local resistance. The question of scattered timber would remain a

[103] Phrase borrowed from James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985).
[104] Naoki, 58-59.
[105] "Ōryokkō hyōryūboku seiri ni kanshi Tohendō dōtai to shōgi no ken."; *Annual Report*, 12.

source of cross-border tension in subsequent years, as seasonal flooding and the resistance of Chinese timbermen continued to move the liquid geography of the Yalu River to the forefront of Sino-Japanese diplomacy.

But Japanese attempts to assert regional hegemony meant grappling with more than just those things that sat at or above on the Yalu's surface, like floating logs or river island reeds. As the case of contests over Yalu fishing rights show, it also meant engaging with the Yalu's underwater environment, yet another complicating factor in the politics of the border.

Disputes over Yalu Fishing Rights

Like the river island and floating timber disputes, fishing was another area where the ambiguity of the border posed both opportunity and obstacle to emergent Japanese power. Although local human populations have been harvesting fish from this river for millennia, Yalu fisheries did not attract significant controversy until the modern period. Earlier Korean officials did not regard Chinese fishermen as major threats to Korean border sovereignty. But after the creation of a Japanese protectorate over Korea in 1905, the aggressive policing of Japanese and Korean fishing rights in the Yalu became another method for Japan to challenge China's sovereignty along the Sino-Korean border.

While imperial Japan's pursuit of marine fisheries has received greater scholarly attention, the case of the Yalu shows that Japan's piscatorial colonialism also extended into the riparian arteries of its growing continental empire.[106] Sino-Japanese conflicts over the policing of Yalu fisheries focused primarily on an eight *li* (roughly thirty kilometer) stretch of the Yalu near

[106] For two essays on the expansion of Japan's marine fisheries, see William Tsutsui,"The Pelagic Empire: Reconsidering Japanese Expansion" and Micah Muscolino "Fisheries Build Up on the Nation: Marine Environmental Encounters between Japan and China," in Ian Jared Miller et al., ed., *Japan at Nature's Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), 21-38 and 56-72.

the river's mouth at the Yellow Sea. [107] Although the first comprehensive fish survey of the Yalu River conducted in 1938 documented some 74 species, the aquatic populations of greatest commercial significance had long been two species that thrived in the saline waters of this lower Yalu estuary, shrimp and icefish (Salangidae).[108] Icefish in particular were considered a notable "specialty product" of the river.[109] Icefish are thin, translucent fish native to freshwater environments throughout East and Southeast Asia. Yalu icefish were valued for their size, which was larger than in many other parts of Northeast Asia. They were also harvested in greatest numbers during the early spring when they would travel upstream to spawn, which lent them the moniker "cherry blossom icefish."[110] During this time fishermen from all over Korea's northwestern provinces would congregate in the river, with period accounts reporting that the fishing boats were "as thick as a forest."[111]

In 1908, Japanese protectorate officials pressed the Korean government to accept their proposal for a new "Korea Fisheries Law" that would go into effect on April 1, 1909. One of the primary provisions of the new law was an extensive licensing system that would prevent unauthorized fishing within Korean territorial waters. Done in the name of "protecting" Korean fishery resources, the new law in practice accelerated exploitation of Korean fisheries by making it easier for ambitious Japanese entrepreneurs to gain licensed access to Korean fisheries. The provisions against unlicensed fishing also empowered Japanese colonial officials to more

[107] Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha Chōsaka, *Manshū no suisangyō* (Dairen [Dalian]: Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha, 1931), 57.
[108] Chŏng Mungi, *Amnokkang ŏbo*, 1940. Manuscript, Yonsei University Library.
[109] Chōsen Sōtokufu Suisan Shikenjō, *Ōryokkō no sakana* (Fuzan [Pusan]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Suisan Shikenjō, 1940), 2.
[110] Ibid., 3.
[111] "Chŏsonjŏk myŏngmul in baekŏ ŏro kaesi," *Maeil sinbo*, April 13, 1933.

aggressively guard against "poaching" by third-party entities, which in the Yalu border region meant Chinese fishermen in particular.[112]

Competing Chinese and Japanese claims to jurisdiction over the Yalu icefish harvest led to increased diplomatic tensions soon after the proclamation of the new fisheries law. In May 1909, Japanese officials in Andong and Sinŭiju pursued the case of six Korean fishermen whom they claimed had been "illegally" extorted by Chinese fisheries officials.[113] According to police interviews, the six fishermen were harvesting icefish from the lower Yalu when they were approached by two Chinese in ordinary dress identifying themselves as representatives of the Andong branch of the Fengtian Fisheries Bureau. The Chinese officials then asked for the fishermen to pay taxes for their right to fish in the river. While some of the fishermen agreed to pay taxes on the spot, others refused. Those who refused were then taken to the Andong Fisheries Bureau branch and compelled to pay the tax by force. To the Japanese colonial officials monitoring this case, the actions of the Chinese officials were an egregious offense against Korean fishermen operating in Korean territorial waters. To the Qing, however, the tax collection was an acceptable administrative step in an ambiguous border zone. When interrogated by Japanese police about the rationale behind his actions, the accused Chinese fisheries official replied that he had simply been told to collect taxes on "all Korean fishermen" operating along the Yalu, admitting that there was no clear precedent for defined Chinese or Korean fishing districts within the river.[114]

The differing responses to this issue revealed a fundamental conflict in Qing and Japanese sovereignty claims over the liquid space of the Yalu estuary, with both sides wanting to

[112] Chang Su-ho, *Chosŏn sidae mal Ilbon ŭi ŏŏp ch'imt'alsa: kaehang esŏ 1910-yŏn kkaji Ilbon ŭi ŏŏp ch'imt'al e kwanhan yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Susan Kyŏngje Yŏn'guwŏn, 2011), 101-110.
[113] "Ōryokkō gyogyō kankei zassan," JACAR, B11091940400.
[114] Ibid.

control access to the river's fisheries. The advantage in this dispute belonged to the Japanese, who proved willing to back up their claims with greater force. As part of a larger push to enforce the 1908 Korean Fisheries Law, the Japanese government deployed naval torpedo ships to Korean coastal waters to intimidate Chinese fishermen.[115] They also conducted extensive surveys into Chinese "poaching" in the lower Yalu and nearby coastal islands.[116]

Chinese observers, including Qing officials, responded to these new developments with alarm. Newspapers and magazines as far away as Shanghai began publishing articles highlighting the Japanese seizure of the Yalu fisheries and the corresponding loss of Chinese "sovereignty" (*zhuquan*).[117] Chinese officials in Manchuria launched an investigation into the matter after one such article in the *Beijing ribao* (Beijing daily) claimed that Korean and Japanese fishermen on the Yalu now outnumbered their Chinese counterparts seven to three. In a telegraph to the Qing Foreign Ministry, members of the survey team described how it was simply impossible for Chinese fishermen working along the border to avoid straying into Korean waters (which were nebulously defined to begin with) and being harassed by Japanese colonial officials. Furthermore, Protectorate officials' vigilance in limiting access to parts of the river near the Korean bank meant that even Chinese fishermen who had previously operated with the full consent of Korean officials were now cut off from prior sources of income. These included one Mr. Zhao, a Chinese shrimp harvester who operated in Korean coastal waters near the Yalu and had long paid rents on his boats. Japanese warships were also traveling to the region and

[115] TBS 10:19:35,"Kantei haken ni kansuru ken."
[116] TBS 10:19:34, "Pyŏngan nambuk-to yŏnan ŭi mirŏsŏn sanghwang pogo yich'ŏp."
[117] "Yalu Jiang Huaren yuye shili zhi shuwen," *Huashang lianhe bao* 6 (1909), 3; "Yalu Jiang yuye zhi shiquan Fengtian," *Shen Bao*, May 9, 1909.

disturbing Chinese fishermen, all of which led the author of the telegraph to express dissatisfaction at the "extremely unfair" (*shu bu ping*) nature of border relations.[118]

Yet just as fish beneath the river's surface moved irrespective of national boundaries, fishermen also continued to exploit gaps in colonial border governance. Even after the official Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, the issue of "poaching" in the Yalu fisheries remained a difficult one for regimes on both sides of the river. A May 7, 1916 article in the *Maeil sinbo*, a Korean-language mouthpiece of the colonial government, related how the Sinŭiju police station was intensifying its efforts to crack down on rising numbers of "poachers" during the springtime icefish harvest. Meanwhile, Chinese government reports continued to complain about Japanese and Korean violation of Chinese sovereignty in the Yalu estuary.[119] The patrolling of the porous border proved a continued challenge for regional authorities, one that extended to fishing and other fronts.

Conclusion-The Ambiguous Yalu Border

For Qing officials, disputes over river islands, timber felling, and fishing highlighted the need to bolster their border sovereignty against increasingly assertive Japanese imperialism. Doing so meant not only careful diplomatic negotiation, but also asserting a more forceful, militarized Chinese presence all along the border. During his term as Governor-General of the Three Eastern Provinces (1907-1909), Qing reformer Xu Shichang dispatched a survey party led by Fu Qiang, a Qing official and graduate of Japan's Hosei University, to investigate the ongoing situation along the Yalu border. As part of several recommendations to emerge from this survey's

[118] Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, *Qing ji Zhong Ri Han guanxi shiliao*, v. 10 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1972, 6976.
[119] *Yalu Jiang hua jie an cankao wenjian*

report, expedition member Zhang Lixue suggested creating a waterfront police force to regularly patrol the Yalu and the Hun River, one of the Yalu's main tributaries. In articulating the reasons for his proposal, Zhang cited the need to protect Chinese "rights" to the Yalu amidst Japan's territorial rapacity. [120] Zhang and other Chinese officials were also concerned about violence in Korea between Japanese officials and Korean "righteous army" (*uibyŏng*) insurgents spilling across the border into China.[121] In 1909 the Yalu-Hun River Waterfront Police Agency was officially inaugurated—its patrol boats a reminder that the Yalu was still more than simply a Japanese waterway.[122]

Yet despite Qing bureaucratic innovations, an important obstacle to Chinese efforts to shore up Yalu sovereignty remained in the unclear nature of the border itself. With the conclusion of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty on August 22, 1910, the Yalu and neighboring Tumen River became a formal border of the Japanese Empire. In terms of border administration, however, the treaty did little more than formalize a colonial boundary that had been constructed over the preceding Korean Protectorate period (1905-1910). As this chapter has shown, Protectorate officials inserted themselves into long-standing territorial disputes over river islands, attempted to monopolize the regional timber industry, and claimed exclusive rights to the Yalu's fish populations. While ostensibly done in the name of "Korea," the real intention was to enforce Japanese political and economic control over this frontier borderland. The completion of the Yalu railroad bridge in 1911, covered in chapter one, provided a sedentary corridor of transit in what previously was an off-limits buffer zone between China and Korea. Yet this attempt to control the liquid geography of the Yalu border had clear limits. Japanese officials

[120] *Dongsansheng zhenglue*, 1, 29-32.
[121] Li Tingyu, *Changbai si zhong* (Taibei: Tai lian guo feng chubanshe, 1969), 438.
[122] *Andong xian zhi*, 96.

encountered serious challenges from local populations, officials on the Chinese side of the border, internal disagreements, and the Yalu River itself, which complicated border-drawing efforts by flooding, depositing sediment, and providing a home to boundary-crossing fish populations. The result was a series of violent confrontations and compromises that showed the ultimately contingent nature of Japanese governance along this imperial frontier.

The continually ambiguous nature of the Yalu borderline came with its own complex consequences for Japanese colonial rule. When engineers from the Navy Ministry of Japan began a new cartographic survey of the river's mouth in 1921, customs officers in the Chinese border city of Andong successfully lobbied to make the survey a joint Sino-Japanese effort.[123] Building on this diplomatic victory, Chinese authorities appealed to Japanese diplomats in December of the same year to fix the Sino-Korean border. In their written correspondence, officials in the Chinese government expressed their hope that clearly defining the border would help them regain economic and political benefits they had previously lost.[124] These included rights to river islands ("Every time reeds grow on a river island...Koreans move there and Japanese use this as a pretense to occupy it," one telegraph complained) as well as control over fish and floating timber.[125] Unsurprisingly, the Chinese suggestion was a controversial one among Japanese authorities. While officials from the Government-General of Korea expressed some willingness to comply with Chinese demands, these suggestions met the strident opposition of the Japanese Naval Ministry, who sternly opposed the idea on the grounds that it might threaten Japanese

[123] "Ri ren celiang Yalu Jiang jiaoshe," *Dongfang zazhi*, June 16, 1921.
[124] *Yalu Jiang hua jie an cankao wenjian*, manuscript, Seoul National University Library.
[125] *Yalu Jiang hua jie an cankao wenjian*

efforts to patrol the border against "rebellious Koreans" (*futei senjin*), a term reserved for Korean opponents of Japanese colonial rule.[126]

The ambiguity of the Yalu border ultimately presented both opportunity and obstacle to imperial rule. The lack of a clearly defined borderline allowed Japanese officials to claim essential sovereignty over the entire river and for colonial police and military forces to traverse its length with administrative ease. But as the fears over "rebellious Koreans" also demonstrate, the border remained porous and easily penetrable to forces that challenged imperial rule. Moving from the question of defining the border to policing it, the following chapter documents how Japanese colonial officials attempted to patrol the Yalu's 500-mile length against political opponents of the regime following their 1910 annexation of Korea. As we will see, border policing required an intimate knowledge of the Yalu's seasonally changing landscape.

[126] "Ōryokkō suidō kokkyō kakutei mondai" in "Ōryokkō kōkōken mondai kankei ikken," *Gaimushō kiroku* F16010, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Chapter 3: Policing the Yalu Border Through the Seasons

The freezing Yalu River provoked an annual crisis for officials on the Chinese-Korean border. To some Japanese border officials wintertime surveillance constituted the "real work of border patrol," especially as the former "moat" around Korea became a pathway for anti-Japanese rebels.[1] Guerrilla leader and later president of North Korea Kim Il-sung recounted Japanese colonial police so desperate to block guerrillas' advances that they "dragged people out to noisily break the ice on the Yalu every night."[2] Exaggerated as Kim's story may be, administrators' anxieties about the frozen Yalu were real. For their part, Chinese border officials worried that the frozen river "posed no obstacle" to Korean independence activists and, more menacingly, border-trespassing Japanese police.[3] Seasonal anxieties on both sides of the border extended beyond winter. As one Japanese official explained, "Spring, summer, fall, and winter, there is not a single day where one can stretch out and rest."[4]

This chapter examines Yalu border security through an explicitly seasonal lens. The personal accounts of border officials, anti-Japanese rebels, ordinary border residents, as well as other contemporary media, show that the thawing, flooding, and freezing of the river critically shaped attempts to police the border's liquid geography—a combination of human and non-human agents, including the Yalu River itself, that resisted centralized attempts to control the region. In addition, seasonal anxieties shifted in response to major events such as the March First Korean Independence Movement (1919) and the Manchurian Incident (1931). By grafting a

[1] *Kokkyō keibi,* 47; "Keppyōki keibi ni kansuru ken," National Archives of Korea, CJA0002478.
[2] Kim Il-sŏng. *Segi wa tŏburŏ*, vol. 6 (Pyongyang: Chosŏn Nodongdang Ch'ulp'ansa, 1995), 5.
[3] "Liaoning Sheng zhengfu wei Ji'an xian cheng bao xia fang buzhi qing xing shi," Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC010-01-018956.
[4] Kosako Shintarō, *Kokkyō no hana* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Shingishū Insatsu Kabushiki Kaisha, 1936), 1.

cyclical seasonal pattern on this more conventional linear chronology, I present a new model of periodization for reconstructing the contingencies of life in this contested border zone.

The following narrative begins by highlighting how border agents responded to the arrival of spring and the thawing of the frozen river, a period known locally as the "thawing season" (K: haebinggi, C: jiedongqi, J: kaihyōki). Spring promised initial relief to border officials as large chunks of liberated ice impeded border crossings. Yet the opening of the river to waterborne traffic soon necessitated 24-hour surveillance of the numerous timber rafts, "propeller boats," and other vessels that plied their way up and down the river's course. The flowing river proved an unreliable barrier against armed political dissidents, traditional Manchurian "horse bandits" (K: majŏk, C: mazei; J: bazoku), and others who chipped away at competing Sino-Japanese claims to the border region. By summertime, heavy monsoonal rains transformed the river into a treacherous torrent, while at the same time the abundant foliage of the "flourishing season" (K: pŏnmugi, C: fanmaoqi, J: hanmoki) provided extensive cover for anti-Japanese forces on the river's banks. This section on the spring-time thawing season and summer-time flourishing season focuses primarily on events and sources from the 1910s-1920s. Although border attacks occurred all throughout the year, it was the spring through fall months, especially summer, that became identified by border officials as the time of greatest seasonal threat during this period.

These seasonal dynamics changed, however, as a result of the September 18, 1931 Manchurian Incident and Japanese occupation of Northeast China. Events after 1931 led to border officials to place the greatest emphasis on the dangers of the "icebound season" (K: kyŏlbinggi C: jiedongqi J: keppyōki), when the frozen Yalu afforded a readily accessible pathway for reinvigorated anti-Japanese resistance. The early-mid 1930s saw multiple border

attacks by guerrillas and retaliatory "bandit suppression" campaigns by officials during this season. It also witnessed an outpouring of magazine articles, commemorative albums, and other media highlighting official anxieties about the icy Yalu corridor.

Japan's colonization of the Yalu border between Northeast China and Korea was part of a much larger process of nineteenth- and twentieth-century empires expanding their boundaries to increasingly remote and ecologically challenging regions. From the rain forests of Southeast Asia to the slopes of the Himalayas, imperial states were circumscribed by local climates in their capacity to project power and solidify colonial boundaries. Yet prior studies of these frontiers have paid little attention to how patterns of seasonal change significantly shaped imperial governance.[5] Sensitivity to the seasonality of border security allows us to glimpse what Fernand Braudel described as the "noiseless" "underlying currents" of human history, localizing human actors in a landscape rich with the visceral experience of changing weather and seasons and not just a sterile vacuum wherein political and economic dramas unfold.[6] Any attempt to understand Yalu border politics must begin with its seasonal patterns of water and ice.

Spring

Springtime was typically a time of relief for border officials as warming temperatures caused the Yalu's thick ice to dissipate. The exact timing of the "thawing period" varied by year and by region. In Yongamp'o, located at the mouth of the river near the Yellow Sea, the ice

[5] Most studies in the emerging field of climate history have focused on long-term patterns. See, for example, Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For an informative discussion of climatic discourse, science, and policy in a British imperial context, see, Georgina Endfield and Sam Randalls, "Climate, Empire, and Environment," in *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire: New Views on Environmental History*, ed. James Beattie, Edward Melillo, and Emily O'Gorman (London : Bloomsbury Academic, 2015): 21-43.

[6] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York: Harper Touchbooks, 1975), 21.

began melting as early as mid-March, whereas upstream it might not thaw until late April.[7] As described by Japanese policeman Yoshimura Yoshizō, the joys of the "blissful spring" (*ureshii haru*) could only be known by people who lived in the region.[8] As another border policeman noted, the most cheerful time for border patrol was not New Year's (*shōgatsu*) or *Obon*, the typical days of greatest festivity in the Japanese calendar. Rather, it was the brief, "festival-like" three or four day period at the beginning of the thaw when floating chunks of ice stopped the movements of anti-Japanese guerrillas and smugglers across the border.[9]

But the coming of spring to the Yalu was not always greeted in such romantic terms. This was especially the case following the March First Korean Independence Movement in 1919 and the anti-Japanese May Fourth Movement in China the same year. After Japanese officials' brutal suppression of Korean "Righteous Army" (*ŭibyŏng*) independence fighters during the Protectorate period (1905-1910), an illusory peace seemed to prevail over the Yalu region. This was interrupted only occasionally by "bandit" attacks from the Chinese side of the river against locally stationed military police (*kenpei*).[10] Simmering dissatisfaction with Japan's harsh colonial rule, however, led to the 1919 outbreak of the March First Korean Independence Movement. Now recognized as a watershed moment in the emergence of Korean anti-colonial nationalism, the movement began as a series of non-violent protests in the colonial capital of Seoul. By the end of the month, the protests had enveloped the entire peninsula. Seasonal metaphors permeated the movement's discourse, with a "declaration of independence" drafted by leading Korean

[7] Murakami Masatsugu, *Manshūkoku oyobi shūhen ni okeru sho kasen no tōketsu* (Dairen [Dalian]: Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha Chōsakyoku, 1944), 64-67.
[8] Heian Hokudō Keisatsubu, ed. *Kokkyō keibi* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Heian Keishō Henshūbu, 1936), 167.
[9] Kobayashi Kaneshige, *Kokkyō to sono keibi* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Keibi Engōkai, 1936), 19.
[10] The response of the colonial Korean government and military police to one such raid in 1915 on a Yalu River Timber Company office in the Chinese border county of Changbai is analyzed in Kanno Naoki, "Chōsen-Manshū hōmen kara mita Terauchi Masatake zō no ichi danmen: Ōryokkō Saiboku Kōshi nado to no kankei o tsūjite" *Higashi Ajia kindaishi* 16 (March 2013): 97-113.

activists declaring that "a new spring has arrived prompting the myriad forms of life to come to life again. The past was a time of freezing ice and snow, stifling the breath of life; the present is a time of mild breezes and warm sunshine, reinvigorating the spirit."[11] Unnerved by the sight of millions of Koreans taking to the streets and shouting pro-independence slogans, Japanese authorities unleashed a brutal wave of violence that resulted in thousands of deaths and even more arrests.[12] In response to Japanese suppression, scores of Korean nationalists fled north of the Yalu and began armed cross-border raids against Japanese outposts.[13] The Spring of 1919 also saw the May Fourth Movement in China grow out of a series of student protests against Japanese imperial expansion into a widespread social and cultural movement. As anti-Japanese sentiment rose throughout the country, Chinese authorities began sympathizing with Korean independence movements in Manchuria and elsewhere.[14]

This burst of anti-Japanese sentiment and borderland violence unnerved Japanese authorities, who began committing increased manpower and resources to policing the Yalu border.[15] It also coincided with the thawing of the Yalu River, marking the beginning of what came to be a distinctive seasonal cycle of border security. An April 6, 1920 telegram sent to top Japanese military officials warned that with the unfreezing of the Yalu, Korean independence

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[11] For a full translated text of the declaration, see Yŏngho Ch'oe, Peter H. Lee, and Wm. Theodore de Bary, eds., *Sources of Korean Tradition Volume II: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 336-339.

[12] The most comprehensive examination of the March First Movement in English remains Frank P. Baldwin Jr.'s 1969 dissertation: "The March First Movement: Korean Challenge and Japanese Response" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1969).

[13] Chong-Sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 157-162.

[14] Xu Wanmin, *Zhong Han guangxi shi: jindai juan* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2014), 199; Eric Esselstrom, *Crossing Empire's Edge: Foreign Ministry Police and Japanese Expansionism in Northeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 65. Esselstrom also discusses Sino-Japanese conflicts over the policing of Korean rebels (with a particular focus on the role of the Japanese Foreign Ministry Police in Kando) in chapter three of his book. See Esselstrom, 65-91.

[15] Matsuda Toshihiko, *Nihon no Chōsen shokuminchi shihai to keisatsu: 1905-1945-nen* (Tokyo: Azekura shobō, 2009), 322-341.

groups would likely attempt to smuggle weapons into the Chinese border city of Andong. The document thus called for increased surveillance of river traffic.[16] Japanese naval ships were also dispatched to the mouth of the Yalu to monitor for signs of "rebellious Korean" activity.[17]

The intensity of Japanese attempts to suppress the armed Korean independence movement alarmed observers on the Chinese bank of the Yalu. By this time Manchuria was under the control of Zhang Zuolin, a warlord of humble bandit origins who began ruling the region after an initial period of unrest following the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911. In his interactions with the Japanese, Zhang sought technical and military support for his Fengtian regime in exchange for protecting Japan's extensive Manchurian railway concessions. At the same time, Zhang's regime was also determined to hold further Japanese expansion at bay.[18] Officials in the Yalu-bordering counties of Andong, Kuandian, Ji'an, Linjiang, and Changbai had long been urged to "exercise caution" when dealing with local Korean migrants, Japanese settlers, and Japanese officials on the Yalu's opposite bank.[19] But such calls took on greater urgency in the wake of the March First Movement, as Japanese naval ships moved with impunity near Andong and Japanese police began crossing the river at will to pursue alleged Korean independence fighters.[20]

As accumulated ice slowly retreated from the Yalu's surface, the surveillance of boat traffic became a prominent concern for Chinese and Japanese border officials alike. Period

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[16] "Kakai kaihyō ni okeru futei kōdō ni kansuru ken," JACAR (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records) C06031159300.
[17] "Yalu Jiang Ri ting youyi," *Dagong bao*, April 30, 1920.
[18] For more about Zhang's complex relationship with the Japanese, see Chi Man Kwong, *War and Geopolitics in Interwar Manchuria: Zhang Zuolin and the Fengtian Clique during the Northern Expedition* (Boston: Leiden, 2017), 77-78
[19] Zhongguo bianjiang shi di yanjiu zhongxin, *Dongbei bianjiang dang'an xuanji* (Hereafter DBDX) (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe , 2007), 8:267-270
[20] *DBDX*, 8:292,

sources spoke unfavorably of the river's accessibility to waterborne traffic due to its shallow flow and numerous rapids.[21] Despite these limitations, the Yalu's position as a strategic conduit between Korea and Manchuria encouraged a thriving river trade. Means of river transport included junks, sampans, canoes, sailboats, timber rafts, and "propeller boats." [22] Responsibility for policing river traffic on the Chinese side of the border was split between the Yalu-Hun River Waterfront Police, an agency created by the Qing in 1909 to monitor the Yalu and its tributary the Hun River, and officials from various border counties. With spring's arrival, these officials relayed to superiors detailed information about ice melting patterns and the estimated starting date for waterborne traffic.[23] Japanese authorities circulated similar information on the Korean side of the river, where border policing fell to police from the provinces of North Pyŏngan and South Hamgyŏng as well as local military garrisons.[24]

Timber rafts and "propeller boats" were two particularly distinctive forms of river transport that also served as ready targets for "bandit" groups and anti-Japanese dissidents.[25] Floated downstream from the richly forested upper Yalu, these log rafts were a perennial feature of the Yalu cultural landscape.[26] Popular songs like the Japanese "Ōryokkō bushi" (Yalu River melody) romanticized the journey of raftsmen in the wake of the Yalu's melting ice.[27] Yet the

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[21] China: The Maritime Customs, *Decennial Reports, 1922-1931* (Shanghai, 1933), 270; Tani Mitsuyo, *Manshū kasenshi* (Shinkyō [Changchun]: Manshū Jijō Annaijo, 1940), 260.

[22] In the words of one German geographer who traveled to northern Korea in 1933, the Yalu was "a very busy river, despite its adverse natural conditions and its boundary character." Hermann Lautensach (Eckart and Dege translators), *Korea: AGeography Based on the Author's Travels and Literature* (Berline: Springer Verlag, 1988), 248.

[23] "Liaoning Sheng zhengfu wei Andong shangbu gonganju chang chengbao jieshou ji chouban dongji lian fang deng shi," Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC010-01-001142;

[24] "Kakai kaihyō ni okeru futei kōdō ni kansuru ken."

[25] "Yalu Jiang shang mingwu fei chuan kaishi yunhang," *Shengjing shibao* April 8, 1938.

[26] Kinnosuke Adachi, *Manchuria: A Survey* (New York : R.M. McBride, 1925), 2.

[27] While the exact origins of the song are unclear, Yuasa Chikusanjin, a scholar of ballads from the Meiji to the early Showa period, suggests that the tune did in fact originate among the Yalu timber raftsmen depicted in the song's lyric. Yuasa also notes the role of *kisaeng* and other pleasure district workers in popularizing the song, a fact also

song's peaceful nature belied the actual dangers of such journeys. As discussed in chapter two, Japanese rafters were targeted during the Protectorate period (1905-1910) by disgruntled Chinese timbermen who were systematically excluded from the lucrative Yalu logging industry. As reminders of Japan's colonial presence along the border, raft pilots remained targets years later as raids by anti-Japanese dissidents and bandits rocked the border region. On June 7, 1924, for example, a Japanese rafter named Matsumi Kumajirō was shot and killed by six "bandits" on the Yalu near Ch'osan County.[28] Non-Japanese raftsmen occasionally fell victim to border violence as well, as was the case on May 29, 1928 when four Korean raftsmen were shot and killed by Chinese "horse bandits" near the upper Yalu city of Hyesanjin.[29]

While timber rafts represented one precarious aspect of Yalu river transportation, another was the "propeller boat" (*puropera fune*). Propeller boats were shallow-bottomed passenger boats equipped with airplane-like propellers that sat above the water to help navigate the Yalu's shallow depths.[30] The use of propeller boats began on the Korean side of the river in 1922 as a joint venture between the Korean colonial government and Sinŭiju-based Japanese timber entrepreneur Tada Eikichi.[31] In exchange for Government-General subsidies, the propeller boats, operated by Tada's Yalu River Transport Company (*Ōryokkō yusen kōshi*), were used to transport gold, deliver mail, and provide regular passenger service along an officially-designated route that stretched from Sinŭiju to Singalp'a at the Yalu's upper reaches (figure 3.1).[32]

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supported by a 1926 Tonga ilbo article that describes the song as one often sung by *kisaeng*. See: Yuasa Chikusanjin, *Kōta yawa* (Tokyo: Shinsakusha, 1924), 79-120.; "Ponŭn ttaero..." *Tonga ilbo*, August 8th, 1926.

[28] Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, *Kōtō keisatsu kankei nenpyō* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, 1930), 145.

[29] "Ubu majŏkdan ch'ulhyŏn pŏlbu samyŏng ŭl sasal," *Maeil sinbo*, June 1, 1928.

[30] Gōndō Kyūshū, "Seibu kokkyō o mawarite," *Keimu ihō*, June 1923, 32.

[31] Ibid., "Ima ya mizukara ninzuru kokkyō sōtoku-san," *Keijō nippō*, October 18, 1935. For more on Tada, a larger-than-life figure who was referred to by contemporaries as the "Governor-General of the border," (J: kokkyō sōtoku) see Fedman, 213-214.

[32] Tani Mitsuyo, *Manshū kasenshi* , 260

Figure 3.1: Photograph of "propeller boats" from colonial-era postcard.

Source: https://blogs.yahoo.co.jp/y294maself/33063481.html

Propeller boats provided the quickest and most reliable means of transport on the river until the completion of railroad routes along the upper Yalu in the late 1930s. This made them indispensable to border administration and development but also convenient targets for "bandit" attacks.[33] On May 25, 1928, when "bandits" dressed like Chinese officials raided a propeller boat near the Korean county of Chasŏng, killing two passengers and kidnapping a military officer, Lieutenant Wakabayashi, who was also on board.[34] A combined force of border policemen and Japanese troops from as far afield as the colonial capital of Keijō failed to recover the kidnapped officer but did incite protests from local Chinese authorities, who themselves mobilized thousands of troops and offered a reward of 20,000 yen for information about the missing soldier.[35]

[33] Gōndō, "Seibu kokkyō o mawarite," 31.
[34] "Kukkyŏng iltae e majŏk toryang," *Tonga ilbo*, May 27, 1928.
[35] "3: Chōsen kokkyō bazoku shūgeki jiken," JACAR, B13081174600.

Propeller boats' susceptibility to attack was especially made clear with the attempted assassination of Governor-General Saitō Makoto in spring 1924. Since the beginning of Japanese rule in Korea, prominent colonial officials regularly conducted "inspection tours" of police stations along Korea's northern border. Such tours underscored the importance of border patrol to the colonial state's larger security apparatus. After assuming the position of Governor-General in 1920, Saitō embarked on two uneventful inspection tours of the Sino-Korean border, first in 1921 and again in 1923.[36] On his third trip to the border in 1924, however, Saitō encountered the determined face of Korean anti-colonial resistance. [37] On May 19, a group of Korean independence fighters fired on Saitō and an accompanying party of colonial bureaucrats, border policemen, and newspaper journalists as they traveled upstream via propeller boat.[38] The rebels' bullets grazed the earlobes of two Japanese policemen, causing them to topple into the river, while other policemen began firing off a volley of return fire in the direction of the Chinese river bank. The attackers, thought by police at the time to be about ten in number, immediately fled before they could be positively identified. Subsequent searching of the Chinese bank failed to yield any sign of the escaped guerrillas.[39]

Although the attack on Saitō's propeller boat was seemingly unsuccessful, the psychological impact of the raid rippled far and wide beyond the Yalu. Initial reports of the attack were carried in newspapers throughout Asia. Much to colonial authorities' chagrin, the

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[36] For multiple articles detailing Saitō's 1923 inspection tour of the border, see the June 1923 issue of the Government-General Police Affairs Bureau monthly, *Keimu ihō.*

[37] This was not the first attempt on Saitō's life during his career as Governor-General of Korea. The first occurred on September 2,1919, soon after he commenced his post, when a Korean dissident threw a bomb under his carriage in Seoul. See Frank Baldwin, "Participatory Anti-Imperialism: The 1919 Independence Movement," *Journal of Korean Studies* 1 (1979), 132.

[38] "Chaetŭng ch'ongdok ilhaeng sŭpkyŏk sagŏn hubo," *Tonga ilbo*, May 21, 1924.

[39] Kim Chŏng-ju, ed. *Chōsen tōchi shiryō 9: Enkyō kankei* (hereafter abbreviated as *CTS*) (Tōkyō : Kankoku Shiryō Kenkyūjo, 1970-1972), 598-600.

June 3, 1924 issue of the *Tongnip shinmun* (Independence news), the official mouthpiece of the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai, lauded the "courageous" attack and the "thunder-like" bullets which caused the Governor-General to "lose his senses" and "sneak away like a rat."[40] By contrast, a May 22 article in the Japanese daily *Yomiuri shimbun* emphasized Saitō's cool resolve despite the attempt on his life, reassuring its metropolitan readership that the Governor-General was "impervious" to such raids and had concluded his border inspection "with much gusto" (*sukoburu genki*).[41]

The diplomatic fallout over the propeller boat raid inflamed Sino-Japanese tensions along the Yalu. In the attack's wake, Japanese colonial authorities telegraphed Chinese governor of Dongbiandao Wang Shuncun to demand increased security on the remainder of the Governor-General's intended route. Although Wang issued an official apology for the attack, Japanese authorities were displeased by what they claimed was Wang's unwillingness to accept full responsibility for an egregious security breach.[42] Yet even this allegedly tepid contrition contrasted dramatically with the defiant response given by Wang Yubin (not related), chief of the Chinese county of Ji'an where the attack had taken place. Wang not only refused to apologize for the incident, but even claimed that Japanese authorities had fabricated the whole event in order to trespass into Chinese territory.[43] An article in the *Shen Bao*, a major Shanghai newspaper, also cited the eyewitness report of a local herder who claimed to have heard gunshots coming from Saitō's boat as it passed by on the river but no corresponding shots on the Chinese bank.[44] For many Chinese observers, Japanese imperialists posed a far greater threat to border stability than

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[40] *CTS*, 618.
[41] "Shūgeki jiken nado hai ni kakenu sōtoku," *Yomiuri shinbun*, May 22, 1924.
[42] *CTS*, 602.
[43] Zhongguo bianjiang shi di yanjiu zhongxin, *Dongbei bianjiang dang'an xuanji* (Hereafter *DBDX*) (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue ch banshe , 2007), 38:113-118.
[44] "Feng Ji'an zhishi fouren Zhaiteng yuxian," *Shen Bao*, June 16, 1924.

Korean dissidents. Such disagreements over border policing would not be resolved until the 1925 Mitsuya Agreement to be discussed later.

As the Yalu ice retreated, local Chinese bandits and Korean guerrillas not only attacked river traffic but also crossed the river to raid Japanese police and forestry stations as well as threaten wealthy landlords and alleged pro-Japanese collaborators.[45] Officials in colonial Korea recorded some 1,652 "incidents" of border violence in 1920 alone.[46] Bandits and anti-Japanese fighters often used small junks or simple dugout canoes to cross the border under the cover of nighttime darkness.[47] These groups also commandeered other river-going vessels. As an American missionary traveling along the Yalu in 1926 noted, colonial officials required all river-going traffic to dock at night near border police stations out of fear that Korean independence fighters "might seize the boat[s] and use [them] to transport men or ammunition from the Chinese side."[48]

To guard against cross-border attacks, Japanese placed police stations and substations at nearly every *ri* (approximately 2.4 miles) along the Sino-Korean border, with 4-10 policemen stationed at each of these outposts.[49] While these remote frontier stations were typically built from pre-existing Korean-style structures, they were also fortified with fences, ditches, and sometimes watchtowers built with forcibly mobilized local labor.[50] Traveling on the Yalu in 1933, German geographer Hermann Lautensach described these police stations as resembling

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[45] "Chosŏn tongnip undong ŭi mudanhwa," *Tonga ilbo*, August 21, 1921.
[46] *Kokkyō to sono keibi,* inset.
[47] Andō Kesaichi, "Heihoku keisatsu gaikyō," *Keimu ihō* July 1923, 23.
[48] Robert Baird "A Journey Down the Yalu" (manuscript), Baird Family Papers, The National Archives of the Presbyterian Church, USA.
[49] Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, *Chōsen keisatsu no gaiyō* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, 1925), 118.
[50] Ibid., 118-119.

"small fortresses."[51] The intended effect of these "fortresses" was to project an image of power over a militarized border landscape, though this display of strength belied the challenges of controlling the Yalu's vast liquid geography.

Borrowing from military terminology, police units were placed along the "frontline" and "second-line" of border security, the former term referring to stations immediately along the river and the latter being used to describe police outposts in slightly more inland areas that were nonetheless susceptible to cross-border raids. By 1923 the total number of police officials on the first and second-lines of the Sino-Korean border was 2,344, and the number only continued to grow as efforts to crack down on anti-Japanese resistance escalated.[52] As Matsuda Toshihiko notes, between 1920 to 1924 the overall number of police stationed in the three Korean border provinces increased some 34.4% while numbers of police Korea-wide increased only 0.4% during the same period.[53] Ethnically, Japanese officials comprised nearly two-thirds of this police force, with the rest being composed of native Koreans.[54] In addition to border policemen, military units were also stationed nearby as "border garrisons" (*kokkyō shubitai*), along with small regiments of military police (*kenpei*).[55]

Chinese officials also constructed surveillance stations along the border while detailing plans for "summer defense" (*xia fang*) and "winter defense" (*dong fang*). One plan for "summer defense" in Andong described the city as "an important confluence point between land and water" and suggested mobilizing manpower from a variety of local administrative offices,

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[51] Lautensach, *Korea: a Geography Based on the Author's Travels and Literature*, 240.
[52] Susukida Yoshitomo, "Kokkyō ni okeru keisatsukan no seikatsu," *Keimu ihō*, August 1923, 23.
[53] Matsuda, *Nihon no Chōsen shokuminchi shihai to keisatsu*, 336.
[54] Chōsen Sōtokufu, *Chōsen Sōtokufu tōkei nenpō: taishō 9 nen, v. 5* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1921), 1; Chōsen Sōtokufu, *Chōsen Sōtokufu tōkei nenpō: taishō 13 nen, v. 5* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1926), 1.
[55] Chōsen Kenpeitai Shireibu, *Chōsen Kenpeitai rekishi dai 6-kan: Taishō 8-nen 8-gatsu—Shōwa 19-nen 7-gatsu* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2000), 28.

including the Yalu-Hun Waterfront Police and Andong city police.[56] Yet despite such efforts, a lack of personnel to counteract the massive Japanese presence on the Korean side of the border remained a pressing concern. A 1931 Andong county gazetteer listed the total number of people employed by the Yalu-Hun Waterfront Police as 302 individuals split between 19 different outposts.[57] In their correspondence with superiors in Fengtian (now Shenyang), officials from the Yalu-Hun Waterfront Police frequently complained about how their limited numbers could not realistically enforce Chinese sovereignty along the liquid border with Korea, especially as, in the words of one Kuandian county official, Japanese police stations stood "thick as a forest" on the opposite bank of the river.[58]

Summer

As seen by officials, the need for multiple lines of well-staffed border police was especially keen during the warm summer months.[59] Officials referred to this period as the flourishing season—a time when vegetation cover along the Yalu river banks was at its fullest and food supplies were most readily available.[60] The accessibility of food and hiding places was especially important for anti-Japanese fighters, who lived a precarious existence between periodic raids and avoiding capture and death at the hands of Japanese authorities. Anti-Japanese guerrillas are sometimes romantically depicted in contemporary South and North Korean media as well-equipped gunslingers.[61] Yet in reality guerrilla fighters were often as humbly dressed and

[56] "Liaoning Sheng zhengfu wei Ji'an xian cheng bao xia fang buzhi qing xing shi,"
[57] Yu Yunfeng, *Andong xian zhi* (Taibei : Chengwen Chubanshe, 1974), 358.
[58] *DBDX* 8:329, 377.
[59] *Kokkyō keibi*, 214.
[60] MS sei, "Hanmoki ni okeru kokkyō hizoku no sōsa ni tsuite," *Keimu ihō*, July 1931, 98.
[61] Kevin Michael Smith, "Vicarious Politics: Violence and the Colonial Period in Contemporary South Korean Film," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 15:12 no. 3, Jun 15, 2017. https://apjjf.org/-Kevin-Michael-Smith/5048/article.pdf (accessed May 3, 2019).

equipped as the rural farmers and timbermen they operated among. As one former Korean resident of the Yalu region sympathetically recalled years later regarding guerrilla fighters visiting his home,

> Their appearance...was completely different from what I had imagined...Wearing oxcart overalls and with their hair tied up with cotton towels, they looked completely like countryside farmers. I expected that independence fighters, even if their clothes were not that fancy, would at least have a pistol strapped to their waist, but they did not even have an old-style hunting rifle let alone a pistol.[62]

Such poverty regularly compelled anti-Japanese guerrillas to rely on help from local communities along the border. Villagers sometimes aided guerrillas of their own volition, providing food and shelter or information about local police movements.[63] Yet cooperation with anti-Japanese guerrillas came with severe risks.[64] In August 1924, for example, colonial police surrounded the homes of villagers accused of harboring insurgents in Hwach'ang township, North Pyŏngan Province and set them on fire, killing most of the occupants inside.[65]

In addition to such human violence, another unique challenge of summertime border security was the monsoonal rains that brought heavy floods to the region. The summer months of June through August saw higher levels of precipitation than any other time of the year.[66] The flooding during this annual rainy season, exacerbated by heavy logging and deforestation along the upper Yalu, posed unique obstacles to border security.[67] Riverside patrols assumed an added layer of risk as roads used to navigate between watch points were frequently washed out. If one

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[62]Ch'oe Chŏnghwa, *Sakchu kunji* (Seoul: Sakchu Kunminhoe, 1991), 241.
[63] Ch'ae Yŏng-guk, *1920-yŏndae huban Manju chiyŏk hangil mujang t'ujaeng* (Ch'ungch'ŏng-namdo Ch'ŏnan-si: Tongnip Kinyŏmgwan Han'guk Tongnip Undongsa Yŏn'guso, 2007), 18.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Wiwŏn Kunji P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, *Wiwŏn kunji* (Seoul: Wiwŏn Kunji P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 1971), 90-92.
[66]*Manshū kasenshi*, 259.
[67]Yi Sŭng-ch'un, *Ōryokkō jyōryū shinrin shakubatsu jigyō annai* (Hu'chang: Ōryokkō Jyōryū Shinrin Shakubatsu Jigyō Annai Hakkōsho, 1931), 76.

were not careful, wrote Japanese police officer Mizuno Takusaburō, they would find themselves swept away into the river's roaring current, where it was "doubtful that one could stay afloat forever."[68] Such warnings about the volatility of the summertime river were based on actual experience. After repeated heavy rains in August 1928, three military police were crossing a bridge over a small Yalu tributary not far from the border when the bridge was swept away, drowning one of them in the process.[69] In an earlier incident on August 27, 1921, four policemen were riding a raft while patrolling the Yalu near Huch'ang when the raft overturned, drowning one of the policemen who was unable to swim his way out.[70]

Floods could destroy outposts on both sides of the river with unmatchable force. This was discovered by Chinese officials from the Yalu-Hun River Waterfront Police in 1923, when summertime flooding destroyed two of their riverfront patrol stations.[71] Of course, anti-Japanese guerrillas and residents of local border communities were just as vulnerable to the dangers of Yalu flooding as Chinese and Japanese policemen. But in the pages of popular newspapers and police memoirs, guerrillas and "bandits" seemed impervious to such natural disasters. An August 26, 1923 article in the Tianjin-based Chinese newspaper *Yishi bao* described Korean guerrillas carrying out raids amidst the chaos of massive flooding that year. [72]

A more mundane but no less noticeable feature of summertime Yalu border security was the intense heat and humidity. The range between lowest winter and highest summer temperatures in Chunggangjin on the Korean side of the river was a dramatic 81.6 degrees

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[68] *Kokkyō keibi,* 87.
[69] "Amnokkang yŏnan hou," *Tonga ilbo*, August 31, 1928
[70] "Sunsa Il myŏng iksa, *Tonga ilbo*, September 2, 1921
[71] "Fengtian Sheng gongshu wei Ya Hun liang jiang shui shang jingju cheng qing ba kuan xiu bei shui chong mo ge ju fang bing song ju dan shi," Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC010-01-018581.
[72] "Yalu Jiang Ri jing han tang zhi pao huo shen," *Yishi bao*, August 26, 1923.

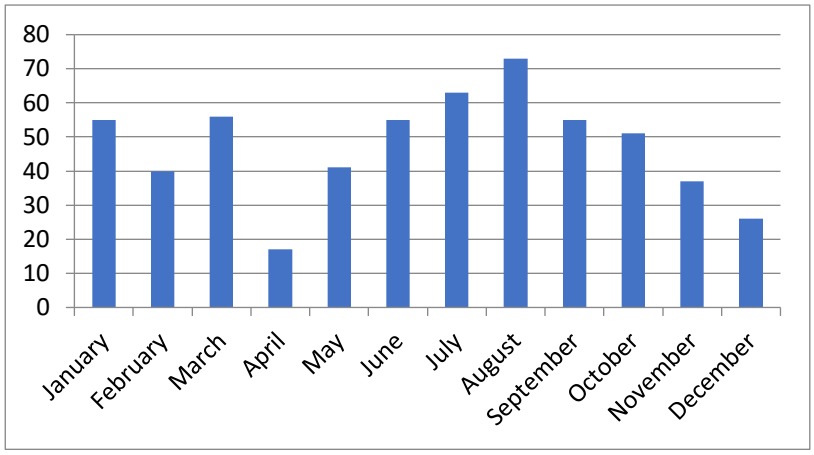
Celsius.[73] It is little surprise, then, that media such as the popular "Northern Korea Border Patrol Song," written in 1928, mentioned "boiling" summer temperatures reaching nearly 40 degrees Celsius along with the frozen river and winter nights of below -40 degrees Celsius.[74] Writing about his experience standing watch over summertime ferries, police officer Mizuno complained about the sweat that "drenched my whole body" as he stood on the shade-less river bank. One could not escape the heat by drinking from the river, however, lest the dirty water induce multiple harried trips to the toilet.[75]

Police records attest to the potent combination of environmental and human factors that made summertime a dangerous period for Yalu border security. Records of border raids and other high-profile incidents between 1919-1927 published by the Police Affairs Bureau of the Government-General of Korea shows that the approximately 43%, or nearly half of the total border incidents for the year, occurred during the four-month period between June and September (see table 3.1). August in particular was dangerous, with nearly 13 percent of attacks taking place during this month alone.[76] Records of North Pyŏngan Province police fatalities from 1910-1936 also show August to be the most deadly month for those stationed on the border, with nearly a quarter of total fatalities (see table 3.2).[77]

[73] Lowest temperatures were -43.6 degrees Celsius recorded for winter, compared to 38 degrees Celsius for summer. Lautensach, *Korea: A Geography*, 91.
[74] Kodama Toshimitsu, *Natsukashi no Nihon uta zenshū* (Kagoshima-shi: Chiran Tokkō Irei Kenshōkai, 1972), 338.
[75] *Kokkyō keibi,* 85.
[76] *Kōtō keisatsu kankei nenpyō*.
[77] Kosako Shintarō, *Kokkyō no hana*, 5-18.

Table 3.1- Major Border Incidents by Month, 1919-1927

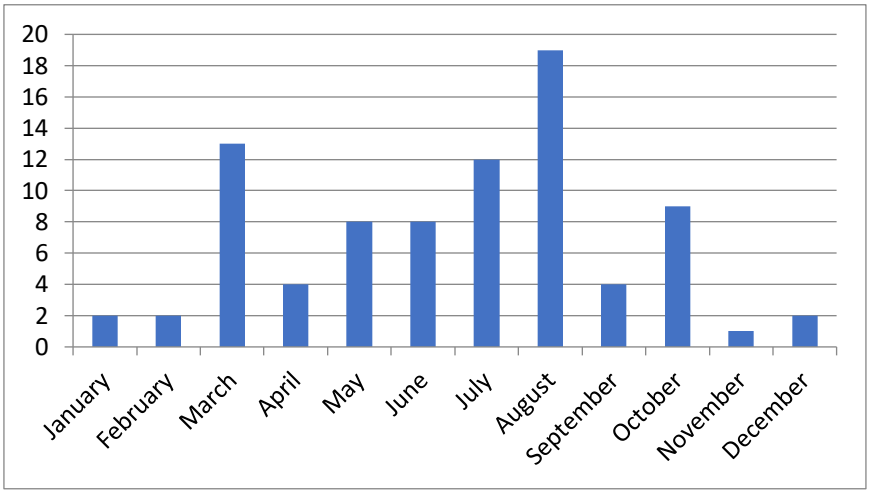
Month	Incidents
January	55
February	40
March	56
April	17
May	41
June	55
July	63
August	73
September	55
October	51
November	37
December	26



Source: Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, *Kōtō keisatsu kankei nenpyō*.

Table 3.2- Border Police Fatalities by Month in North Pyŏngan Province, 1910-1936

Month	Fatalities
January	2
February	2
March	13
April	4
May	8
June	8
July	12
August	19
September	4
October	9
November	1
December	2



Source: Kosako Shintarō, *Kokkyō no hana*, 5-18

Such statistical observations are borne out in individual media accounts of summertime border violence. Throughout the early 1920s, newspapers in Korea, Japan, and China carried numerous reports of Korean guerrillas crossing the flowing Yalu to raise funds, "punish" wealthy

Korean landlords and Japanese collaborators, distribute anti-Japanese pamphlets, and attack Japanese police or forestry stations.[78] Guerrilla activity also occurred along the nearby Tumen River, though the occupation of Kando by Japanese police and military officials in October 1920 compelled most armed Japanese resistance groups to shift their focus to the Yalu and the northwestern Korean provinces of North Pyŏngan and South Hamgyŏng, where the Japanese presence was far less concentrated and the geography more remote.[79] By 1924-1925, as one border official later recollected, summertime attacks seemed to be occurring "on a daily basis."[80] On August 7, 1924, a group of Korean independence fighters set fire to a Forest Management Bureau office near Huch'ang before retreating into a nearby forest. Just two days later, five Japanese police officers were returning from the opening of a gold mining office in Ch'angsŏng, North Pyŏngan Province when they were invited to dine with the head of Ch'ŏngsan township. Sleeping afterwards in the yard of his home, the policemen were ambushed around midnight by Korean independence fighters who killed four of the policemen and seriously injured the fifth.[81] The unexpected nature of this attack was similar to that of another raid a year later. On August 28, 1925, anti-Japanese guerrillas raided Yangsan in the border county of Sakchu, shooting two local Koreans and burning down their homes after they attempted to report the guerrillas' presence to nearby police. The next day seven police officials from the Yangsan station formed a search group to pursue the guerrillas, leaving just one officer behind to guard the police station.

[78] "Chosŏn tongnip undong ŭi mudanhwa"; "Dong sheng teyue tongxin," *Yishi bao*, May 14, 1921; For a detailed analysis of depictions of "rebellious Koreans" in Japanese media, including fictional works, see Andre Haag, "Fear and Loathing in Imperial Japan: The Cultures of Korean Peril, 1919-1923," Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2013).
[79] Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 157-162. As Lee describes, other armed nationalist groups also fled from Kando to Siberia and northern Manchuria.
[80] *Kokkyō keibi,* 213.
[81] "Suksu chung toryŏn sagyŏk," *Tonga ilbo*, August 14, 1924.

Later that day that the guerrilla fighters attacked the station, killing the wife of one police officer and the wife and adopted daughter of another.[82]

The fate of border police family members in incidents like the Yangsan raid illustrates how women and children were also affected, often in dramatic ways, by the seasonal violence that erupted along the colonial Yalu. Female Korean and Chinese residents of border communities especially confronted violence on multiple fronts. While the dangers of bandit and guerrilla raids were widely known, the merciless "bandit suppression" tactics of colonial police also inflicted untold hardship on local women. In 1924, for example, the *Tonga ilbo* ran a series of articles accusing Japanese and ethnically Korean policemen in Kanggye County, North Pyŏngan Province, of raping local Korean women under the pretense of conducting "investigations." The same women were then threatened by police after they tried to report these crimes. [83] Unsurprisingly, Japanese censors labeled such reports "baseless rumors" meant to "agitate people's emotions," while a GGK-sponsored mouthpiece, *The Seoul Press*, accused the *Tonga ilbo* of being a "reptile press" that falsely slandered the honor of the colonial police force.[84] The *Tonga ilbo* described the difficult situation faced by female border residents as being "between two fires," with anti-Japanese guerrillas and police "unwittingly cooperating to make [life] unbearable for them."[85]

Yet among the many women affected by cross-border violence, the recipients of the greatest sympathy from Japanese official and popular sources were, unsurprisingly, ethnically

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[82] "Susaektae ch'uldong ŭl chŏtae, *Tonga ilbo,* September 4, 1925.

[83] "Yubunyŏ rŭl nŭngyok, kanggan koso haettago satok," *Tonga ilbo*, August 15, 1924," "Kanggye sagŏn e taehayŏ," *Tonga ilbo,* August 17, 1924.

[84]"Shinbunshi yōran: Chōsen nai hakkō shinbunshi sono hoka shuppanbutsu torishimari jōkyō." Accessed through th National Institute of Korean History digital database, http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?levelId=had_001_0070; "The Reptile Press," *The Seoul Press*, October 1, 1924

[85] "U-Rueh-Mien Affair Investigated," *Tonga ilbo*, September 11, 1924

Japanese border police wives. The dramatic deaths of Japanese police wives during the Yangsan raid especially captivated the Japanese popular imagination. A 1929 article in the popular magazine *Kingu*, for example, narrated the life of one woman, Kiyoko, who worked as a textile factory worker before marrying and moving to Korea. The article explained how Kiyoko's strenuous upbringing gave her unique courage in the face of the "bandit" attack. It also described how she heroically shot and injured one of the attacking guerrillas with her husband's handgun before being killed. Finally, the article noted that Kiyoko had originally been invited to return to Japan immediately before the attack, but had stoically refused to do so until after the summer, the most dangerous time for border security, had passed.[86]

The linking of seasonal border violence to police wives' valiant sacrifice was found in other sources as well. One 1929 Japanese collection of vignettes on life along the Yalu border contained an illustration of a border policeman and his wife along with a poem narrated from the wife's perspective:

> When the green leaves flourish
> The bandits thrive as well
> You will take your gun
> I will take up my sword
> Ah...
> In life or death, our fates are intertwined.

While valorizing the sacrifice of border police families and underscoring the masculine virtue of colonial policemen, by deploying a seasonal nod to "flourishing green leaves" the poem also reinforced the dangers of the "flourishing season" and the link between the Yalu's physical landscape and its contested political geography.[87]

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[86] Totsukawa Hanzō, "Shakai bidan: kokkyō keibi no jojōfu," *Kingu*, January 1, 1929, 190-199.
[87] Ueda Kunji, *Kokkyō nihyaku ri* (Keijō [Seoul]: Kokkyō Nihyaku Ri Hakkōjo, 1929), 115.

Responses to the seasonal violence that rocked the Yalu region during the early 1920s reached beyond the domestic to the diplomatic, contributing to mounting cross-border tensions between Japanese and Chinese officials. As one police chief in the Chinese border county of Kuandian described, Japanese border police engaged in a destabilizing "cat and mouse" relationship with ethnic Korean residents in Kuandian.[88] The seasonality of this "cat and mouse" dynamic was described by Chinese diplomats stationed in Sinŭiju, who reported how every spring and summer anti-Japanese rebels "exploited the lush and dense mountain forests" to make cross-border raids while Japanese police then used the excuse of "suppressing Korean dissidents" to trespass onto Chinese soil.[89] Colonial police pursuing Korean dissidents on the Chinese side of the border often failed to notify local authorities, a fact that further exacerbated tensions.[90]

The dynamics of these border tensions were especially fraught for the thousands of ethnic Koreans who lived on the Chinese side of the border. Korean migration north of the Yalu began decades earlier due to widespread rural poverty in northern Korea and was encouraged at the time by poorly-enforced border controls.[91] It was the flight of Korean independence activists to the region in the wake of Japan's annexation of Korea, however, and their presence among local Korean populations that caused the greatest concern for Chinese and Japanese border officials alike. Korean armed resistance organizations like the Ch'amŭibu (created in 1924) set up schools, military camps, and other quasi-governmental facilities while relying heavily on local Korean

[88] *DBDX*, 8:329.

[89] Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, "Mi jian," 02-19-007-01-007.

[90] Matsuda, 337.

[91] For more on the factors motivating early Korean migration north of the Yalu, see Kwangmin Kim, "Korean Migration in Nineteenth-Century Manchuria: A Global Theme in Modern Asian History," in *Mobile Subjects: Boundaries and Identities in the Modern Korean Diaspora*, edited by Wen-Hsin Yeh (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2013): 17-31

migrants for material support.[92] At first, the attitude of Chinese observers towards anti-Japanese activists was sympathetic, in large part due to their own concerns about Japan's expansion into Manchuria and the rise of anti-Japanese nationalism in the wake of the May Fourth Movement.[93] A May 14, 1921 article in the *Yishi bao* captured such sentiments when it described Japanese authorities' indiscriminate killing of local Korean migrants as part of their "menacing plot" (*duji*) to crack down on Korean independence fighters.[94] Within a few years, however, attitudes shifted as the number of Korean migrants grew and Chinese officials became increasingly worried about Japanese suppression of the Korean independence movement becoming a pretense for further expansion into Manchuria.

As cross-border raids mounted, Chinese administrators began to realize the benefits of cooperating with the Japanese to suppress the Korean independence movement. In June 1925, an accord was finally struck between Mitsuya Miyamatsu, head of the Government-General of Korea's Police Affairs Bureau, and Yu Zhen, police chief of Zhang Zuolin's Fengtian regime. Known later as the "Mitsuya Agreement," this 1925 agreement promised that Chinese officials would arrest dissident Koreans and turn them over to authorities in colonial Korea. Most importantly for Chinese negotiators, a clause was also included stating that both sides would refrain from crossing the river into each other's territory.[95] The commencement of greater Sino-Japanese cooperation on the policing of "rebellious Koreans" had devastating consequences for anti-Japanese guerrillas along the border. Guerrilla groups were already reeling from years of Japanese suppression as well as fierce factional politics and infighting that split the anti-Japanese

[92] Ch'ae Yŏng-guk *1920-yŏndae huban Manju chiyŏk hangil mujang t'ujaeng* (Ch'ungch'ŏng-namdo Ch'ŏnan-si : Tongnip kinyŏmgwan Han'guk tongnip undongsa yŏn'guso, 2007), 22.
[93] *Zhong Han guangxi shi*, 199.
[94] "Dongsansheng teyue tongxin: Yalu Jiang pan zhi Han dang," *Yishi bao*, May 14, 1921.
[95] Esselstrom, *Crossing Empire's Edge*, 87-90.

insurgency.[96] As a result, the total number of border "incidents" dropped precipitously from 270 in 1925 to 69 in 1926, becoming almost non-existent by the end of the decade.[97]

Despite the successful blow to Korean guerrillas dealt by the Mitsuya Agreement, Sino-Japanese tensions over the policing of the river border continued. On July 9, 1925, Chinese officials from the Yalu-Hun River Waterfront Police began building an outpost on a river island near the upper Yalu county of Changbai to help patrol a nearby ferry crossing. Japanese policemen on the Korean side protested this construction by claiming that the island was actually Korean territory. Chinese officials refused to tear down the half-completed building, defending their actions by saying that they were unaware of the island's disputed status. Ultimately the Japanese police chief in Hyesanjin took matters into his own hands by ordering the unilateral destruction of the wooden outpost.[98]

Another set of events two years later underscored growing cross-border animosity. Since at least 1923, officials from the Japanese Foreign Ministry had been pressing for the creation of a new branch of the Andong consul along the upper Yalu in the Chinese town of Mao'ershan.[99] A May 1927 attempt to establish a subconsulate was aborted, however, when hundreds of determined local Chinese residents chased Japanese officials across the river. [100] These protests were encouraged by Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin, whose increasingly anti-Japanese stance

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[96] For a discussion of how such politics affected the Ch'amŭibu organization that orchested the 1924 Saitō Makoto raid, see Sin Chu-baek, *Manju chiyŏk Hanin ŭi minjok undongsa, 1920-45 : minjokchuŭi undong mit sahoejuŭi undong kyeyŏl ŭi taerip kwa yŏndae rŭl chungsim ŭro* (Seoul: Asea munhwa, 2002), 56-82.

[97] *Kokkyō to sono keibi*, inset.

[98] "Ōryokkō Ni-Shi kakai mondai ikken," JACAR, B03041228400.

[99] Esselstrom, 95. The plan, which would have given the Foreign Ministry a much greater foothold along the upper Yalu, enjoyed initial support from the Government-General of Korea. After 1925, however, officials in colonial Korea withdrew their support, citing fears of alienating potential Chinese allies by violating the terms of the recently concluded Mitsuya agreement.

[100] Ibid., 26; Zhengxie Hunjiang shi Linjiang qu weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui, *Linjiang wenshi ziliao di er ji: Linjiang guanmin ju Ri she ling douzheng zhuanji* (Hunjiang Shi, 1986), 42.

eventually led to his assassination by Japanese agents in 1928.[101] Zhang's death did little to resolve the issue in Japan's favor, however, as Manchuria came under the control of his son Zhang Xueliang, a committed anti-Japanese nationalist who pledged his political support to the Nanjing-based Chinese Nationalist regime of Chiang Kai-shek. After repeated fruitless attempts to open the subconsulate, the Foreign Ministry officially abandoned the cause on August 29, 1929[102]

By the end of the 1920s, Chinese officials were adopting increased measures to block Japanese intrusions along the border. Besides conducting semiannual surveys of resident Koreans in southern Manchuria (once in the spring and once in the fall), they collected annual reports on the size and strength of Japanese police and military deployments along the border.[103] In a 1930 report, Yalu-Hun River Waterfront Police Chief Luan Yunkuai gave additional suggestions for combating Japanese police who used "bandit" border crossings as an excuse to "destroy the public order" on the Chinese side of the river. These included increasing the overall number of Chinese border police, connecting remote police stations with telephone wires, and undertaking regular patrols of the river using propeller boats.[104]

Measures undertaken by Chinese officials to reassert their border sovereignty limited Japanese hegemony over the Yalu's liquid geography for a time. The events of September 18, 1931, however, would radically alter this regional balance of power.

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[101] Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Colloboration in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 43.
[102] Wang Ju, "1927 nen no iwayuru Rinkō jiken ni kansuru shohoteki bunseki," *Chūgoku kenkyū geppō* 401 (July 1981): 47.
[103] Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, Zaiman Senjin to Shina kanken: tsuketari Manshū ni okeru hainichi undō (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, 1930), 165.
[104] Ibid., 153-155.

Autumn

After long summers of searing temperatures, high humidity, riverside raids, and heated diplomatic tensions, the general consensus among Japanese border police about the Yalu autumn was that it was far too brief. "It is usually said that a single falling leaf heralds the coming of autumn," remarked police officer Yamada Ainosuke, "but in the northern borders of Korea that does not apply. If a single leaf falls, then winter is known to be coming."[105] Such observations were not divorced from reality. According to data collected by a GGK weather observation station in Chunggangjin along the upper Yalu, average maximum temperatures during the period 1925-1930 were 22.5 degrees Celsius in September versus 2.7 degrees Celsius in November, when ice often first started to appear on the river's surface.[106] As a result of the season's brevity, discussion of autumn in the context of border security tended to focus on preparation for the upcoming "icebound season," including the strengthening of police station fortifications.

On the eve of the autumn equinox of 1931, however, a key set of events occurred that radically altered the Yalu's political landscape. At 10:00am on September 18, 1931, Japanese military officers with the Kwantung Army staged a railway explosion outside the Manchurian capital of Fengtian, which they then used as a pretext to occupy the city and begin their planned conquest of Northeast China. Less than twenty-four hours later, Japanese military garrisons had already occupied Andong as well as other major cities in southern Manchuria.[107] Military units stationed in Korea also hastily crossed the Sino-Korean border to help with the invasion.[108]

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[105] Kōno Yahei, *Kokkyō keibi kinenshū* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Heian Keishō Henshūbu, 1937), 11.
[106] Chōsen Sōtokufu Kansokujo, *Chōsen Sōtokufu Kansokujo kishō gonenhō: Shōwa gannen yori Shōwa 5-nen ni itaru* (Zinsen [Inch'ŏn]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Kansokujo, 1931), 49.
[107] Barbara J. Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895-1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 143.
[108] *Kokkyō keibi, 35.*

In response to the Japanese takeover of Manchuria, later known as the "Manchurian Incident," the Yalu frontier once again erupted into what one Japanese policeman called a "state of war" (*senji jōtai*). [109] Within China, Zhang Xueliang's support of Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek's decision to not resist the Japanese invasion sparked popular outrage and support for various Manchurian rebel groups.[110] Such groups included multiethnic Chinese and Korean Communist-led militias such as the Northeast People's Revolutionary Army (formed in 1933), which three years later became the Northeastern United Anti-Japanese Army.[111] Older outlaw groups such as the Shandong-based "Big Sword Society" also utilized the political upheaval to expand their activities while occasionally allying with Communists and other guerrilla groups.[112]

The chaos of this border violence came to be closely entwined with the Yalu's wintertime topography. Since the 1920s cross-border media reports on wintertime border security had emphasized the extreme measures undertaken to police the Yalu ice. For instance, in January 1922, a notice published in the Korean-language newspaper *Tonga ilbo* informed its readers that anyone traveling on the frozen river's surface outside permitted daylight hours would be shot immediately.[113] Throughout the same period, official and popular discussion of Yalu border security also devoted significant attention to the spring "thawing season" and raids during the summer "flourishing season." But it was not until after the 1931 Manchurian Incident that a

[109] Ibid.

[110] On the politics of Chinese collaboration and nationalism immediately following the Manchurian Incident, see Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth.*

[111] For analysis and primary documents on the Chinese Communist Party's role in the Manchurian guerrilla movement, see Dongbei kang Ri lianjun shiliao bianxiezu, *Dongbei kang Ri lianjun shiliao*, vols. 1 & 2 (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi shiliao chubanshe, 1987), 159.

[112] Chong-Sik Lee, *Revolutionary Struggle in Manchuria: Chinese Communism and Soviet Interest, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 214.

[113] "Apkang pingsang ŭi tonghaeng kyŏnggye," *Tonga ilbo*, January 9, 1922.

proliferation of high-profile attacks, among other factors, caused official anxieties to focus primarily on the winter.

Winter

The appearance of floating ice heralded the imminent icebound season.[114] Boats caught off guard by the encroaching ice could not be extracted until the next spring, a cause of "deep concern for river traffic," according to one period text.[115] The average date for the onset of the ice varied according to region. Because the velocity of the river's flow slowed as it became wider near the ocean, communities like Yongamp'o at the river's mouth saw the river freeze over as early as mid-November, whereas upstream locations usually did not freeze until mid-December. Due to the colder climate of the upper Yalu, upstream locations were also some of the last to welcome the thawing season, with the river staying frozen until early April.[116]

The average length of the icebound season was nearly four months, meaning that thick ice covered the Yalu's surface for almost one-third of the year. The freezing of the river carried multiple meanings and uses to those who lived along its banks. As the Yalu now became off-limits to boat traffic, sledges became the preferred method for transporting goods up and down the river's course.[117] For those Chinese, Japanese, and Korean workers in the Yalu timber industry, winter allowed newly felled timber to be easily transported by sledge over the now-frozen earth to the river, where it was stacked to be floated downstream in the spring.[118] The frozen river was also a valuable source of fresh ice, which local residents cut and stored for use

[114] Noritake Kazuo, *Ōryōkkō,* 176.
[115] *Manshū kasenshi*, 262.
[116] Murakami Matsusugu, *Manshūkoku oyobi shūhen ni okeru shokasen no tōketsu*, 64-67.
[117] Noritake Kazuo, *Ōryōkkō,* 167.
[118] Aaron Stephen Moore, "'The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia': Japanese Expertise, Colonial Power, and the Construction of the Sup'ung Dam." *Journal of Asian Studies* 72, no. 1 (February 2013): 124.

in the warm summer months.[119] For many, moreover, the frozen Yalu brought new recreational opportunities. Ice skating was a popular sport in the frigid climes of northern Korea and southern Manchuria, where large sections of the river near the cities of Andong and Sinŭiju were converted into outdoor skating rinks and skating competitions were held with some regularity. As former Japanese and Korean residents of Sinŭiju later remembered, the region produced champion speed skaters recognized throughout the empire.[120]

During his travel on the Manchurian-Korean border near Sinŭiju in 1936, Korean writer Chŏn Mu-gil, upon encountering the frozen Yalu, expressed admiration and awe at the "incredible power of nature," which transformed the "dark and wide waters" of the Yalu into "nothing more than a piece of ice." The ability of the ice to "connect" the two opposite riverbanks resembled some form of "Daoist magic," Chŏn wrote, claiming that "the winter border does not recognize the existence of the river."[121]

For border police on guard against cross-border "invasion," however, the frozen river was less a place for recreation, commerce, or admiration than a dangerous threat to their work. According to an internal document of the North Pyŏngan Province Police Affairs Bureau, the Yalu River served as a strategic "moat" around Korea during the spring, summer, and autumn months. But with the coming of winter this natural fortification disappeared (see figure 3.2). A subversive "freedom" of access was now allowed on the river's icy surface, which became a convenient corridor for smugglers, "bandits," and other groups whose activities threatened imperial control.[122]

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[119] "Amnok kang ch'aebing nyang chŭngga," *Maeil sinbo*, March 6, 1931.
[120] Mainichi Shinbunsha. *Nihon shokuminchishi 1: Chōsen* (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1978), 205; Sinŭiju Siminhoe, *Sinŭiju shichi* (Seoul: Sinŭiju Siminhoe, 1969), 64.
[121] Chŏn Mu-gil, "Manju chugan'gi: kyŏul ŭi kukkyŏng chŏngjo," *Tonga ilbo*, January 24, 1936.
[122] "Keppyōki keibi ni kansuru ken."

Figure 3.2: Image from a border police commemorative photo album. The caption reads "inspection of travelers on the ice," while the sign depicted in the photograph shows "regulations for traveling on the ice," including a proscription against nighttime border crossings.

Source: Heian Hokudō Keisatsubu, *Kokkyō no mamori*, (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Heian Hokudō Keisatsubu, 1933), 27.

Winter was a double-edged sword for Japanese border officials. So-called "bandit suppression" campaigns in Manchuria aimed at crushing guerrilla resistance were often carried out in the winter, when (as one former Japanese soldier recalled in an oral account) the fresh snow exposed the footprints of retreating guerrillas.[123] At the same time, colonial police in Korea feared that retreating Manchurian guerrillas in desperate need of supplies would exploit the frozen river's accessibility to make raids into Korea. Whereas the summer was the statistically most deadly time for colonial Korean border security in the 1920s, the years 1932-1933 saw over half of so-called "bandit invasions" into the Korean border province of North Pyŏngan occur during the winter months of December-March.[124] Concerns about frozen river crossings were

[123] Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, "Manshū kara no hikiage taikensha: Takamura Eizō-san." Sensō shōgen aakaibusu. http://www2.nhk.or.jp/archives/shogenarchives/shogen/movie.cgi?das_id=D0001130003_00000&seg_number=001
[124] "Shōwa nana hachi nen chū hizoku Sen nai shinnyū jyōkyō," National Archives of Korea, CJA0002457.

most prominent among officials in colonial Korea. A concentrated police presence and decades of authoritarian colonial rule in Korea made the threat of "bandits" crossing into Manchukuo from Korea virtually non-existent.[125] By contrast, the mountainous and heavily forested frontier of southern Manchuria, with rampant rural poverty on both sides of the border, had long provided favorable conditions for bandit and dissident activity.

Colonial officials' amplified concerns about the Yalu winter manifested themselves in a variety of settings. Documents sent by the Government-General of Korea to the Colonial Ministry in 1932 cited the specific dangers of the frozen Yalu and the increased "freedom" of movement on its surface in a plea for more financial resources and manpower.[126] The tenor of official police publications also shifted to reflect greater fears about the wintertime Yalu. A 1925 edition of the *Chōsen keisatsu gaiyō* (an overview of police operations in Korea), published annually by the Government-General of Korea, noted that border attacks generally decreased during the winter season.[127] But beginning with the 1931 edition, mentions of the "icebound season" highlighted it as "the most important time for police surveillance," a theme repeated often thereafter.[128]

While the frozen Yalu had long been a staging ground for illicit cross-border activity, three episodes illustrate the factors that led officials to consider winter particularly dangerous: the "T'osŏng incident" of 1934, the "Tonghŭng incident" of 1935, and a raid on Taegil in March 1936. Just before midnight on January 23,1934, approximately 140 anti-Japanese guerrillas

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[125] After the creation of Manchukuo, "border security" for Manchukuo officials primarily came to refer to the long, contested eastern and northern borders with the Soviet Union. For an extensive study of 1930s Soviet-Manchukuo border conflicts, which culminated in the bloody 1939 Battles of Khalkin Gol, see Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan Against Russia, 1939* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1985).

[126] "Chōsen Sōtokufu bunai rinji shokuin secchisei chū o kaiseisu," National Archives of Japan 1777100, Reel number 040800.

[127] *Chōsen keisatsu no gaiyō*, 117.

[128] *Chōsen keisatsu no gaiyō* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, 1931-1941).

launched a raid on a Japanese police box in the village of T'osŏng near the Yalu. To escape detection, the group split up into smaller contingents of three to five men so as to reduce the crunching sound under their shoes as they traversed the snow piled up on the river's ice. They were first noticed by two local Korean villagers conducting night-time river patrols as members of a police-organized "self-defense corps." By the time these villagers could contact a Japanese officer on patrol, the guerrillas had already reached the eastern entrance of the village. Hurriedly grabbing machine guns, the five officers stationed at the police box engaged with the guerrillas in a battle which ultimately left six villagers and one guerrilla dead before the anti-Japanese force fled back across the river into Manchuria.[129]

On February 13 of the next year, ethnically Korean Communist leader Yi Honggwang led approximately two hundred members of the Northeast People's Revolutionary Army across the frozen Yalu to attack the Korean village of Tonghŭng. According to one Chinese source, Yi's attack began with a rallying speech about "striking down the enemy" and "winning back our homeland."[130] The guerrillas did not retreat until after burning several houses, kidnapping villagers, and engaging in an intense gunfight with colonial police that lasted nearly two hours.[131] The participation of female "comrades" in Yi's band also shows how women were implicated in the violent seasonal politics of this border not just as victims of border violence as highlighted earlier but also as active participants in armed resistance groups.[132] The wintertime attack on Tonghŭng prompted speculation in the Korean-language media of a second raid by Communist-

[129] *Kokkyō keibi,* 25-30.
[130] Liaoning Sheng dang shi bianweihui, *Dongbei kang Ri douzheng shilunji: di 1 ji* (Shenyang: Liaoning Sheng dang shi bianweihui, 1986), 256.
[131] Ibid., 8; "Tonghŭngŭp sŭmnae sigasŏn," *Tonga ilbo*, February 14, 1935.
[132] A rumor widespread at the time was that Yi Honggwang himself was a female guerrilla leader. This originated in part, according to the later memoir of one of Yi's Chinese compatriots, went Yi sent a female comrade to interrogate prisoners taken during the raid, who then mistook the interrogator for the Communist leader. *Dongbei kang Ri douzheng shilunji: di 1 ji*, 256.

led forces. Such an attack did indeed occur during the winter of 1935-1936. Some 150 anti-Japanese guerrillas crossed the frozen Yalu before dawn on March 25 to raid a police substation at Taegil, shooting and killing two policemen and taking all of the weapons in the station's armory.[133]

Map 2- Location of major icebound season raids, 1934-1936

Border officials responded to these cross-border raids by deploying technologies such as airplanes and telephone wires. Airplanes were first used for border security in February 1935 after the North Pyŏngan Police Affairs Bureau purchased two Salmson 2-type biplanes for reconnaissance purposes. As a contemporary newspaper noted, the police use of aircraft was a first not only in Korea but in the entire Japanese empire.[134] Airplanes afforded a previously inaccessible birds-eye view of the region, allowing border officials to trace the movements of

[133] "Ch'onggigo nae ŭi pyŏnggi wa hyŏngŭm obaek wŏn to t'algŏ," *Tonga ilbo*, March 29, 1936.
[134] Kukkyŏng keibi yong piki iwŏl e toch'ak, *Maeil sinbo*, January 28, 1935.

"bandits" and smugglers and spot their "hideouts" more effectively. From five hundred meters in the air, as one Japanese pilot remarked, the "snake-like" river looked like a mere "sandbank pushing up against another," as the geographic obstacle posed by the river's flowing water seemed to disappear.[135]

Telephone technology further diminished the Yalu border's spatial challenges. The installation of telephone wires to connect remote police outposts on the Yalu was a priority of officials throughout the 1930s, and villagers living in riverside communities were often forcibly mobilized to help build telephone poles.[136] As Daqing Yang has previously shown, the expansion of Japan's telecommunications network was essential for maintaining control in Korea and elsewhere in the empire.[137] But as quickly as border officials installed these wires to strengthen their regulatory reach over the river, anti-Japanese activists cut them down. When guerrillas attacked the Taegil substation on March 25, 1936, they first snipped the station's telephone wires before crossing the frozen river.[138] Kim Il-sung's autobiography also describes how guerrillas appropriated telephone parts for other purposes, including extracting the sulfur from telephone insulators for use in gunpowder production.[139]

While the use of technologies such as telephones and airplanes was critical to the border security apparatus, the actual day-to-day work of wintertime river patrol still relied on a massive mobilization of human labor. Police officers in colonial Korea often moved from nearby locations in the northern provinces to other stations and substations on the river "frontline"

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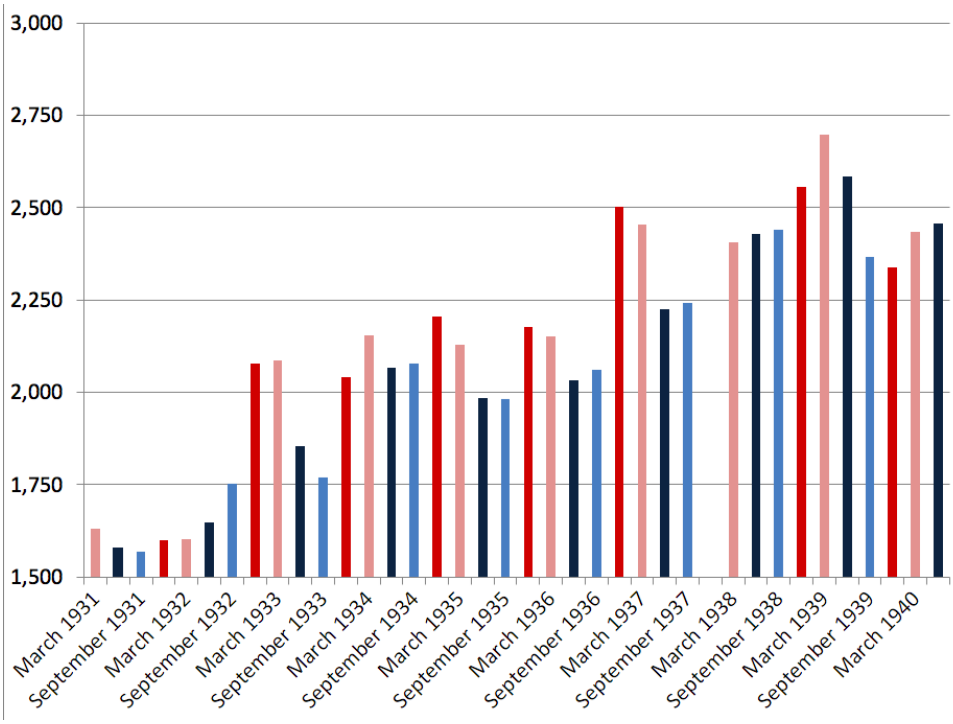
[135] *Kokkyō keibi,* 229-230.
[136] *Kokkyō keibi,* 48-49.
[137] Daqing Yang, *Technology of Empire: Telecommunications and Japanese Expansion in Asia, 1883-1945*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 46-47.
[138] Noritake, *Ōryōkkō,* 236-237.
[139] Kim Il-sŏng. *Segi wa tŏburŏ*, Volume 3 Chapter 8.6

(*daiissen*) each winter.[140] As the graph below demonstrates, for most years during the period 1931-1940, the number of police on the border consistently rose in the winter months.[141]

Table 3.3- Number of Police Stationed on the Korean Side of the Yalu Border, 1931-1940. These numbers were reported quarterly: dark red and light red represent the figures for December and March, respectively, while dark blue and blue represent the figures for June and September. Figures are unfortunately missing for December 1937.



Source: Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, "Kokkyō Dai ichi, nisen keisatsu haichihyō, Shi Shōwa go-nen ji Shōwajūichi-nen (1930-1936)," National Archives of Korea; Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku , "Kokkyō Dai issen, "Dai nisen keisatsukan haichi kankei," Shi Shōwa jūni-nen ji Shōwa jūshichi-nen (1937-1942)," National Archives of Korea.

In addition to buttressing their own numbers, colonial police forcibly mobilized local civilian populations to carry out riverside patrol. In villages along the Korean side of the Yalu,

[140] September 22, 1935.

[141] Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, "Kokkyō Dai ichi, nisen keisatsu haichihyō, Shi Shōwa go-nen ji Shōwajūichi-nen (1930-1936)," National Archives of Korea, CJA0002456; Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku , "Kokkyō Dai issen, "Dai nisen keisatsukan haichi kankei," Shi Shōwa jūni-nen ji Shōwa jūshichi-nen (1937-1942)," National Archives of Korea, CJA0002457.

colonial authorities began mobilizing local residents—primarily young men—to form rural "self-defense corps" " (J: *jikeidan*; K: *chagyŏngdan*) since soon after the outbreak of the March First Movement.[142] By February 1938, the total membership in "self-defense corps" had grown to 16,932, more than seven times the number of full-time colonial police on the Korean side of the Manchurian-Korean border in March of the same year (2,407).[143] Members of "self-defense corps" were expected to carry out basic river patrol duties under the supervision of local police and were mobilized most often during the times of greatest climatic challenge to border security.[144]

The plight of these young men during the frigid Yalu winter was publicized in colonial Korea and in the Japanese metropole. A 1938 article in the *Maeil sinbo*, a Korean-language mouthpiece of the Government-General of Korea, called on readers to raise funds for warm jackets and cold-weather clothing for self-defense corps members "shivering in the cold" while protecting the colony.[145] In a July 1936 issue of the Japanese metropolitan newsmagazine *Asahi gurafu*, author Noritake Kazuo described the scene of "self-defense brigade" members conducting nighttime patrol on the frozen river's ice, continuously calling out "*nuguyo, nuguyo*" (Korean: Who's there? Who's there?) in a "sorrowful tone." Noritake praised these villagers for their determination "not to let bandits cross even one foot into Korea," asserting later that "the greater part of border security success can be attributed to these young men."[146]

While observers wrote admiringly about the "self-defense corps," the latter's service to the empire was anything but voluntary. Internal police documents describe the substantial

[142] *Kokkyō keibi*, 41; "Kukkyŏng kyŏngbi ŭi kongnoja chagyŏngdan e chi'sa," *Tonga ilbo*, February 22, 1928.
[143] "Kukkyŏng kyŏngbi ŭi kongyŏngja," *Maeil sinbo*, February 24, 1938.
[144] Noritake Kazuo, *Ōryōkkō,* 45.
[145] "Kukkyŏng kyŏngbi ŭi kongyŏngja."
[146] "Hokusen kokkyō keibi," 5; Noritake Kazuo, *Ōryokkō* (Tokyo: Daiichi Shuppan Kyōkai, 1943), 45.

involvement of colonial police in their selection and training.[147] The memoir of one Korean who grew up in the border county of Sakchu recalled how "one to two village residents were called up every evening to keep guard during the night under the of banner of 'border security.' If the sound of a barking dog or something similar was heard across the frozen ice...we had to stare and watch with an intensity that pierced the frozen darkness."[148] On July 23, 1925, the *Tonga ilbo* reported farmers' complaints in Ch'osan county, North Pyŏngan Province after police officials decided to eliminate five border outposts and replace them with regular river patrols composed of local residents.[149] But in the end, self-preservation forced many young men in rural communities to join these law enforcement groups. Between the intimidating tactics of colonial police and the threat of "bandit" attacks, the specter of violence was a regular fact of life for all "self-defense corps" members and a likely factor behind their involvement in border security. First to have encountered guerrilla forces crossing the frozen Yalu during the 1934 "Tosŏng incident," self-defense corps members often paid a heavy price for their connection to colonial authority. This was the case during the March 1936 Taegil raid when one "self-defense corps" member, a Korean villager named Pak Kil-rok, was killed by a guerrilla bomb.[150]

Similar tactics were used by the Manchukuo puppet regime created by the Japanese in Manchuria to mobilize populations against "bandits" on the other side of the border. The reinvigoration of the anti-Japanese guerilla movement challenged Japanese attempts to stabilize their rule in northeast China. In response, Manchukuo authorities mobilized locals into "self-defense groups" (J: jieidan, C: ziweituan) that resembled those in Korea. They also implemented a *baojia* (Japanese: hokō) system of collective responsibility for local security that was based on

[147] "Keppyōki keibi ni kansuru ken."
[148] *Sakchu kunji*, 171
[149] "Punmang han nonggi e nongmin ŭl kyŏngbi e sayong," *Tonga ilbo*, July 23, 1925
[150] *Kokkyō no hana*, 18.

traditional Chinese precedents as well as Japanese pacification policy in colonial Taiwan.[151] Under this policy, allegations of colluding with guerrilla fighters could lead to violent reprisals not only against individuals but against entire communities. To further discourage local support of anti-Japanese guerrilla movements, Manchukuo authorities wrested peasants from their land and gathered them into closely guarded "collective hamlets" (J: *shūdan buraku*), where they were forced to display identification papers upon entering and leaving. This policy inflicted unprecedented hardship as deadly disease spread rampantly in the cramped collective villages and farmers were forced to abandon much of their farmland in the name of "bandit suppression."[152]

Humans were not the only organisms mobilized in the fight for control of the Yalu border, nor were they the only ones to endure its winters. Two types of animals figure frequently in the writings of colonial border patrol officials: dogs and pigeons. Dogs, preferably those of the hearty German Shepherd breed, were raised at border police and customs stations for use as patrol animals.[153] In the depth of the Yalu winter, border officials wrote sympathetically of their station dogs "refusing to eat" until they had been sufficiently warmed, the cold nights draining them until "they had little energy to bark."[154] Dogs accompanied border police and custom officers on riverside patrols for smugglers and "bandits," with their ferocity in fulfilling their assigned roles inspiring fear among observers in border communities. With characteristic

[151] *Antō-shō kōsho nenpō*, 113.
[152] Tsūka-shō Kōsho, "Kōtoku Gonendo fukō kōsaku jisseki hōkokusho" and Antō shō fukō iinkai, "Fukō kōsaku shinpo jōkyō hōkoku," in *Fukō kōsaku jisshi keikaku gaiyō* (Tsūka-shō Kōsho: 1939), manuscript, Takushoku University Library; Armstrong, 24
[153] *Kokkyō keibi,* 42.
[154] Ibid., 54.

bravado, one police officer declared that all it took was a single dog bark and cry of "who are you!" (*nuguyo*) in Korean to stop many guerrillas from making the border crossing.[155]

While lacking police dogs' ferocious reputation, carrier pigeons were another animal both essential to Yalu River border patrol and susceptible to its climatic extremes. Carrier pigeons were widely used to relay messages between police substations in remote locations such as river islands. They were also used by border police for cross-border "searches" (*naisa*) and "bandit suppression" in the Manchurian frontier.[156] Accounts published by border officials contain numerous expressions of gratitude to these birds, and border police stations were often equipped with pigeon shacks in the event that their services were needed.[157] Used most often during the summer months, the release of pigeons was often stopped in the winter due to climatic concerns.[158] Care had to be taken that pigeons did not freeze to death during the most severe of Yalu winter nights, when temperatures would drop below -40 degrees Celsius.[159] In his 1936 article for the *Asahi graph*, Noritake Kazuo included a list of animals—120 dogs, 194 chickens, 2 ducks, and 4 pigs and cows—which froze to death in the area supervised by the Tonghŭng border police station in the winter of 1935-1936.[160] Such figures confirm Aaron Skabelund's observation that Japanese imperial expansion, including Yalu border security, truly entailed the mobilization of "all creatures great and small."[161]

As in years past, Government-General officials' success in patrolling the Yalu during the 1930s often hinged on successful cooperation with authorities on the "opposite bank" (*taigan*).

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[155] Masui Junji, "Inu to nukuyo to," *Heihoku keishū*, August 1, 1933.
[156] Yahei, *Kokkyō keibi kinenshū*, 200-201.
[157] "Hokusen Kokkyō keibi,"4; *Kokkyō keibi,* 53.
[158] *Kokkyō keibi,* 53.
[159] Ibid., 54.
[160] "Hokusen kokkyō keibi." *Asahi gurafu*, July 15, 1936, 4.
[161]Aaron Skabelund, *Empire of Dogs: Canines, Japan, and the Making of the Modern Imperial World* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), 130.

While such cooperation was significantly easier following the Japanese takeover of Manchuria, bureaucratic rivalries between different colonial governments in Korea and Manchuria meant that it was by no means automatic. After the hasty participation of the Korea-based Chōsen Army in the Manchurian Incident, the first official meeting about border security between the Government-General of Korea and the newly-created Manchukuo government did not take place until January 15, 1933, nearly a year and a half later.[162]

Despite tentative attempts to increase collaboration, officials on both sides of the Yalu differed on the relative importance they attached to policing the "international river" (*kokusai kasen*). While officials in colonial Korea continued to increase the amount of police and military deployed at the border throughout the 1930s, suppression of guerrilla groups in their hideouts north of the Yalu ultimately mattered far more to Manchukuo authorities than the policing of the river itself. This was made evident in December 1934, when the Manchukuo government decided to remove some 200 policemen from the Yalu-Hun River Waterfront Police, cutting the overall size of the force in half.[163] For authorities in colonial Korea, this decision seemed to confirm that they bore the brunt of Yalu border security. When asked by a newspaper reporter about the potential effects of this move, an official from North Pyŏngan Province replied that while "it was difficult to say it would not affect their operations, we in North Pyŏngan haven't really been able to rely on them for much help [in the past]."[164] In addition to disagreements over border policing, Manchukuo authorities also complained about colonial Korean policemen's border trespassing in a manner similar to their Chinese predecessors. Such disputes were cited in a 1937 agreement between police officials in North Pyŏngan Province, which noted the "friction

[162] "Chosŏn kwa Manju kan e kukkyŏng kyŏngbi hoeŭi," *Tonga ilbo*, January 10, 1933.
[163] Antō-shō Kōsho Sōmuchō Sōmuka, *Antō-shō kōsho nenpō: Kōtoku ninen* (Antō [Dandong]: Dōchō, 1936), 119.
[164] "Yahon kukwŏn ŭi chŏngni ro kukkyŏng kyŏngbi e isang," *Maeil sinbo*, January 29, 1935.

and discord" caused by "lack of contact" between authorities on opposing sides of the river. This same agreement also described the icebound season as the most urgent time for cross-border cooperation, showing how conflicts over border policing were linked to entrenched seasonal anxieties.[165]

Even with these tensions, Japanese military and police officials continued to launch brutal counter-insurgency campaigns against Manchurian guerrillas. Winter was the typical season for "bandit suppression" campaigns, which mobilized thousands of troops and policemen from across Manchukuo and Korea and often destroyed whole villages accused of harboring rebels. The choice of winter for counter-insurgency campaigns was motivated by a number of factors, including the scarcity of supplies for anti-Japanese guerrillas, which was hoped to induce their quick surrender, and the ability to track insurgents' footprints in the freshly fallen snow. In a 2009 interview recalling his participation in Yalu "bandit-suppression" campaigns, former Japanese soldier Takamura Eizō cited such explanations while declaring that summertime counter-insurgency "simply didn't work." Takamura also punctuated his recollections with exclamations about the border region's cold: "I was so shocked when I went by just how cold, so cold it was. Thirty below. God was it fierce!"[166]

The correspondence of Communist guerrilla leaders confirms that winter was indeed a time of considerable hardship. Even as border police writings described the icebound season as a prime moment for "bandit" attack, guerrilla leaders first had to convince their comrades that operating in the winter at all was a good idea. In a letter circulated to Communist guerrilla leaders throughout Northeast China, one Chinese commander argued that despite the extreme cold and a lack of material resources when compared to the summer, "we must oppose the

[165] Matusda, 542-544;"Kokkyō keibi renraku tagō ni kansuru ken," National Archives of Korea, CJA0002478.
[166] "Manshū kara no hikiage taikensha: Takamura Eizō-san."

tendency to say 'we cannot engage in guerrilla attacks during the winter'."[167] Other guerrilla leaders' writings are also filled with concerns about a lack of warm clothes and other supplies necessary to pass the harsh Manchurian winter, a desperation which may have motivated them to carry out further raids.[168] Colonial border police might have complained about the cold and ice, but when compared to the underequipped anti-Japanese guerrillas the odds were still very much in their favor.

By the 1930s Japanese officials increasingly used popular media to muster resources for wintertime border security from an empire-wide audience. In contrast to the decade before the 1931 Manchurian Incident, when salacious tales of "rebellious Koreans" colored most Japanese depictions of imperial border security, the creation of Manchukuo brought with it a host of new existential threats.[169] With bloody skirmishes erupting on the Chinese-Manchukuo and Soviet-Manchukuo borders and massive pacification campaigns occurring within Manchukuo itself, the continued guerrilla threat on the Sino-Korean border seemed less central.[170] To remind distant readers of the Manchurian-Korean border's continued importance, officials in Korea, particularly those in the Government-General of Korea Police Affairs Bureau and the police department of North Pyŏngan Province, disseminated depictions of Manchurian-Korean border security through a variety of mediums, including the new technologies of radio and film as well as published commemorative albums, newspapers, and magazines.

In a bid to elicit greater interest and sympathy, the majority of border security depictions focused on the winter-time icebound season and the attendant challenges of policing the frozen

[167] Dongbei kang Ri lianjun shiliao bianxiezu, *Dongbei kang Ri lianjun shiliao* , vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi shiliao chubanshe, 1987), 15r
[168] Ibid., 114.
[169] Andre Haag, "Fear and Loathing in Imperial Japan."
[170] Ozawa, 36.

Yalu. In the process these special radio broadcasts, commemorative albums, magazine articles, and films propagated what might be called an "icebound masculinity," trading stories of stoic male policemen enduring bitter winters and grisly gunfights as a way of highlighting the virtues of the colonial project.[171]

Radio was one important medium through which this message was disseminated. Border-security related radio broadcasts became regular features in the 1930s, often featuring Yalu-themed songs such as the "Northern Korea Border Security Song" or "Yalu River Melody" before concluding with celebrity pleas for "comfort packages" to be sent to border police.[172] One January 23, 1936 radio program broadcasted throughout colonial Korea and Japan, entitled "a night of comfort" (*imon no yoru*), began with a description of a solitary policeman making his nighttime patrol rounds while fighting off the bitter winter cold. As one presenter explained, winter was "the most important time" for border security.[173] At approximately two hundred *li* in length, the frozen Yalu "could be crossed over by bandits freely at any time, and thus it is difficult to prevent even one of them from entering Korea."[174]

In addition to radio, print media also afforded border officials an opportunity to broadcast their wintertime deprivations. Beginning in the early 1930s, policemen from North Pyŏngan Province, the largest and most populous Korean province along the Sino-Korean border and a

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[171] Comparisons can be drawn to discussions of "Arctic masculinity" in the context of Arctic exploration, which one scholar has described as an "emphasis on physical strength, roughness, ingenuity, and self-realization." See Lena Aarekol, "Arctic Trophy Hunters, Tourism and Masculinities, 1827–1914," *Acta Borealia*, 33:2 (2016): 123-139.

[172] Period sources indicate that such broadcasts were at least partially successful in meeting their intended objectives. In March 1937, for instance, a group of forty-five local schoolchildren presented a "pure-hearted" donation of funds to representatives of the Government-General of Korea in Tokyo. Apparently they had been inspired to do so after hearing about the experiences of border police officers on the radio: "Kukkyŏng kyŏngbiwŏn ege sunjunhan haktong hŏngŭm," *Maeil sinbo*, March 18, 1937. Donation campaigns for border security policemen were also spearheaded by organizations like the Korea branch of the Japan-wide "Patriotic Women's Association" (*aikoku fujinkai*), which raised money to donate winter clothing and machine guns to border police stations: "Kukkyŏng kyŏngbi huwŏn," *Maeil sinbo*, December 1, 1935.

[173] Kokkyō to sono keibi, 7

[174] Ibid., 11

frequent target of guerrilla raids, began publishing photograph-rich commemorative albums.[175] One such volume, simply entitled *Kokkyō keibi* (Border security), contained numerous short essays solicited from border policemen that emphasized the special hardship stemming from frigid winter temperatures and guerrilla raids. As one policeman wrote, wintertime patrol constituted the "real work of border patrol duty. Spring, summer, and autumn on the border are for the replenishment of energy and a waiting period for the icebound season to come again. This isn't false stoicism or a bluff; I imagine that anyone who has served in a post on the frontlines would feel the same."[176]

In the same publication, Japanese police chief Morinishi Takejirō described his experience weathering the coldest temperatures ever recorded on the Korean peninsula, -43.6 Celsius (-46.48 Fahrenheit) at the Chunggangjin police station on January 12, 1931.[177] "It's impossible for me to describe in words the cold of -43.6 Celsius," wrote Morinishi. "Even though the fire of the *ondol*[178] is lit and the bottom of my futon is hot to the point of burning, the top of my futon is as cold as ice." Hair washed with warm water would immediately freeze, and if one were to run his fingers through their hair it would easily break off. The eating of raw fish or *sashimi* was done "with bellies flat against the ondol-heated floor," lest the essentially frozen fish be digested improperly. At one point, Morinishi even had to borrow a hatchet and a saw from a local field office of the Government-General of Korea's Forestry Bureau to prepare a frozen fish

[175] See, for example, Heian Hokudō Keisatsubu , *Kokkyō no mamori*, (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Heian Hokudō Keisatsubu, 1933).
[176] *Kokkyō keibi,* 47. Credit goes to Russell Burge for this translation.
[177] This temperature is a full -2.6 degrees colder than the lowest-ever observed temperature in Japan proper, -41 Celsius at Asahikawa, Hokkaido in 1902.
[178] An underfloor heating system used in traditional Korean homes.

for dinner. "I've lived in Korea and Manchuria for 28 years," Morinishi wrote, "but this kind of cold was a first."[179]

Photographs of winter and summertime Yalu border security, along with accompanying text, were also featured in a special "Northern Korea border security" edition of the *Asahi gurafu*. As the introduction to the special edition read in sensational tone:

> Bandits! Smugglers! The water of the two hundred li-long Yalu River forming the Korean-Manchurian border freezes to the color of a bayonet in the winter and in the summer burns like a machine gun's touch hole. Here our comrades on patrol put their lives in continuous danger. The lifeline of Japan stretches to the north and south, but here on the northern edge of the peninsula, we must not forget the red warning line that has been drawn.[180]

As befitting the magazine's genteel metropolitan audience, the article also prominently depicted the wives and children of border policemen in their roles as guardians of imperial domestic sensibility.[181] As a feminine antidote to portrayals of male border police suffering alone along the frigid Yalu, Japanese publications like the *Asahi gurafu* highlighted policemen's wives' responsibility for protecting the welcoming warmth of border officials' homes, both figuratively and literally. A police wife interviewed by a Japanese settler newspaper in Korea described caring for her husband's frostbite wounds after he returned from wintertime counter-insurgency campaigns, while in a 1934 article in the popular women's magazine *Shufu no tomo* (Housewife's friend) police wife Kuromitsu Yoshiko described the "tremendous" costs required to fuel the *ondol* underground heater of their home as one of their family's major expenses.[182]

Noticeably absent from these accounts of imperial domesticity along the frozen Yalu were the voices of Korean wives of ethnically Korean border policeman. The colonial border

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[179] *Kokkyō keibi,* 53-56.
[180] "Hokusen Kokkyō keibi." *Asahi gurafu*, July 15, 1936, 2.
[181] Ibid., 1-2, 9.
[182] "Kokkyō no omoide o kataru," *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun Seisen ban*, June 12, 1942; Kuromitsu Yoshiko, "Gesshū kyūjū en de kokkyō keibi junsa buchō no kakei," *Shufu no tomo*, August 1, 1934, 164.

police force responsible for much of the day-to-day work of border surveillance was throughout the colonial period around 30%-40% Korean in its composition, of whom an appreciable number had families.[183] Yet while Japanese police wives' service to the empire was widely heralded, the work of their Korean counterparts was rarely discussed in Japanese-language sources. Korean-language media also hardly mentioned these women—preferring to focus instead when possible on the plight of those Korean women victimized by the colonial security regime. What does survive in the archive are haunting images like figure 3.3, a wintertime photograph from a 1933 border police photo album which shows a cold-looking Korean border police wife and her Japanese counterpart surrounded by thickly-bundled male policemen stationed at one remote police outpost.

Figure 3.3:Border police and family members

Source: Heian Hokudō Keisatsubu, *Kokkyō no mamori*, (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Heian Hokudō Keisatsubu, 1933), 52.

[183] According to a 1936 survey, 1,541 of the total 2,383 policemen stationed along the border "frontline" were married (approximately 65%): "Kokkyō Dai ichisen kinmu keisatsukan kazokusu chō, Korean National Archives, CJA0002454 A complete breakdown of the ethnic composition for each police outpost on the border can be found in Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, "Kokkyō Dai ichi, nisen keisatsu haichihyō, Shi Shōwa go-nen ji Shōwajūichi-nen; Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku , "Kokkyō Dai issen, "Dai nisen keisatsukan haichi kankei," Shi Shōwa jūni-nen ji Shōwa jūshichi-nen (1937-1942).

Media depictions of Yalu border security and the dangers of the frozen river culminated in the 1943 silver-screen production of *Suicide Squad at the Watch Tower* (*Bōrō no kesshitai*).[184] Produced by Toho Co. Ltd., a major Tokyo film studio, the film is set eight years earlier in a remote Korean village on the upper reaches of the Yalu. During the summer and fall the village is an idyllic place where residents live in harmony under Japanese colonial rule. Suspense builds, however, as winter approaches and what sounds like rifle shots emanate from the river's direction. The sound is actually that of the Yalu freezing over, which portends the coming of the "bandits" who live across the border.[185] The film thus reflected a well-entrenched vision of the Yalu as a riparian border whose threats were seasonal as well as political.[186]

Conclusion- Negotiating a Seasonal Border

Examining the Yalu's history through a seasonal lens helps recreate the limits of state power and lived experience of border violence along this contested crossroads of empire. A seasonally-inflected history moves beyond linear narratives of inevitable colonization, war, or environmental decline. It reveals how shifting perceptions of time and cyclical seasonal patterns were a critical part of the Yalu's liquid geography. The changing seasonal movements and

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[184] Scholars have previously analyzed this film for its propagandistic theme of ethnic harmony between Japanese officials and colonized Koreans. See, for example, Naoki Mizuno, "A Propaganda Film Subverting Ethnic Hierarchy?: Suicide Squad at the Watchtower and Colonial Korea," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, 2 no. 1 (2013): 62-88; Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2011), 249-258.

[185] Fujitani, 307-308.

[186] *Suicide Squad at the Watchtower* was not the first Japanese film to depict the Sino-Korean border. An earlier 1925 silent production entitled *Daichi ha hohoemu* (The continent smiles) prominently featured a scene where the main protagonist narrowly escaped death at the hands of vengeful Korean bandits along the Yalu. Reflecting the earlier decade's emphasis on the *kaihyōki*, this scene took place during the Yalu summer rather than winter. The film was evidently well-received at the time, though budget considerations prevented the directors from engaging in actual location shooting along the Yalu. Unfortunately, film scholar Yang In-sil notes that no known extant copy of the film reel survives to this day. For more on the film and how it was received, see Yang, "1920 nendai shikaku media no ichidanmen: 'Daichi ha hohoemu' to 'Chōsen,'" *Ritsumeikan sangyō shakai ronshū* 43, no. 1 (June 2007): 35-56.

anxieties of border residents and officials alike were materially rooted in a thawing, flooding, and freezing river environment. They were also discursively shaped in a context of Sino-Japanese rivalry, Japanese imperialism, and Korean and Chinese anti-colonial nationalism. By the 1930s the practical consequences and discursive representation of seasonal border surveillance shifted as fears of the wintertime ice became nearly all-consuming.

By late 1936-1937, plans were announced that portended significant transformations for Yalu border security and its patterns of seasonal change. First, on October 29, 1936, an agreement on border policing was concluded between Ueda Kenkichi of the Kwantung Army (which had preeminent power in the affairs of the Manchukuo state) and Governor-General Minami Jirō. While joint "bandit suppression" campaigns between Manchukuo and the GGK had been ongoing since the early 1930s, their meeting addressed lingering disagreements over Government-General officials' border crossings and set the stage for even larger joint suppression campaigns to follow.[187] Finally in 1937 the Manchukuo and colonial Korean governments announced plans to build a massive hydroelectric facility on the Yalu River: the Sup'ung Dam, second largest in the world at the time of its completion.

As will be examined in chapter five, these agreements which took place were part of a larger project to assimilate and "obliterate" the Yalu border during the period 1937 to 1945. These in turn would have major consequences for traditional seasonal patterns of border life, including the disappearance of winter ice on the lower Yalu. But first, we will turn to another problem that consumed cross-border authorities—smuggling, especially as it thrived in the narrow liquid corridor between the border cities of Andong and Sinŭiju.

[187] Matusda, 542; "Senman ichinyo no kiso kakuritsu," *Chūgai shōgyō shinpō*, October 31, 1936.

Chapter 4: Smuggling and the Yalu's Competing Sovereignties

Violent encounters with customs officials were nothing new for Yalu smugglers. But even for the most battle-hardened, the morning of August 4, 1936 was especially deadly. At around 10:00am, Manchukuo customs officials in Andong received word that three sampans manned by nearly one hundred Korean smugglers were operating in nearby waters. Hours later customs officials were in hot pursuit, chasing the bootleggers as they attempted to flee to safety on the Korean side of the river. As one of the Koreans' vessels escaped, the other two became locked in battle with the customs officials' motorboats. Smugglers pelted customs officials with stones and beat them with clubs, while customs officers, according to one source, threatened smugglers with gunshots and knives. By the end, embattled smugglers leapt in the murky waters of the Yalu in a last-ditch attempt to escape. Twenty-five of them drowned. Popular Korean-language media responded to customs "cruelty" with outrage, while colonial officials in Korea condemned Manchukuo customs officers' intrusion into their administrative territory.[1]

By focusing on smuggling, this chapter demonstrates how the Yalu's liquid geography was defined by the fractured, competing, and ill-defined zones of political control imposed on the river's seasonally changing surface. The tensions surrounding the incident described above highlight the complex factors that made smuggling a particularly intractable problem for Yalu border officials. While the anti-Japanese guerrilla raids discussed in the previous chapter occurred all along the river's length, most smuggling took place in a circumscribed riparian space adjacent to the Japanese railway concession in Andong. Even within this limited stretch, customs officials contended with the competing administrative claims of the Japanese colonial

[1] Zeikan Gaishi Hensan Iinkai, *Manshūkoku zeikan gaishi* (Shinkyō [Changchun]: Keizaibu Kanseika, 1944), 302-303; "Andong hyŏn segwalli ŭi p'okhaeng," *Tonga ilbo*, August 8, 1936; "Pulbŏp haengwi rŭl inha nŭnga?" *Tonga ilbo*, August 9, 1936.

government in Korea, various regimes on the Chinese side of the river, and the South Manchurian Railway Company, which administered the railway concession until its dissolution in 1937. These claims were impossible to clearly delineate on the river's murky surface, a fact that only exacerbated local tensions. Furthermore, the annual explosion of wintertime smuggling heightened official angst as smugglers rushed to move goods across the frozen river.

I define "smuggling" as an illicit economic activity distinct from the guerrilla and "bandit" raids covered in the previous chapter. While the motivations of those denounced as "bandits" (J: *hizoku*) could be just as economic as smugglers, border officials distinguished both in terms of terminology and administrative responsibility. Controlling the economic threat posed by smuggling was the primarily responsibility of customs on either side of the border, whereas "bandit suppression" was the duty of police and military officials.[2] It may be asked how useful "smuggling" is as an analytical category when the boundaries between licit and illicit trade were as porous as the Yalu border itself. While noting the difficulties that come with a concept that is inherently situational (trade deemed smuggling by officials on one side of the border is licit trade to the other, and vice versa), I use the term in any context where the activity in question deliberately seeks to evade or defraud customs regulation on either side of the river.

The legally marginal practices of smuggling have increasingly moved to the center of historians' attention, though significant gaps in this emerging scholarship remain.[3] Eric Tagliacozzo's work on smuggling in British and Dutch colonial Southeast Asia and Philip Thai's

[2] While this distinction between customs officials and policemen reflects administrative priorities, on a day-to-day basis the enforcement of customs laws along the Yalu border was also tasked to border police, especially along the upper Yalu where the reach of customs agents was weakest. See, for example, "Hokusen Kokkyō keibi." *Asahi gurafu*, July 15, 1936, 5-6.

[3] On the links between smuggling and early modern globalization, for example, see Michael Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014). Smuggling along another riparian border, the Rio Grande, had yielded studies such as George T. Díaz, *Border Contraband: A History of Smuggling across the Rio Grande* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

research on smuggling in modern China both demonstrate, for example, the links between customs regulation and the emergence of modern political economies.[4] The new scholarship on smuggling has paid inadequate attention, however, to climate and the links between seasonal changes in local environments and illegal trade. For scholars of Japanese imperial history, the literature on smuggling also remains underdeveloped. Although some attention has been given to the Kwantung Army-operated opium monopoly in Manchuria, little of this interest extends outside of narcotics to the thriving illicit trade in cloth, precious metals, and other goods which both undergirded and compromised Japanese continental expansion.[5] A recent in-depth study of Dalian—a Japanese colonial city which rivaled Andong in status as the smuggling capital of southern Manchuria—contains only limited references to this trade.[6] And while individual facets of the Yalu underground economy have been covered by historians in Japan, China, and South Korea, none comprehensively examine this transnational issue using sources in all three major East Asian languages.[7] Existing studies also examine the pre-1932 Chinese Maritime Customs and the post-1932 Manchukuo custom in Andong separately, obscuring the significant similarities between the two.

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[4] Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 2005; Philip Thai. *China's War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State, 1842–1965* (New York City, New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

[5] On the links between Japanese expansionism and opium smuggling, see John M. Jennings, *The Opium Empire: Japanese Imperialism and Drug Trafficking in Asia, 1895-1945* (Praeger: Westport, Connecticut, 1997), and Miriam Kingbserg's more recent work, *Moral Nation: Modern Japan and Narcotics in Global History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013).

[6] What references do exist are overwhelmingly to drug smuggling. See, for example, Emer O'Dwyer, *Significant Soil: Settler Colonialism and Japan's Urban Empire in Manchuria* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 31, 43.

[7] China-based historian Yao Jingzhi's study on smuggling in Northeast China, for example, uses Chinese and English-language sources to narrate the smuggling problem from the perspective of the Chinese Customs until 1931 (Yao Jingzhi, "20 shiji 30 niandaichu Dongbei de zousi wenti," Masters thesis., Xiamen University, 2006), while Japanese scholar Tanaka Ryuichi's examination of "Andong-Sinŭiju smuggling" begins with the Japanese takeover of the customs after the Manchurian Incident (Tanaka Ryūichi, "'Manshūkoku' keisatsu to chiiki shakai: keizai keisatsu no katsudō to sono mujun o chūshin to shite," *Chungang saron* 32 (December 2010), 259-266). One study that attempts to bridge this chronological divide is Korean scholar Yi Ŭnja's "Chungil chŏnjaeng ijŏn sigi Chungguk ŭi kukkyŏng tosi Andong ŭi ijumin—kyoryu wa kaltŭng ŭi ijungju*" Chungguk kŭnhyŏndaesa 62* (June 2014): 95-127, which provides a brief overview of the smuggling problem until 1937 as part of a larger analysis of Korean migrant society in Andong (see pages 118-124).

I will first analyze the origins of the Yalu's illicit economies and the creation of a modern customs regime along the river. I then break down the geographic, climatic, ethnic, and confrontational aspects of this illicit trade during the 1910s-1920s before examining continuities and changes in smuggling enforcement following the Japanese seizure of Manchuria and the creation of the Manchukuo customs. While many scholars have discussed Japanese efforts to establish Manchukuo's alleged autonomy in the realms of discourse and diplomacy, few have analyzed how Manchukuo's political distinctiveness was enforced through daily local practices like customs enforcement on the border with Korea.[8] Like their Chinese predecessors, Manchukuo authorities wrangled with their counterparts in Korea and the Andong railway concession over the smuggling issue. At the same time, Manchukuo officials instituted increasingly aggressive and violent measures to combat smugglers' activities. Smuggling enforcement continued to be defined seasonally, as wintertime especially remained the most active time for illicit trade. The alternatively liquid and icy landscapes of Yalu smuggling were imagined in gendered terms that sympathetically distinguished the female smuggler from the organized "gang"-like activities of the male smuggler. With intensifying enforcement the scale of these illicit economies finally began to retreat, though even these belated effects would prove illusory in the long-term.

Smuggling in the Era of The Chinese Maritime Customs Service

The origins of the Yalu's underground economies are as old as the border itself. As discussed in previous chapters, authorities in Chosŏn Korea and late imperial China had long grappled unsuccessfully with illicit border crossers. Dealing in valuable goods such as timber,

[8] For a representative discursive study of Manchukuo, see Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

ginseng, salt, and furs, smugglers blatantly ignored dynastic bans that limited cross-border trade to a highly formalistic series of tributary missions. Rampant smuggling along the early modern Sino-Korean borderland is described in the journal of Pak Chiwŏn, a Chosŏn official who accompanied a 1780 tribute embassy to Beijing. As he and other members of his entourage waited on the shores of the Yalu to cross into Qing China, Pak expressed surprise both at the inconvenience and inefficacy of the anti-smuggling inspection they were subjected to:

> People are asked for their name, residence, age, facial features, height, et cetera. The inspectors of the embassy and the Ŭiju office examine every single piece of luggage to check for any illegal items, such as gold, silver, pearls, ginseng, furs, or weapons. Attendants and servants take off their shirts and pants and open their luggage to show to the officials. Bundles of linens and clothes and various boxes are scattered all around the shore. Without these inspections, there is no way to prevent smuggling. However, the inspections inevitably create great inconvenience. Nonetheless, even this inspection is nothing but a ritual. Since the Ŭiju merchants sneak across the river prior to the inspection, what effect does it really have?[9]

As the nature of the Yalu boundary evolved by the twentieth century, so did cross-border smuggling. The start of what could be called the first modern customs regime along the Sino-Korean border began in 1883 after the conclusion of the Twenty-Four Rules for the Traffic on the Frontier between Liaodong and Korea. This agreement between the Qing and Chosŏn legalizing non-tributary border trade also opened a Korean customs office along the border in Ŭiju.[10]

The opening of Andong as an international treaty port in 1906 hailed further changes to the border economy, and by the next year (1907), the Chinese Maritime Customs Service officially opened its Andong branch. Founded by French, British, and American consuls in 1854

[9] Seonmin Kim, *Ginseng and Borderland: Territorial Boundaries and Political Relations Between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea, 1636-1912* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 109.

[10] Kirk Larsen argues that this agreement and other modifications to pre-existing tributary relations during this period were part of a larger Qing borrowing of gunboat diplomacy and trade monopoly methods from Western imperialists. See Larsen, *Traditions, Treaties, and Trade* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 90.

and imposed on a fractured Qing state amidst the internal chaos of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), the Maritime Customs Service had rapidly expanded from its original mission of overseeing customs revenue collection in Shanghai to managing over twenty Chinese ports by the turn of the century.[11] Although the Customs ostensibly collected revenues on behalf of the Chinese state, the inability of the Qing and succeeding Republican-era governments to set their own tariff rates until 1929, combined with the almost exclusive dominance of higher administrative positions within the Customs Service by foreign personnel (primarily British), reflected its origins as a tool of foreign gunboat diplomacy. The first foreign Commissioner of Customs to arrive in Andong was the British-born L.N. Palen.[12] Meanwhile, Japanese officials in Protectorate-era Korea were also taking steps to strengthen the reach of the Korean customs along the Yalu by opening a branch in Sinŭiju in 1906.[13]

Even as this regulatory framework was being put into place, however, the activity of Yalu smugglers showed few signs of abatement. A 1910 article in the Shanghai-based *Shen Bao* newspaper described how Koreans were regularly crossing the river to sell illicit salt.[14] Salt had long been a lucrative government monopoly in China, and the economic pressures faced by the declining Qing state before the 1911 Xinhai Revolution and early Republican governments afterwards gave even greater urgency to the policing of this valuable stream of revenue. In

[11] According to "Notes on China and Chinese Subjects," *Mesny's Chinese Miscellany*, April 2, 1896, the Imperial Customs Service managed twenty-four ports in China and also helped oversee four ports in Korea as of 1896. Philip Thai notes that the Maritime Customs Service had a presence in almost fifty Chinese ports by 1930. Thai, *China's War on Smuggling*, 30.
[12] For a chronological list of foreign commissioners of the Andong customs, see Qi Feng, "Jindai Andong haiguan yanjiu," Masters thesis., Liaoning University, 2014, 12.
[13] Shingishū Zeikan, *Shingishū minato ippan* (Shingishū: Shingishū Zeikan, 1937), 1.
[14] "Hanmin nai yi ru shi ye," *Shen Bao*, June 6, 1910.

addition to salt, grain, tobacco, and coins were also smuggled across the border in large quantities.[15]

The 1907 creation of a Japanese extraterritorial settlement and railway concession in Andong, immediately across the river from the new railroad city of Sinŭiju in Japanese-occupied Korea, created an ideal legal haven for bootleggers' activities. As a result of treaties concluded between the Qing state and Japan in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War , the policing of the Japanese settlement in Andong was under the jurisdiction of the Governor General of the Kwantung Leased Territory in Dalian rather than Chinese officials.[16] Although the presence of a Maritime Customs Service outpost near the Andong railway station gave Chinese officials an administrative toehold in the settlement, they were otherwise powerless to use weapons, issue citations, or perform their duties without the cooperation of concession police. Such an arrangement proved a perennial source of frustration for customs officials on the Chinese bank of the Yalu.[17]

This illicit economy based around the Sinŭiju-Andong corridor further thrived after the completion of the Yalu River Railway bridge in 1911. Just as the scale of legal trade across this rail route connecting Korea and China expanded, so did smugglers' activities. While stories of individual salt and coin smugglers splashed across newspaper headlines, early records from the Chinese Customs in Andong show that corporate customs evasion by Japanese merchants operating on the newly-opened South Manchurian Railway Company (SMRC) was just as, if not more, pervasive than other forms of smuggling. In 1914, for example, a full 69.8% of customs

[15] Zhongguo bianjiang shi di yanjiu zhongxin, *Dongbei bianjiang dangan xuanji* (Hereafter referred to as DBDX), (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue ch banshe , 2007) , 61:248-250; "Pyŏngan pukto: Tonae," *Maeil sinbo*, May 21, 1914; "Ŏpchŏn ŭl milsuip," *Maeil sinbo*, November 27, 1918.
[16] On the Kwantung Leased Territory 's Government-General and its specific administrative responsibilities, see O'Dwyer, 6-8.
[17] A 1916 Chinese customs report described the Japanese settlement as the "heart" of Yalu smuggling operations: DBDX, 62:96.

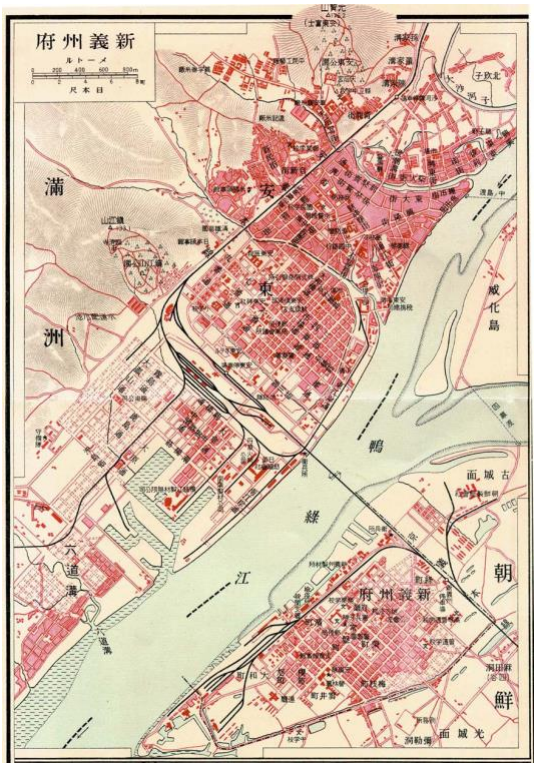
violations recorded in Andong were by Japanese merchants, many of them contracted by the SMRC, who falsely reported the amount or value of their goods. Statistics such as this show that even after a special one-third reduction in customs rates on goods traveling over the Yalu via rail was negotiated between the Chinese and Japanese governments in 1913, attempts to defraud the Chinese customs remained rampant.[18]

Smuggling was by no means limited to the Chinese bank of the river. A July 15, 1922 article in the Korean-language *Tonga ilbo* reported that 125 cases of smuggling had been recorded in Sinŭiju so far that month, an increase of nearly 60% over the previous year's figures.[19] Goods commonly smuggled into Sinŭiju from China included alcohol, tobacco, and cloth, the combined fines for which equaled 68,000 yen by 1924.[20] As this illicit economy expanded, the frontier city of Sinŭiju came to be closely identified with smuggling in the larger public imagination. 'What thing is most plentiful in Sinŭiju?" a 1923 article in the Korean magazine *Kaebyŏk* rhetorically asked its readers. "Grain? Cargo? Fish? No. Then maybe sorghum wine?...No, it is none of those things. It is smugglers."[21]

By mid-1920s, Yalu smuggling came to assume the specific geographic and ethnic characteristics that would define its place in the regional economy for years to come. The geography of the Yalu's illicit economy was, to use a Dickensian term, a "tale of two cities." Andong and Sinŭiju (figure 4.1). While the anti-Japanese guerrilla raids discussed in the previous chapter occurred all along the border, the bulk of Yalu smuggling occurred in a relatively circumscribed stretch of river adjacent to two particular sites: the Yalu River Railroad Bridge and the district of Liudaogou in the Andong railway concession.

[18] DBDX, 61:136-219.
[19] "Kukkyŏng segwan pŏmch'ik chŭngga," *Tonga ilbo*, July 15, 1922.
[20] "Sinŭiju esŏ kŏmgŏhan pŏmch'ik kŏn su," *Sidae ilbo*, July 14, 1925.
[21] "Kukkyŏng esŏ ŏttŏn chaptongsani," *Kaebyŏk*, August 1, 1923.

Figure 4.1: Map of the twin border cities of Andong (upper left) and Sinŭiju (lower right) intersected by the Yalu River



Source: Shingishūfu, Chōsen Testsudō Kyoku, 1920

As the only non-aquatic means of crossing the river most months of the year, the railroad bridge was a common target for smugglers. As previously mentioned, transporting goods by rail and then misstating their amount or value was one common tactic for merchants seeking to fatten their profit margin at the expense of customs officials.[22] In addition, individuals attempted to smuggle undeclared goods within passenger's luggage. Goods frequently trafficked in this manner included gold, silver, and opium, the latter of which was even stowed in train pillows.[23] To combat the concealing of items in personal luggage, Japanese and Chinese officials began

[22] See note 19.
[23] *Manshūkoku zeikan gaishi*, 301.

joint inspections of traveler's goods at the Andong railway station soon after the railway bridge's completion.[24] Passengers traveling beyond Andong in either direction were required to switch trains for the duration of their journey, an interruption that provided an ideal space of time for such an inspection to take place.[25] The level of inspection was deep and invasive enough to cause inconvenience, if not outright embarrassment for ordinary travelers making the cross-border journey. Even relatively privileged Japanese travelers were not immune to the shame of being treated like potential smugglers. In her 1928 account of a SMRC-sponsored journey through Manchuria, Japanese poet Yosano Akiko related how Japanese schoolchildren returning to Japan from a Manchurian sightseeing trip were forced to leave out their open bags for customs inspection, revealing to passers-by knapsacks stuffed with several cartons of Western and Chinese-made cigarettes. Unsure whether the cigarettes were intended as family souvenirs or placed there by a teacher eager to supplement his meager salary, Yosano nonetheless expressed disgust at a Japanese customs bureaucracy seemingly devoid of "empathy or human kindness." [26]

The Yalu River railroad bridge offered smuggling opportunities not only by rail but also on the eight-foot wide pedestrian pathways that abutted the railway tracks on either side. The bridge was opened to general pedestrian traffic soon after its completion as part of a larger effort to economically integrate Andong and Sinŭiju and project Japanese power into southern Manchuria. The flip side of this integration, however, was the attendant difficulty of preventing unwanted goods and individuals from also traveling across the border. Every day a motley

[24] Ibid., 174.
[25] This and other provisions related to customs inspections were included in a November 2, 1911 agreement between the Japanese and Qing governments on Yalu border trade, the English translation of which can be found in John MacMurray, ed., *Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894-1919*, Volume 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1921), 914.
[26] The record of Yosano's travel to Andong can be found in Yosano Akiko and Yosano Tekkan, *Manmō yūki* (Osaka: Ōsaka Yagō Shoten, 1930), 92-98. For an English translation of Yosano's travelogue, see Yosano Akiko, *Travels in Manchuria and Mongolia: A Feminist Poet from Japan Encounters Prewar China*, trans. Joshua Fogel (New York : Columbia University Press, 2001).

assortment of students, laborers, peddlers, and others jostled their way across the paths on rickshaws, bicycles, and by foot to their destinations on either side of the river. A February 1931 article in the *Maeil sinbo* counted a total of 1,736 people who crossed the bridge during a one-hour interval on the previous January 31st, a figure which averages to roughly twenty-nine people per minute.[27] During the spring through autumn months, foot traffic also typically peaked immediately before and after times when the central portion of the bridge swung open to boat traffic and pedestrians were not allowed on the bridge. Taking advantage of these bottleneck periods, smugglers attempted to meld into the crowd and evade the suspicion of onlooking customs officials. In other cases, smugglers on rickshaws or bicycles would rush quickly across to the safety of accomplices elsewhere in Sinŭiju or Andong, or most violently, split into two groups, one of which would engage customs officials while the other group blasted past.[28] The most daring would even leap onto or from passing trains or catch goods thrown out of train windows.[29]

Notwithstanding its vulnerability, constant customs surveillance on the railroad bridge ultimately made it a less attractive venue for large-scale smuggling than the liquid surface of the Yalu itself. For goods traveling across the river from Sinŭiju to Andong, the main destination was a marshy corner of the Japanese concession known as Liudaogou. The popularity of Liudaogou as a smuggling entrepôt was explained as follows by a Western commissioner of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service:

> Liutaokou [sic] is a desolate expanse of foreshore situated in nearly the extreme corner of the Japanese settlement limits. Its facilities for smuggling are these: It is a very lonely spot, far from the town and from any probability of interference. It is cut off from

[27] "Apkang ch'ŏlgyo ilil kan tonghaeng insu," *Maeil sinbo*, February 5, 1931.
[28] Chōsen Bōeki Kyōkai, *Chōsen bōekishi* (Keijō [Seoul]: Tōyō Keizai Shinpo Keijō Shikyoku, 1943), 342; Nakamura Mika, "Hutatabi Shingishū no mitsuyu ni tsuite," *Keimu ihō*, August 1935, 81.
[29] Preventive Secretary's Note No. 1," March, 15, 1932, 15. Roy Maxwell Talbot Papers, Sonoma State University Library Special Collections; *Manshūkoku zeikan gaishi*, 301.

> approach by our patrols, except by a very long detour, by a broad creek which running obliquely into the main river just above Liutaokou, scours a deep channel right under the bank there permitting comparatively deep drought native boats to approach close to the shore. A village of the roughest type of Coreans [sic] adjoins this foreshore. Some of the houses are said to be godowns for storing the goods brought across from Shingishu [sic]. The railway yards with their warehouses are within easy reach. The Customs House is nearly two miles away."[30]

As the above description of Liudaogou shows, the liquid geography of Yalu smuggling extended not just to the main channel of the Yalu, but also to the numerous small creeks abutting the river and extending into places like Liudaogou. In the spring through autumn months, such streams allowed nimble smugglers' boats to approach safety easily while preventing access to larger customs surveillance vessels.[31] For the smuggler seeking to evade customs detection, an intimate knowledge of the Yalu's riparian topography was thus an essential survival tool.

The Yalu and its seasonal variations fundamentally influenced the rate and flow of traffic in smuggled goods between the Andong and Sinŭiju shorelines. The only times of the year when environmental factors rendered the Yalu completely inaccessible to illicit trade were the few-day periods immediately before the winter and spring when large chunks of loose, floating ice impeded river access. As the diary of an American commissioner of the Andong customs reveals, these periods provided rare relief to customs administration. Writing in frustrated tone after ice failed to materialize late one November, the commissioner explained: "Continuous mild when I want ice in river to stop the smuggling temporarily at least. It is getting on my nerves now."[32] The springtime thaw was particularly welcome, as it heralded an end to the anarchic accessibility of the frozen river. In a March entry, the same commissioner recorded: "Ice on river becomes

[30] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," Francis Hayley Bell to Frederick Maze, January 6, 1930.
[31] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," Special Dossier for F.H. Bell, May 20, 1929.
[32] Roy Maxwell Talbot Diary, Nov 24, 1931. Roy Maxwell Talbot Papers, Sonoma State University Library Special Collections.

unsafe. All smuggling on ice consequentially ceases. Feel that it will never be as bad again as we contain it better by water."[33]

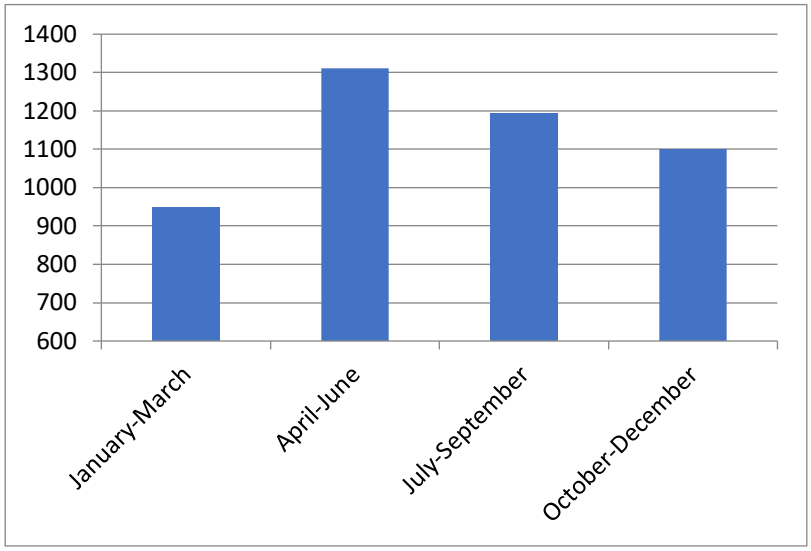
From an administrative standpoint, winter was easily the most difficult season of all for smuggling regulation—a fact borne out in both qualitative and quantitative evidence from the period. A December 18, 1923 article in the *Tonga ilbo* described how both Chinese and Japanese officials were intensifying searches of handheld goods in response to the new "freedom" of movement offered by the river's frozen surface.[34] A report by the Andong Customs commissioner a few months later detailed how since the freezing over of the river there "had not been a single night when rice smuggling had not occurred." All throughout that winter, the report detailed, large groups of mostly Korean smugglers hired by Japanese merchants in Andong had been transporting sacks of grain across the river ice to Korea. There the rice was then shipped to markets in the Japanese metropole, where it could fetch higher prices. When confronted by Chinese officials, the bootleggers would retaliate by throwing stones and otherwise resisting arrest.[35]

A statistical analysis of smuggling enforcement data compiled by the Andong Customs between over a nearly two-decade period (1912-1930) shows that the three-month period from January to March had lower citations than the remainder of the year (see table 4.1).[36]

[33] Roy Maxwell Talbot Diary, March 7, 1932.
[34] "Kukkyŏng segwan ŏmjung ," *Tonga ilbo*, December 18, 1923.
[35] DBDX, 64:428.
[36] Compiled from charts found in DBDX, 60: 235-281, 436-508; 61: 136-219, 376-424; 62: 1-76, 181-266, 372-440; 63:1-58, 189-227, 353-405; 64: 1-44, 227-254, 359-391; 66:384-412; 67: 261-317; 68:118-177; 69:116-174.

Table 4.1- Number of Andong Customs smuggling citations as recorded in three-month quarters

Quarter	Citations
January-March	950
April-June	1311
July-September	1194
October-December	1100



Source: *Dongbei bianjiang dangan xuanji*, v. 60-69. Includes every year during period 1912-1930 except for 1929, for which data is inconsistent.

Such data could indicate a decline in smuggling during the winter. However, the evidence provided by reports like those cited above suggests that the fewer citations were due to the overall decreased efficacy of the wintertime customs than smugglers' unwillingness to brave the winter cold.

Besides its distinctively seasonal nature, frequent references to Koreans in official documents attest to what became another defining component of Yalu smuggling. As the value of goods traded across the Yalu steadily grew, Korean gradually became the dominant ethnic background among the smugglers that operated along the border. Whereas ethnic Koreans made up only 4.3% of smugglers caught in Andong during the year 1914, by a decade later (1924) that percentage had grown to approximately 45.2%, or nearly half of all smuggling citations. At the

end of the 1920s, Koreans made up two-thirds of all smuggling citations.[37] Chinese customs authorities spoke with alarm of the increasing number of Korean "ruffians" (*baotu)*, many of them employed by Japanese merchants in the Andong concession, who regularly transported grain, salt, and other goods across the river.[38] This phenomenon of growing Korean participation in smuggling encouraged an official image of Koreans as inherently lawless and prone to illicit trade. In the words of one American commissioner: "By nature a Korean takes to smuggling like a duck to water." [39] Across the river, a similar perception of Sinŭiju developed as a smuggler's haven and an unruly frontier city.[40]

Of course, blaming smuggling on ethnicity was easier than dealing with the systemic factors that fueled Korean participation in this illicit trade. One major issue was economic disenfranchisement. Even relatively elite Koreans in the border city of Sinŭiju complained about their exclusion from the city's most profitable industry, timber processing, which was overwhelmingly in the hands of Japanese settler capitalists.[41] Another factor encouraging Korean participation in Yalu smuggling was widespread rural poverty under colonial rule and the subsequent migration of ethnic Koreans to Andong and other cities in southern Manchuria, where they enjoyed extraterritorial status as subjects of the Japanese Empire. Whereas only 80 Koreans lived in the Andong railway concession in 1908, by 1917 that number had grown to 1,843, expanding further by 1929 to 8,102 of 58,440 settlement residents (approximately 14 percent).[42] These Korean residents frequently acted as brokers between Japanese and Chinese merchants in Andong and Sinŭiju. Participation in the illicit (though hardly underground)

[37] Ibid.
[38] DBDX, 66:436; DBDX, 64:448.
[39] "Preventive Secretary's Note No. 1," 17.
[40] "Kukkyŏng esŏ ŏttŏn chaptongsani."
[41] Chang Sŏngsik, *Sinŭiju taegwan* (Sinŭiju: Munhwadang, 1931), 176.
[42] "Chungil chŏnjaeng ijŏn sigi Chungguck ŭi kukkyŏng tosi Andong ŭi ijumin, 104.

economy penetrated all levels of Korean migrant society, with marginalized, lower-class Koreans doing the dangerous day-to-day labor of transporting goods while elites provided capital and negotiated with Japanese and Chinese merchants for further investment.[43]

Of course, Korean involvement in smuggling would not have been imaginable without the protection offered by Japanese police authorities in the railway concession. As a result of the Chinese Customs' inability to carry weapons in the Andong railway concession, gangs of smugglers took to throwing stones, wielding clubs and otherwise openly resisting arrest when confronted by customs representatives. A 1921 report by the Andong Customs noted that Liudaogou was "considered a dangerous place for a Customs Officer to try and function, especially at night," citing as evidence an incident two years prior on October 2, 1919, in which an ethnically Korean tidewaiter (an officer who boarded and inspected incoming ships) named Y.P. Kim had been seized by smugglers in their boat, only managing to escape by jumping into the frigid river and swimming to shore.[44] Appeals for help from the Japanese concession police, the same report noted, had largely been in vain. A January 1925 sent by the Andong Customs to the Governor of Fengtian Province related how even large groups of twenty customs agents had been attacked by well over a hundred stone-throwing Korean grain smugglers. In the midst of such violence, the report's author accused Japanese concession police of providing "implicit protection" for smugglers' activities by refusing to intervene.[45] Similar arguments about the complicity of Japanese authorities in smugglers' attacks on Chinese customs officials were repeated in the Chinese popular press.[46]

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[43] Ibid., 120.
[44] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," "Memorandum for Colonel Hayley Bell, p.s.o., Commissioner, Appendix No. 1: Report on Liutaok'ou for Commissioner."
[45] *Dongbei bianjiang dangan xuanji* 66, 444-449.
[46] "Andong Ri ren ji shang Hua yuan an," *Shen Bao*, June 25, 1925.

In response to accusations that Japanese police were in league with smugglers, colonial authorities in Korea made tepid promises to cooperate with their cross-border counterparts on smuggling regulation. Hindering such negotiations, however, was the fractured nature of Japanese authority along the Yalu, which was split between the Japanese Foreign Ministry, (which maintained its own office and consular police force in Andong), the Japanese settlement in Andong (policed by the Government-General of the Kwantung Leased Territory but civilly administered by the South Manchurian Railway Company), and the colonial regime in Korea overseeing Sinŭiju city and North Pyŏngan Province, as well as the main Government-General in Keijō (Seoul). Failure to consult all relevant parties could be damning for Chinese customs officials' efforts at diplomacy. After repeated bloody confrontations between smugglers and officials from the Chinese Salt Inspectorate (an administrative body taxed with policing the long-standing salt monopoly) led to severe injury and even death, Japanese authorities in the Andong concession promised to increase regulation and shut down a salt-processing plant operating within the concession.[47] But when Dongbiandao governor Bing Kezhuang appealed for help from North Pyŏngan governor Tani Takima after the problem continued, Bing's appeals were met with angry rebuttals from the Japanese consul in Andong, who accused Bing of having ulterior motives in circumventing the Japanese Foreign Ministry and opening direct negotiations with local authorities in Korea.[48]

Japanese reluctance to prosecute smuggling also stemmed from the more veiled problem of official corruption. Although the historical paper trail of officials taking bribes or otherwise colluding with smugglers is difficult to trace, existing reports do give clues as to how official venality helped smuggling flourish along the Yalu border. On April 26, 1934, for example, the

[47] "Antō Shisen kokkyō Senjin shio mitsuyunyū jiken ni kansuru ken," JACAR B10073674800405.
[48] Ibid., 405-413.

Tonga ilbo reported the arrest of seven Japanese and Korean policemen in Andong for taking bribes from cloth smugglers.[49] In addition to taking bribes, customs officers also exploited their positions in other ways. In November 1927, eight mostly Japanese customs officials in Sinŭiju were convicted of illegally pocketing rewards meant for civilian informants by apprehending smugglers and then submitting reports filed in the names of their spouses or other non-officials.[50]

By the late 1920s, Sino-Japanese conflicts over the issue of Yalu smuggling were escalating in a manner which mirrored mounting tensions between the two countries. The assassination of Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin by Japanese agents in 1928 epitomized the deteriorating relations between Japanese expansionists and their formerly reliable Chinese collaborators in the face of an increasingly assertive Chinese nationalism. The successful unification of China under the Nationalist regime of Chiang Kai-Shek in 1927, after over a decade of divisive warlord politics, also brought portentous changes to the Chinese Customs. One key change was the new Nationalist regime's recovery of tariff autonomy. Since the First Opium War, the Qing and later Republican governments had been compelled by Western powers to maintain customs duties at the low rate of five percent. Seeking a source of revenue that would support their long-term state-building goals, the new Nationalist government successfully concluded negotiations to regain control over customs rates in 1928.[51] Just months later on February 1, 1929, Nationalist leaders dramatically raised customs rates on goods traveling into the country. While the increase in customs taxes did generate significant revenue for the Nationalist state, it also added dangerous fuel to the already volatile issue of Yalu smuggling. Whereas Chinese customs agents in Andong had previously dealt primarily with salt and grain

[49] "Ibŏn en Andong hyŏnsŏ e Pulsang sagŏn," *Tonga ilbo,* April 26, 1934.
[50] "Segwalli, kyŏnggwan ŭl mangna han Sinŭiju ŭiok kongp'an," *Tonga ilbo,* November 5, 1927.
[51] Thai, 78-79.

smuggling, they now grappled with a wave of illicit imports of cloth and other goods subjected to the new customs rates.[52]

"Since the memorable day of the 1st February, 1929, there has been no peace in Antung [sic] as far as the Custom House is concerned," proclaimed one Chinese customs official.[53] In a 1929 report sent to Customs supervisors in Shanghai, customs employee E. O'Hare included several diary entries detailing customs violations by Korean smugglers and the violent consequences for customs officers who tried to stop them. On March 22, for example, O'Hare recorded how a Japanese employee of the Maritime Customs was "badly beaten by Korean smugglers and thrown into the river at Liutaokow [sic] last night."[54] Also documented within these journal entries was the Customs' ambiguous relationship with the Japanese concession police. On April 23, for example, O'Hare wrote how Japanese police at Liudaogou had turned over six boxes of smuggled contraband to the Customs. On May 6, three Japanese policemen also helped customs officers confiscate two sampans loaded with bags of salt after dispersing the smugglers with threats of force.[55] Just a few months earlier, however, O'Hare recorded an incident that demonstrated Japanese policemen's complicity with smugglers' activities. On March 16, customs officers approached the Japanese police for help confiscating smuggled goods that had recently arrived from the Korean side of the river. Not only did the police refuse, but one Chinese customs officer allegedly heard the smugglers using the police station telephone to tell the owner of the goods that the goods had landed safely.[56] This incident would be repeatedly

[52] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," "Copy of Memorandum on handling over charge of the Andong Customs."
[53] Ibid.
[54] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," "Memorandum for Colonel Hayley Bell, p.s.o., Commissioner, Appendix No. 6: Smuggling by Koreans."
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

cited in Customs commissioners' later reports as evidence of a lack of Japanese sincerity in pursuing the smuggling problem.[57]

Faced with the dramatic escalation of cross-border smuggling and a mandate to increase customs revenues for the new Nationalist government, Customs Service officials were compelled to continue negotiations with Japanese authorities. Such negotiations were a recognition of the Chinese Custom's "powerlessness" in the Japanese concession, which necessitated a focus on "diploma[cy]" over other strategies for smuggling prevention.[58] An early 1929 appeal by Commissioner Fukumoto Jinzaburō (a Japanese employee of the Maritime Customs Service) to the Japanese consul in Andong resulted in a few tenuous promises. First, the Sinŭiju Customs would instruct Japanese merchants to "avail themselves of the railway" rather than use the river to export goods across the border. Second, police in the Andong concession would be ordered to cooperate with the Chinese customs.[59] These measures were soon deemed insufficient, however, as the scale of smuggling continued to grow unabated.

Subsequent commissioners began pressing for more concessions from Japanese authorities. One recurring request by the Chinese Maritime Customs Service was to construct an customs outpost on the Korean side of the border, a right supposedly guaranteed by a 1913 Sino-Japanese treaty on cross-Yalu trade.[60] In December 1929, visiting Commissioner of Hong Kong Hayley Bell traveled to the colonial Korean capital of Seoul to raise the issue with representatives from the Government-General of Korea. The latter group included individuals such as Hozumi Shinrokurō, head of the Foreign Affairs Bureau and former director of the

[57] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," "Memorandum No. 5, Appendix No. 1"
[58] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," "Memorandum no. 11."
[59] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," "Memorandum No. 5."
[60] See note to "Agreement concerning special duty reduction treatment of goods imported into Manchuria from or through Chosen," *Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894-1919*, 1041.

Sinŭiju customs. According to a later account of the meeting, Hozumi rebuffed the request to build a Chinese customs office in Sinŭiju, claiming it would be an affront to "national liberty" before then deferring further decisions to the main Japanese government in Tokyo.[61]

Unsuccessful in their attempts to build an outpost on the Korean side of the river, Chinese customs officials pressed for permission to build a customs station in Liudaogou. The land surrounding Liudaogou belonged to the semi-governmental Yalu River Timber Company, which maintained a timber yard in the region. When executives from the timber company proved unwilling to lease their shorefront land to the Chinese Customs, Bell took up the issue with leaders of the Kwantung Leased Territory (KLT) to see if they could leverage their control over the Andong concession to force company officials to sell the land. KLT authorities similarly refused to intervene in behalf of the Chinese customs, leading customs officials to abandon the issue for the time being.[62]

Japanese officials' hesitation to accede to Chinese demands revealed their complicity in the Yalu's illicit economies. Internal documents from the Japanese Foreign Ministry show the agency's consular representatives in Andong trying to intercede on behalf of the Chinese Customs to secure help from other Japanese officials in Sinŭiju and Dalian, only to back away in response to opposition from Japanese merchants. In May 1929, for example, the Foreign Ministry convinced the Andong concession police to help "preserve international trust" by devoting more personnel and police boats to smuggling patrol.[63] By late June, concession police had recovered 10,000 pieces of luggage and 3,000 yen in lost customs fees.[64] Yet after Japanese

[61] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," F. Hayley Bell to Frederick Maze, December 19, 1929.
[62] SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," "Visit to Government at Port Arthur."
[63] "Antō ni okeru mitsuyunyū torishimari mondai," JACAR B13081194000, 319.
[64] Ibid.

merchants in Andong complained about the threat to their livelihood and even began mobilizing disgruntled Korean smugglers to threaten the Andong consul, the intensity of Japanese officials' desires to aid the Chinese customs quickly cooled.[65] Not only did smuggling regulation threaten an-all-too lucrative source of income for the local Japanese settler economy, but officials also cited a potential security threat from thousands of unemployed Koreans.[66] In a later meeting with Chinese customs officials, Japanese leaders of the Kwantung Leased Territory clarified that responsibility for smuggling enforcement ultimately rested with the Chinese, and that Japanese could only provide a highly qualified form of "support" to these efforts.[67]

Japanese authorities' unwillingness to help compelled Chinese customs officials to try to contain the smuggling explosion on their own. On May 16, 1930, customs officers engaged three sampans filled with approximately 10,000 yen worth of clothing. The Korean smugglers on board first resisted attempts to confiscate the materials. Accounts differ of what occurred afterwards, with Chinese officials claiming that the fleeing smugglers all leapt into the river and escaped, while the Japanese Foreign Ministry claimed that one of the smugglers was beaten on the forehead severely before falling in the river and drowning.[68] The next day, a large group of enraged Koreans brought the body of the alleged victim to a Customs station. Laying their comrade's body down in front of the station doors, they then began breaking windows, smashing doors and otherwise wrecking the station while the frightened customs officials on duty fled for safety. Accounts also diverge here in regard to the police response: the Chinese account claimed

[65] Ibid., 319-320.
[66] "Antō mitsuyunyū torishimari mondai (sono ato no keika)," JACAR B13081215400, 261.
[67] "Antō ni okeru mitsuyunyū torishimari mondai," 323.
[68] Preventive Secretary's Note No. 1," 21; Antō mitsuyunyū torishimari mondai (sono ato no keika)," 270-271.

that the Japanese police did "nothing" to stop the violence, while the Foreign Ministry report claimed that Japanese police attempted to disperse the rioters but were unsuccessful.[69]

The continued existence of such violence, along with the repeated entreaties of the Chinese Maritime Customs and the powerful Western interests backing them, compelled Japanese authorities to once again consider adopting a hard-line stance towards smuggling enforcement. In January 1931, Kwantung Leased Territory officials issued the sternest set of regulations to date on smuggling. These measures were promoted heavily by the Bureau of Colonial Affairs (*Takumushō*), a Cabinet-level bureau of the Japanese government entrusted with managing colonial affairs, as a means of assuaging rising cross-border tensions.[70] The timing of the regulations also reflected recognition of winter's unique threat to the Yalu's economic stability as officials sought to check the flood of illicit goods across the river's frozen surface.[71] Colonial officials in Korea indicated their support of these measures, with Sinŭiju police authorities promising to add one extra policeman to every customs and police substation along the river in addition to requiring licenses (*menkyo*) for transporting goods across the winter ice.[72] Across the river Andong police officials met with local merchants to warn them about smuggling while also imposing stricter surveillance of the Yalu shoreline.[73]

By all accounts this newest regulatory push enjoyed promising initial success. On February 12, the North Pyŏngan Province Police Chief relayed to superiors in Seoul that the amount of goods arriving at Sinŭiju station had decreased by a dramatic 60 percent since the new regulations were issued.[74] Chinese customs records also show a sharp uptick in the number of

[69] Ibid.
[70] "Shingishū Antō kan mitsuyu torishimari ni kansuru ken," National Archives of Korea CJA0002442.
[71] "Mitsuyu torishimari ni motozuku Chōsenjin kyūsai mondai," JACAR B09040549200, 347.
[72] "Shingishū Antō kan mitsuyu torishimari ni kansuru ken."
[73] "Mitsuyu torishimari ni motozuku Chōsenjin kyūsai mondai," 348.
[74] "Shingishū Antō kan mitsuyu torishimari ni kansuru ken."

smuggling citations, the number of citations for January-March being nearly double that of the previous year's figure for the same period.[75]

However, the same factors that undermined previous regulatory attempts soon challenged this most recent crackdown. Japanese merchants in the Andong procession loudly protested the new measures, claiming that they not only hurt business interests, but also damaged Japan's international reputation. They also complained about alleged inequity in the application of this regulation, stating that Japanese businesses were uniquely targeted while "corrupt" Chinese officials and merchants were profiting from the less stringent enforcement outside the concession.[76]

As was frequently the case, regulation also failed to address the systemic issues fueling participation in the illicit economy, including a lack of economic opportunities for Koreans living along the Yalu border. Estimates for the number of Koreans employed full-time in the smuggling trade varied; conservative estimates placed the figure around one thousand, while others claimed double that amount in Sinŭiju and the Andong concession.[77] On January 22, 1931, Andong consul Yonezawa Kikuji met with officials from the Government-General of Korea to discuss ways to help Korean smugglers find other employment in sectors such as cottage industries or transportation. According to Yonezawa's account, Government-General officials resented Yonezawa's request for 4100 yen to the fund the project (a relatively inconsequential sum compared to the nearly 380,000 yen in additional funds earmarked for border policing a year later[78]), declaring that the Foreign Ministry should assume more of the

[75] Compare DBDX, 69:116-174 and Ibid, 287-405.
[76] "Mitsuyu torishimari ni motozuku Chōsenjin kyūsai mondai," 369.
[77] Antō mitsuyunyū torishimari mondai (sono ato no keika)," 245; SHAC 679-1-27750, "Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," "Memorandum for Colonel Hayley Bell, p.s.o., Commissioner, Appendix No. 5: Smuggling across the Yalu from Korea to Liutaokow: conditions of, and preventions concerning."
[78] "Kukkyŏng kyŏngbi hwakch'ung an naewŏl silsi," *Tonga ilbo*, October 16, 1932.

financial burden for a project ultimately designed to placate Chinese protests rather than advance Japanese interests.[79] Their response demonstrates a fact corroborated by Maritime Customs Service sources: that Japanese officials in Korea were complicit in the success of a smuggling trade that benefitted local interests and strategically undermined Chinese sovereignty. Such dynamics would prove difficult to undo even after the September 1931 Manchurian Incident and the subsequent Japanese seizure of the Andong customs.

Smuggling in the Era of The Manchukuo Customs

When Japanese troops occupied the city of Andong on the morning of September 19, 1931, the foreign-managed Customs was the only official institution they spared. Its fate, as well as that of other Customs Service offices in Manchuria, were left unresolved. Hundreds of miles away in the city of Shanghai, Roy Maxwell Talbot, a long-time American employee of the Maritime Customs Service, ruminated in his diary on the possible consequences of the Japanese occupation for his career. Talbot had been notified only days earlier of his new position as Deputy Commissioner of the Andong customs, an eagerly anticipated promotion that led him to excitedly write "Deputy Commissioner! ☺" with a caricatured smiling face next to it in his journal entry for that day. After reading news of the Manchurian Incident, however, Talbot more anxiously wrote: "My paper says the Japanese have occupied Moukden [sic] & disarmed the Chinese! What a business! This will probably interfere with my appointment at Antung?"[80]

Not only did the Japanese occupation "interfere" (to put it mildly) with Talbot's appointment as commissioner, but after a drawn-out process of failed negotiations and then outright force, Japanese authorities remade the Andong customs into a bureaucratic arm of the

[79] "Torishimari kisoku kōfugo no jōkyō," JACAR B09040549100, 292.
[80] Roy Maxwell Talbot Diary, September 19, 1931.

newly established Manchukuo government. As a result of the Customs Service's strong ties to the West, Japanese leaders were initially reluctant to directly seize the Customs and risk further alienating already strained Western support for their actions in Manchuria.[81] But even as Chinese and Western outrage mounted, imperial officials quickly realized the customs' value as a revenue source for their Manchukuo state-building project. For months following the Manchurian Incident the Andong customs existed in a strange limbo, with Chinese customs officials attempting to prosecute their duties and secure whatever help they could from Japanese police while at the same time preparing for a takeover that was increasingly inevitable.[82] On December 17, Talbot wrote in his journal: "Much talk these days about the Japanese taking over the Customs. Very possible. There is no doubt in my mind that they intend to absorb Manchuria as they did Korea."[83] By March 12, Talbot was issued his first demand to hand over the Customs. Refusing to do so without express orders from his superiors in Shanghai, Talbot was finally removed from his position by force on June 28 and a new Japanese director of the Customs installed.[84]

In theory, the Japanese takeover of the Andong customs simplified the "smuggling question" by making it a matter of pure colonial policy instead of Sino-Japanese diplomacy. Indeed, by early 1932 Japanese police and military officials had already begun to take over enforcement duties on the river with gusto, leading the Korean-language *Tonga ilbo* to declare that a bloody new "era of terror" was marking the end of previously open smuggling.[85] Yet such sensational declarations proved premature. Just as there had never been such a thing as a unified

[81] *Manshūkoku zeikan gaishi*, 177
[82] "Preventive Secretary's Note No. 1," 25.
[83] Roy Maxwell Talbot Diary, December 17, 1931.
[84] *Manshūkoku zeikan gaishi*, 177
[85] "Kongyŏn han 'mil'such'ulgye tae konghwang sidae torae!" *Tonga ilbo*, April 21, 1932.

colonial policy on Manchuria and Korea before the Manchurian Incident, officials from the newly-created Manchukuo state soon clashed with those from the Government-General of Korea and Kwantung Leased Territory over the best direction for smuggling regulation. Manchukuo Customs officials continued to grapple with many of the same issues that had plagued their Chinese predecessors, including a growing demand for illicit goods among Japanese merchants, a shifting riparian environment, the extraterritorial status of the Andong concession, and unwilling cooperation from authorities on the Korean side of the river.

The chaos following the Manchurian Incident provided fertile conditions for smuggling. Andong Commissioner Roy Talbot estimated the total loss of revenue for the Andong customs for the year 1931 to be nearly one million yen, a significant sum during a time when overall legal imports were down due to the ongoing global economic depression.[86] In a March 30, 1932 diary entry Talbot wrote that an estimated 50,000 yen worth of goods made its way across the Yalu ice in a single night.[87] Even after the stabilization of the Manchukuo customs by late 1932, smuggling continued to grow due to Japanese investment in Manchukuo and the rapid economic growth that followed. Much of this traffic was in goods like shoes, cloth, opium, and precious metals.[88] There was also the oft-smuggled salt, which remained subject to government monopoly in both Korea and Manchuria. According to one police official, by 1934 the loss of income due to salt smuggling along the Yalu for the Andong customs was a staggering 1,780,000 yen.[89]

As was the case prior to the Manchurian Incident, the majority of Yalu smugglers in the border cities of Andong and Sinŭiju were ethnic Koreans. A 1969 gazetteer published by former

[86] Roy Maxwell Talbot Diary, February 10, 1932; "Mr. Consul-General Eastes to Sir Miles Lampson," FO 371/16215, National Archives of the UK.
[87] Roy Maxwell Talbot Diary, March 30, 1932.
[88] Nakamura Mika, "Shingishū no mitsuyu," *Keimu ihō* December 1934 (78-86), January 1935 (88-96).
[89] Nakamura Mika, "Shingishū no mitsuyu," *Keimu ihō* December 1934, 84.

Korean residents of Sinŭiju recalled how smugglers dominated the local economy during the early-mid 1930s. Rather than being condemned by fellow Koreans, these smugglers were reportedly even viewed positively for their contributions to the economic recovery of depression-era Sinŭiju. Japanese officials in Korea did little to stop this illicit trade, which continued to profit them even if it hurt the interests of their Manchukuo counterparts.[90]

Korean smugglers continued to make the journey across the river individually or in large "gangs" (*gyangu*) of as many as a hundred or more members, a distinction often made in gendered terms. In a round-table discussion dedicated to the smuggling issue, Andong Chamber of Commerce director Iino Shōtarō differentiated between "male smuggling" and "female smuggling" along the border. The former, Iino explained, consisted of the primarily male gangs of smugglers who would violently engage customs officials whenever approached. "Female smuggling," by contrast, consisted of individual acts of customs subversion, many of them by female smugglers, that were allegedly regarded as less threatening by officials and often went unpunished.[91] In a 1934 article on smuggling, Sinŭiju police chief Nakamura Mika expressed sympathy for the older female smugglers who braved the frigid winter cold nightly to carry small loads of salt across the Yalu. "When one thinks of their suffering, is it not natural and human enough that the hand of regulation is reluctant to prosecute them?"[92] Yet the reality of customs' officials unrelenting gaze belied such claims of genteel pity. Korean language newspapers carried multiple articles describing male officials' abuse of female border-crossers. In one particularly dramatic incident customs officials in Ŭiju brutally beat the pregnant stomach of a woman accused of hiding smuggled goods.[93]

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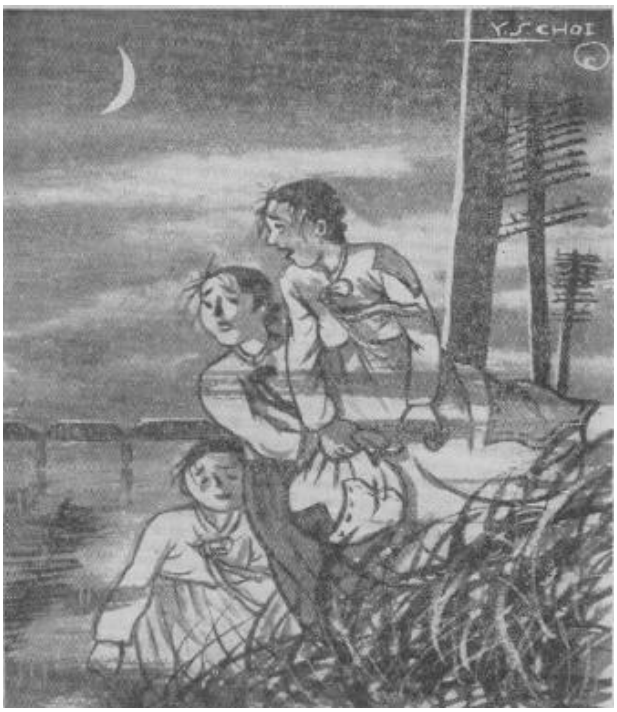
[90] Sinŭiju Siminhoe, *Sinŭiju shichi* (Seoul: Sinŭiju Siminhoe, 1969), 223-224.
[91] *Chōsen bōekishi*, 349.
[92] Nakamura Mika, "Shingishū no mitsuyu," *Keimu ihō* December 1934, 84.
[93] "Segwansa ŭi imbu nant'a," *Sidae ilbo*, November 23, 1924.

The persecuted female Korean smuggler, driven by desperate poverty to gamble her life on the border, became a stock figure in 1930s Korean fiction. A 1933 story in the literary magazine *Samch'ŏlli* narrated a fictional first-person account of a poor woman in Sinŭiju forced to smuggle alcohol by her abusive husband. The story climaxes when a customs official nearly discovers the illicit goods the woman has hidden away under her clothing, only to stop when the protagonist complains of suffering from a "gynecological disease" (*buinbyŏng*).[94] Another 1934 short story published in the women's journal *Sin kajŏng* (New family) told the story of a single mother who takes up salt smuggling to feed her young son and daughter after her husband, a cloth smuggler, dies trying to evade customs officials (see figure 4.2).[95] The most well-known story in this genre, however, was feminist writer Kang Kyong-ae's 1934 short story "Salt" (Sogŭm), also published in *Sin kajŏng*. "Salt" tells the story of a poor Korean migrant to Manchuria who begins smuggling salt across the border after losing her husband to Communist guerrillas and two children to disease. While technically set along the Tumen River boundary, the narrative presented, including a description (censored at the time) of the protagonists' resistance to arrest, would have been familiar to many who lived along the neighboring Yalu as well.[96]

[94] "Kukkyŏng milsuip pihwa," *Samch' ŏlli*, January 1, 1933.
[95] Ch'oe Chŏng-kŏn, "Milsu sangsŭpja," *Sin kajŏng*, August 1934, 14-17.
[96] *Salt* was originally published in several installments from May to October 1934. An English translation of Kang Kyong-ae's short story can be found in Theodore Hughes et al., *Rat Fire: Korean Stories from the Japanese Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 212-265. For further analysis, see Miseli Jeon, "Violent Emotions : Modern Japanese and Korean Women's Writing, 1920-1980." PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2004, 109-116.

Figure 4.2: 1934 illustration of female Korean smugglers nervously making the border crossing from the Korean-language magazine *Sin kajŏng*.



Source: Ch'oe Chŏng-kŏn, "Milsu sangsŭpja," *Sin kajŏng*, August 1934.

In contrast to portrayals of Korean women as victims of the customs regime in Korean-language media, Japanese-language publications portrayed these same women as skillful smugglers and calculating criminals. The author of a 1936 article for the Japanese settler magazine *Mansen* (Manchuria and Korea) described women who regularly stuffed large silver coins in their vaginas and then attempted to walk nonchalantly across the Yalu River railroad bridge. The known "customs record," the article proclaimed in lurid tone, was an attempted 77 coins smuggled in this manner, though the "average" was between 35-50. Of course, the article reassured its Japanese readers, Japanese women had never been discovered engaging in such

degrading acts (though Japanese women were also not likely subjected to the same invasive inspections as their Korean counterparts).[97]

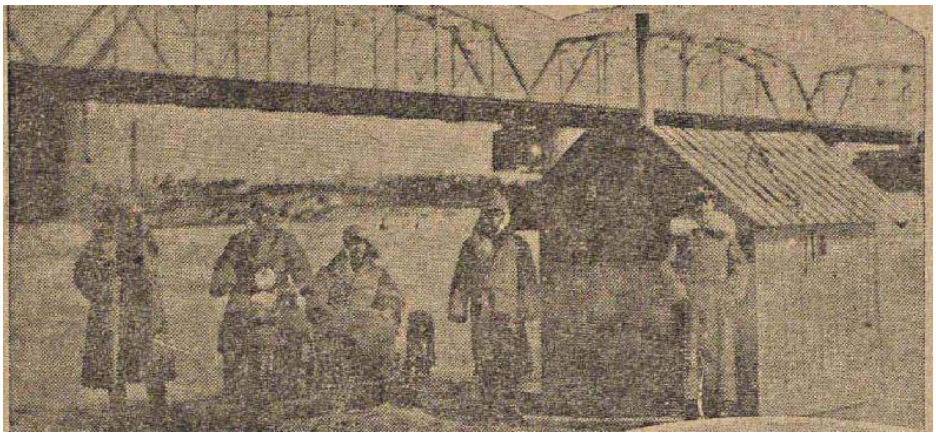
Running through all these accounts were the seasonal landscapes of the Sino-Korean border. With its undefined borderline and variable topography, the Yalu retained a powerful influence on smuggler's operations even after the 1931 Manchurian Incident. In particular, sensational reports about the challenges posed by the wintertime Yalu and the gangs of smugglers crossing its frozen surface became a stock feature of news reporting in colonial Korea. A 1933 *Tonga ilbo* article related how smugglers waited for the Yalu River to freeze just as eagerly "as the Christians wait for the coming of their Redeemer."[98] In a November 29, 1935 piece, the same newspaper described Sinŭiju officials' nervousness in the face of the upcoming winter. Surging silver prices in Japan led an estimated 9,000-10,000 people to smuggle silver currency between Andong and Sinŭiju that year (a figure that, if true, would have been equivalent to roughly 17%-18% of Sinŭiju's total population at the time[99]), and that number was only expected to increase during the "icebound season."[100]

Writings by colonial Korea and Manchukuo customs officials displayed an acute awareness of the heightened dangers of the frozen Yalu. Published in multiple editions throughout the 1930's, the Sinŭiju Custom's booklet *An Introduction to Sinŭiju Harbor* described the icebound period as one in which smuggling was "especially" active, with smugglers moving "freely" between opposite sides of the riverbank. Specific solutions outlined in the booklet

[97] "Kokkyō zeikan no hiwa,"*Mansen*, February 1, 1936.
[98]"Amnok kyŏlbing ttara kyŏnggye simŏm," *Tonga ilbo*, December 23, 1933.
[99] Heian Hokudō, *Heian hokudō tōkei nenpō: shōwa jū nen* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Heian Hokudō, 1937), 10.
[100] "Milsu jŏnsŏn ŭi amyakcha Chosŏnin man manmyŏng tolp'a," *Tonga ilbo*, November 29, 1935.

included the installation of more telephone lines and the construction of special surveillance huts atop the Yalu ice (see figure 4.3).[101]

Figure 4.3: Sinŭiju officials pose in front of a surveillance hut built on top of the Yalu ice.



Source: "Apkang ŭi milsuch'ul kamsi," *Maeil sinbo*, February 5, 1933.

Like the policemen discussed in Chapter three, Japanese customs officials implemented a variety of measures to manage the icebound season. The Andong customs doubled the number of nighttime staff patrolling critical crossing points during the winter.[102] It also took steps to rapidly increase its overall manpower. The seizure of the customs in 1932 precipitated the mass expulsion of Western and Chinese customs workers hostile to the Japanese takeover. While some Japanese and local Chinese employees of the Maritime Customs Service willingly stayed with the new regime, other replacements for lost personnel were hired from Japan.[103] Still faced with a perceived manpower shortage, especially in the face of expanding smuggling operations, the Manchukuo customs implemented annual exams to hire more officials, adding more than 280 in

[101] Shingishū Zeikan, *Shingishū minato ippan* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Shingishū zeikan, 1932); Shingishū Zeikan, *Shingishū minato ippan* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Shingishū Zeikan, 1936). Much of the same information is also reprinted in *Shingishū minato gaiyō* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Shingishū Zeikan, 1938).
[102] Zaiseibu, *Zeikan jimu gaiyō: Harupin, Antō Tomon no bu* (Shinkyō [Changchun]: Zaiseibu, 1934), 221.
[103] *Manshūkoku zeikan gaishi*, 33.

1932, 260 in 1933, and 130 in 1934, a significant percentage of whom were stationed in Andong. Additional customs agents were also brought over from Japan. In 1933 the Andong customs opened new branch offices at strategic points along the upper Yalu, specifically Linjiang, Ji'an and Changkuanhekou.[104] The results of this expansion for the Andong customs were significant. While the Andong branch of the Maritime Customs Service employed 134 workers at the beginning 1932, a number that dropped to 36 immediately following the Japanese takeover of the customs later that year, by 1942 this number had reached 537. Slightly over half of these employees were Japanese, with the remainder being Korean or Chinese.[105]

Wintertime smuggling enforcement entailed the mobilization of canine as well as human labor. In November 1934 the *Tonga ilbo* reported that eight "heartless" German Shepherds had been imported for use by the Andong customs service from the Manchukuo Army, a first in the agency's history. Published immediately before the onset of winter, the article predicted a "bloody confrontation" between these dogs and smugglers on the frozen Yalu.[106] This article attracted the attention of colonial censors, who no doubt objected not only to the article's sympathetic portrayal of smugglers who "put their lives on the line" to "feed their families," but also to its negative depiction of guard dogs as demonic specters of the harsh Yalu winter rather than suffering and sympathetic imperial servants.[107] Yet fears about customs dogs' ferocity hardly proved unwarranted. These dogs could fulfill their responsibilities with deadly efficacy, as was likely the case in January 1936 when a frozen corpse covered in dog bite wounds was found atop the Yalu ice.[108] But much like their human overseers, they were also not immune to the

[104] Ibid.
[105] Antō Shōkō Kōkai, *Antō sangyō keizai gaikan* (Antō [Dandong]: Antō Shōkō Kōkai), 1943), 54-55.
[106] "I chŏn 'chamsang' hyŏpwi hanŭn chomyŏngdŭng kwa tamjŏnggyŏn," *Tonga ilbo*, November 15, 1934.
[107] "Shinbunshi sakujo chūi kiji yoshi- 'Tōa nippō'," *Chōsen shūppan keisatsu geppō 75 go*, November 15, 1934.
[108] "Amnokkang bingsang gui si," *Maeil sinbo*, January 20, 1936.

allure of bribery. One participant in a 1943 roundtable on Yalu smuggling, for example, related how smugglers occasionally tried to feed police dogs and then use them for their own purposes.[109]

Of course, the environmental problems of Yalu policing went beyond the icebound period. As a March 1934 article in the *Tonga ilbo* reported, while the Yalu's ice had retreated that spring, the problem of smuggling had not. Customs officials on both sides of the Yalu were "gravely considering" methods of suppressing this illicit trade, the article related, including the purchase of four high-speed boats for use in Sinŭiju and the erection of searchlights on the Manchurian side of the river.[110] Even with these technologies, however, the constantly shifting geography of the riparian border made prosecution difficult. Because most smuggling took place at night, it was frequently impossible for officials to determine where exactly a smuggling crime had been committed. Using small wooden boats to transport their wares across the river, smugglers exploited the ambiguity of the Korean-Manchurian border on the Yalu to their profit and advantage.[111]

Much to the chagrin of their counterparts in the colonial Korean bureaucracy, Manchukuo customs officials began responding to the border's murky ambiguity by ignoring it altogether. During the Maritime Customs era, the sovereignty of the liquid channel between Andong and Sinŭiju had often been in question. While Chinese officials claimed that the border ran through the middle of the river at its deepest point (a point which was, as mentioned previously, impossible to define in practice), Japanese officials in Andong often claimed that the boundaries of the railway concession extended beyond the shoreline to the middle of the river

[109] *Chōsen bōekishi*, 355.
[110] "Andong, Sinŭiju segwan ŭi milsudan pangŏjin," *Tonga ilbo*, March 30, 1934.
[111] "Shingishū no mitsuyu," December 1934, 84.

abutting the settlement. Such a claim, as was pointed out by exasperated Maritime Customs officials, created an impenetrable "pipe line" of Japanese riparian sovereignty between China and Korea.[112] Yet while Maritime Customs Service employees could only weakly challenge this monopoly, Manchukuo customs officials asserted their presence on the river much more forcefully due to the backing of the Kwantung Army. Unable to fully police smuggling in the Andong railway concession (which remained independent of Manchukuo until December 1937), Manchukuo officials began aggressively pursuing smugglers on the waterfront, a fact that led to more violent confrontations with smugglers. It also amplified friction between the Andong customs and colonial officials in Sinŭiju. In a January 1935 article on smuggling, Sinŭiju police chief Nakamura Mika identified the Manchukuo customs' frequent "invasion" of colonial Korea's territorial waters on the Yalu as a growing threat to regional security.[113]

Tensions between Manchukuo and colonial Korea climaxed in the late spring and summer of 1936 over a string of deadly skirmishes between smugglers and Manchukuo customs officials on the Korean side of the Yalu. On May 23, Manchukuo customs officers approached a group of forty-five Korean smugglers crossing the river by boat. A scuffle quickly ensued, which resulted in the smugglers' vessel flipping over and throwing its occupants into the river. Nine of the smugglers on board drowned as a result. Reporting on this incident days later, the *Tonga ilbo* printed the full names of each of the alleged victims while accusing Manchukuo officials of "murder."[114] Then on August 4, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, a similarly deadly event occurred as twenty-five Korean smugglers drowned following a battle with Manchukuo customs officials. This incident incited a similarly vociferous response from the

[112] SHAC 679-1-27750, “Inauguration of Preventive Service, 1929-1930," "Memorandum no. 11."
[113] Nakamura Mika, "Shingishū no mitsuyu," *Keimu ihō*, January 1935, 92.
[114] "Milsusŏn ŭl koŭi ro ch'unggyŏk," *Tonga ilbo*, May 26, 1936.

vernacular press in colonial Korea, though Manchurian papers were understandably more measured in their own coverage of such events.[115]

Rather than earning the rebuke of colonial censors, strongly-worded accusations of Manchukuo "atrocities" in the *Tonga ilbo* and other newspapers were tolerated, and even encouraged, by colonial officials. Claims about Manchukuo authorities' "tyranny" were repeated in the *Maeil sinbo*, an official mouthpiece of the Government-General of Korea. The *Maeil sinbo* nonetheless deflected the blame from the Manchukuo customs in general to the specific actions of a few rogue customs agents, calling for their swift punishment after prompt negotiations between officials on both sides of the river.[116]

The mounting tensions over Yalu smuggling created an open rift in the policies and rhetoric of Manchurian-Korean integration then being promoted by top Japanese officials. Beginning in the mid-1930s, Governor-General Minami Jirō (a former commander of the Kwantung Army) saw Manchuria's rapid industrialization under the aegis of the Japanese military as a chance to advance the industrial development and militarization of the Korean peninsula. According to this strategic vision, Manchuria and Korea would together act as a "supply base" for further Japanese expansion into the continent. With such top-level pressure to improve Manchurian-Korean relations, it was not long before officials in Andong and Sinŭiju would attempt to put aside their differences. An October 22 meeting between Japanese authorities in the Andong concession and those from the Manchukuo customs agreed to implement drastic measures such as a complete night-time ban on boat traffic.[117] In November, Sinŭiju officials also announced their intention to more aggressively pursue the smuggling issue.

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[115] P'okhaeng han Andong segwalli ku myŏng e ge yesim ch'ŏnggu," *Tonga ilbo*, August 11, 1936; "Ren zhao si zousi chuan bei jianshi chuan peng chen," *Shenjing shibao*, May 26, 1936.
[116] "Apkang myŏngnanghwa wi hae segwansa hoengp'o ŏmgŭm rŭl ," *Maeil sinbo*, June 4, 1936.
[117] "Kakkoku ni okeru mitsuyunyū kankei zakken: Manshūkoku no bu," JACAR B09040535600, 149.

Abandoning the more "passive" approach traditionally adopted by Sinŭiju authorities, by late 1936 customs and police officials were raiding the merchant houses of notorious smugglers and seizing the cargo of boats deemed to be smugglers' vessels. Popular media reported how such measures were "striking fear" in the hearts of the thousands of smugglers who called Sinŭiju home.[118]

The timing of these measures—immediately before the onset of the wintertime icebound season—was also indicative of how climate, as much as intra-imperial infighting, helped shape the Yalu's illicit economies. By 1937 colonial officials achieved some success in their efforts to reduce the number of smuggling incidents on the Yalu, though in the face of wartime economic disruptions and encroaching winter ice these results ultimately proved elusive. As regulation intensified, officials on both sides of the border also cooperated in directing smugglers' labor towards civil engineering projects and other "legitimate occupations." The respite brought by these measures was brief, however. Following the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the cessation of construction projects in the face of the approaching icebound season and rising commodity prices in Manchukuo reinvigorated cross-border smuggling. Despite increased cooperation between cross-border officials, the smuggling issue remained unresolved.[119]

Conclusion

Much like "bandit" and guerrilla activity, smuggling assumed a distinctive seasonal bent as merchants took advantage of the frozen, wintertime border to evade officials' disciplinary gaze. Once the ice retreated, smugglers (overwhelmingly Korean by the late 1920s) quickly switched to transporting goods over the river by boat or, less frequently, by rail and foot across

[118] "Ch'wich'e ŭi chŏkkŭkhwa ro milsuŏpcha tae konghwang," *Maeil sinbo*, November 8, 1936
[119] "Kukkyŏng kyŏngbijin kanghwa," *Tonga ilbo*, December 11, 1937.

the Yalu River Railway Bridge. But as I have demonstrated, smuggling success was not simply a matter of climatic contingency. In all instances, the ability to navigate between different zones of sovereignty was also an essential factor behind smugglers' success. Colonial officials in Korea often refused to prosecute goods heading towards southern Manchuria, the destination of most contraband on the Yalu, while Chinese customs officials were unable to operate freely in the Japanese railway concession. Both factors were a source of constant frustration for the Chinese customs in Andong, and such disputes continued long after the 1931 Manchurian Incident and the Japanese takeover of the Andong customs in 1932.

Rather than discouraging smuggling, the creation of Manchukuo led to an unprecedented outburst of smuggling activity. After seizing control of the Andong customs, Manchukuo authorities attempted to buttress the new state's finances by aggressively policing smuggling. However, such efforts were frustrated by the rapid expansion of smuggling in gold, silver, salt, cloth and other goods. Like their earlier counterparts in the Maritime Customs, the Manchukuo customs also encountered a freezing and shifting river that readily defied attempts at border demarcation and set a volatile stage for smugglers' exploits and debates with officials in colonial Korea and the Andong concession about river sovereignty.

The Yalu's illicit economy remained relatively unwieldly until Japanese authorities began implementing various measures after 1937 to more thoroughly "assimilate" the Yalu border. These measures included the abolition of Japanese extraterritoriality in Manchukuo and the corresponding dissolution of the Andong railway settlement in December 1937. They also included the industrial development of the Yalu corridor and construction of the massive Sup'ung Dam between 1937-1945. Together, these changes radically reshaped the legal and environmental contours of Yalu smuggling and life along the river in general. But even with

these changes, the prevalence of smuggling between Andong and Sinŭiju continued to defy official expectation and define the rebellious nature of the border.

Chapter 5: Assimilating the Border

For a brief time in the mid-twentieth century, the Yalu River border seemed to be neither river nor border. Construction of the Sup'ung Dam, second largest in the world at the time of its completion in 1944, heralded what one proponent declared the "eradication" of the political barrier between Manchuria and Korea.[1] Requiring 850,000 tons of concrete and millions of hours of manpower, the dam, along with multiple harbors at the river's mouth, new railway lines, bridges, and mine development, was part of a larger project to industrialize the Yalu River Basin.[2] There were also plans for six more dams in addition to the one at Sup'ung. With such industrialization came dramatic changes to the river's seasonal topography. During the winter of 1941-1942, the icebound period below the dam was a full month and a half shorter than the previous yearly average.[3] In subsequent winters, the lower Yalu would not freeze over at all.[4] In the eyes of border policeman and writer Noritake Kazuo, the Yalu was no longer the free-flowing river of the past, but an electricity-generating "lake."[5]

This chapter examines Japanese efforts to industrialize the Yalu River basin and harmonize border relations between Korea and Manchukuo during the final years of Japanese colonial rule. In the period from 1937 to 1945 long-term imperial efforts to control the border's volatile liquid geography finally seemed to bear fruit. The dream of "obliterating" the Yalu border had animated the imaginations of Japanese imperial promoters ever since the construction of the iron railroad bridge in 1911.[6] By the 1930s the realization of such an ambition seemed

[1] Harada Kiyoshi, *Suihō hatsudenjo kōji taikan* (Amagasaki: Doken Bunkasha), 1942, 9.
[2] For detailed previous studies of the Sup'ung Dam's construction, see Aaron Stephen Moore, "'The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia': Japanese Expertise, Colonial Power, and the Construction of the Sup'ung Dam." *Journal of Asian Studies* 72, no. 1 (February 2013): 115-139, and Hirose Teizō, "'Manshūkoku' ni okeru Suihō Damu kensetsu." *Niigata Kokusai Jōhō Daigaku Jōhō Bunka Gakubu kiyō* 6 (March 2003): 1-25.
[3] Antō Shōkō Kōkai, *Antō sangyō keizai gaikan* (Antō : Antō Shōkō Kōkai, 1943), 135.
[4] Yamada Ryūichi, interview by author, August 9, 2015.
[5] Noritake Kazuo, *Ōryokkō* (Tokyo: Daiichi Shuppan Kyōkai, 1943), 164.
[6] "Shuchō: Man-Sen no renraku naru," *Chōsen,* December 1911, 12.

more certain than ever. As many officials observed, the old border had been replaced by a new "economic river" (*keizai kasen*) that tied together the previously separate regions of Korea and Manchukuo.[7]

But even as "Manchurian-Korean unity" (*Mansen ichinyo*) became the watchword of official policy after 1936, it was much easier to erase certain bureaucratic mechanisms than to undo the border in people's minds. The process of re-engineering the Yalu border to fit the ideological and material aims of the wartime empire may be understood as one of border "assimilation." The climactic years of Japan's wartime expansion were marked by the empire-wide mobilization of colonized peoples and landscapes for bloody new campaigns in China and the greater Asia-Pacific, with phrases like "Manchurian-Korean unity," (*Mansen ichinyo*), "Korea and Japan as one" (*Naisen ittai*), and "Japanese-Manchurian unity" (*Nichiman ichinyo*) applied to spaces like the Yalu border as well as the people who inhabited them. Scholars have written at length about how the colonial policy of assimilation acquired new urgency after Japan's entry into the Second Sino-Japanese War. The most intensive efforts to create loyal subjects of the Japanese Emperor were concentrated in the formal colonies of Taiwan and Korea. Similar campaigns also took place in Manchukuo—despite its founding rhetoric of cultural autonomy from Japan—with a strengthened emphasis on Japanese language instruction and enforced visits to Shinto shrines taking place after 1937.[8] But these assimilation campaigns were

[7] Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha Sangyōbu, *Ōryokkō keizaiken chōsa hōkokusho* (Dairen [Dalian]: Mantetsu Sangyōbu, 1937), Preface; Harada, 20.

[8] The discourse, practices and implications of colonial assimilation policy towards colonized subjects have been covered in a number of works. For recent English-language works on colonial Korea, see Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policy in Colonial Korea* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Todd Henry, *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese Rule and the Politics of Public Space in Korea, 1910-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). On colonial Taiwan, see Leo Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Andrew Hall discussed the implications of assimilation policy for Manchukuo education curriculum in Andrew Hall, "The

undercut by contradictions inherent to the Japanese colonial project, such as racial chauvinism, as well as by active resistance by colonized subjects. The professed unity of Korea and Manchuria at the Yalu was undercut by a combination of local resistance and the internal contradictions of Japanese policy. Smugglers subverted Japanese officials' insistence on maintaining Manchukuo autonomy by evading customs fees. At the same time, Chinese and Korean guerrilla fighters continued to launch raids on Japanese border posts. Administrative distinctions between Korea and Manchukuo also fueled local residents' long-standing debates about fishing rights and competing industrial projects. Japan's insistence on sustaining the administrative and legal trappings of Manchukuo sovereignty helped contribute to the longevity of these divisions as local bureaucrats defended the interests of stakeholders on respective sides of the border.

Some scholars have echoed the optimistic claims of wartime bureaucrats by stressing the lack of cross-border tensions during this period. In a recent study of the Sino-Korean border at the Tumen River, Nianshen Song claims that the "voiding of the boundary" in 1931 caused Manchuria and Korea to be easily "integrated under the domination of Japanese imperialism."[9] Yet other scholars have questioned the idea of such border-erasing by highlighting the regional rivalries which continued to define cross-border relations into the 1930s and early 1940s. Writing soon after the war's end in 1946, geographer Shannon McCune noted "it will be well to remember that even when the Japanese controlled Korea and had such power in puppet Manchukuo as they did, it was still necessary to have many conferences over boundary and

Word Is Mightier than the Throne: Bucking Colonial Education Trends in Manchukuo," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 3 (August 2009): 895-925.

[9] Nianshen Song, *Making Borders in Modern East Asia: Tumen River Demarcation, 1881-1919* (Cambridge, UK: Cambrige University Press, 2018), 259.

economic development problems."[10] Recent works by David Fedman and Aaron Moore have similarly highlighted disunity rather than cohesion along the wartime Manchurian-Korean border by looking at intraimperial rivalries over the timber trade and dam construction.[11]

In what follows, I will explore the tensions underlying border assimilation while also attending to its under-examined ecological consequences. By deploying the widely discussed concept of the Anthropocene, I will explain the significance of physical changes to the Yalu environment wrought by industrial projects like the Sup'ung Dam. Even after the Sup'ung Dam's completion and successful counter-insurgency efforts against anti-Japanese guerrillas, "Manchurian-Korean unity" was challenged in the era of the Anthropocene by the continually unruly natural environment of the Yalu River.

Envisioning a New Yalu Border

As documented in chapters three and four, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 did little to dissipate the long-standing tensions which had developed along the Yalu border. Like the thick ice which clung to the river into the early spring, it would take more than a flash of heat from the Kwantung Army's guns to melt the frosty distrust which had characterized cross-Yalu relations. The aftermath of the Manchurian Incident prompted what amounted to an existential crisis among officials on the Korean side of the border. Border police worried about the sudden escalation of anti-Japanese guerrilla raids while customs officers felt threatened by the

[10] Shannon McCune, "Physical Basis for Korean Boundaries," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 5, No. 3 (May 1946): 277.
[11] David Fedman, "The Saw and the Seed: Japanese Forestry in Colonial Korea, 1895-1945" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2015), 185; Aaron Stephen Moore, "'The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia," 120. For works by Japanese and Korean-language scholars on the issue of "Manchurian-Korean unity," see Tanaka Ryūichi, "Tairitsu to tōgō no 'Mansen' kankei: 'Naisen ittai,' 'Gozoku kyōwa,' 'Mansen ichinyo' no shosō," *Hisutoria* 152 (1996); Im Sŏng-mo, "Chungil chŭnjaeng chŏnya Manjuguk-Chosŏn kwangyesa ŭi somyo: 'Nichiman ilch'e' wa 'Mansŏn iryŏ' ŭi kaltŭng" *Yŏksa hakpo* 201 (March 2009): 165-202; Chŏng An-ki, "1936 nyŏn Sŏnman sunoe ŭi 'Tomun hoedam' kwa 'Mansŏn iryŏ'" *Manju yŏngu* 12 (December 2011): 181-209.

increasingly assertive intrusion of Manchukuo customs boats into their territorial waters.[12] Colonial officials across the Korean peninsula also worried about the sudden flux of attention and resources from the Tokyo government being devoted to the new puppet-state. As Louise Young has convincingly argued, Manchukuo became the "jewel in the crown" of the Japanese empire after 1931.[13] In the jealous eyes of some Japanese settlers and officials in Korea, Manchukuo's new position as prized "centerpiece" of the Japanese imperium necessarily diminished Korea's former status as the largest and most important colony.[14] Even as migrants flocked to the region for new economic opportunities (both real and imagined) and the allure of new markets caused businessmen in Korea to more eagerly embraced the new Japanese presence, it was not until 1936 that the real groundwork for regional political and economic integration was laid.[15]

The impetus for greater Korean-Manchurian cohesion came from both larger imperial pressures and the personal initiative of the new Governor-General of Korea, Minami Jirō. With tensions between Japan and China mounting, senior figures in the Japanese Army felt the need to mold Korea and Manchuria into a unified "military supply base."[16] Among those was former Kwantung Army commander Minami, whose appointment to the position of Governor-General of Korea in August 1936 was immediately perceived by the colonial Korean press as an "opportunity" to "deepen relations" between Korea and Manchukuo.[17] In keeping with these expectations, Minami exploited his deep personal connections to Manchukuo's Kwantung Army

[12] Heian Hokudō Keisatsubu, ed. *Kokkyō keibi* (Shingishū [Sinŭiju]: Heian Keishō Henshūbu, 1936), 35.; Nakamura Mika, "Shingishū no mitsuyu," *Keimu ihō*, January 1935, 92.
[13] Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 22.
[14] Im, 170-171.
[15] Carter J. Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 155. For further discussion of how Korean and Japanese businessmen in Korea perceived the opportunities of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, see Eckert, 154-181.
[16] Eckert, 77.
[17] "Chosŏn Manju kan injae kyohwan Ch'ongdok, Ch'onggam kyŏlŭi," *Tonga ilbo*, August 26, 1936.

leaders to bring colonial Korean policy more in line with the puppet state's plans for industrialization. On October 29, 1936, Minami met with his successor as Kwantung Army commander-in-chief, Ueda Kenkichi, at the Japanese consulate in Tumen along the northeast Sino-Korean border. Also accompanying them to discuss matters of joint security and Manchurian-Korean border policing were the chief of the Kwantung Army military police and the head of the GGK Police Bureau. Scholars have argued that the phrase "Manchurian-Korean Unity" and its political agenda first arose at this meeting, subsequently known as the "Tumen Conference."[18]

Among the items for discussion at the 1936 Tumen Conference was the joint development of the Yalu River, which Hirose Teizō argues became a prominent symbol of Manchurian-Korean unity.[19] This development would include new bridges as well as hydroelectric dams to provide electricity for industrial projects on both sides of the border. Yet Yalu industrialization also required political and economic stability in what had long been a volatile frontier. In their own separate meeting at the Tumen Conference, Kwantung Army and GGK police officials agreed to cooperate further on issues of border policing against "bandits" and smugglers. It would take further wrangling at the local level to realize these ambitions, but the Tumen meeting provided a significant verbal commitment to ending the tensions that had developed around border enforcement.

It was not long before the rhetoric of "Korean-Manchurian Unity" and the resulting Tumen Conference led to more concrete agreements. On December 10, 1936, less than two months after the Tumen meeting, officials from Manchukuo and colonial Korea met in the Manchukuo capital of Shinkyō (Changchun) to ink the "Memorandum Concerning Bridges on

[18] Chŏng, 181; Im, 183.
[19] Hirose, 'Manshūkoku' ni okeru Suihō Damu kensetsu," 5.

the Yalu and Tumen Rivers." As detailed in Chapter one, for many years bridge construction had been considered integral to the goal of imperial control and sedentarization in the region. With the original 1911 railroad bridge serving as a critical avenue of trade and surveillance since its completion decades earlier, Japanese officials now sensed the opportunity to erect multiple new bridges across the border while ostensibly avoiding the diplomatic rancor that characterized the earlier project. The December 1936 memorandum specifically called for the construction of fourteen bridges across the Yalu and neighboring Tumen River, with eight to be built by the Manchukuo regime and six by the Government-General.[20]

A month after the conclusion of the bridge agreement, a meeting between the Director-General of Korea and the head of the Manchukuo Transportation Bureau yielded a "Memorandum on the Formation of a Joint Manchurian-Korean Technical Committee on the Yalu River."[21] One of the goals of this new joint committee, composed of officials and technicians from both Manchukuo and colonial Korea, was to address what had long been a thorny issue in cross-border relations: namely the management of the Yalu river trade route, which included the maintenance of markers, lighthouses, and other aids for river navigation, as well as periodic hydrographic surveys of the river's mouth. A plan for the joint management of the river was first drafted in 1932 by bureaucrats from the South Manchurian Railway Company.[22] Officials from the Japanese Imperial Navy voiced their own support of the Manchukuo proposal, stating that "convenience" from better lighting and other navigational facilities would likely arise from a joint management approach. But in a 1935 telegraph to then-

[20] " Ōryokkō oyobi Tomonkō kakyō ni kansuru oboegaki oyobi gijiroku," JACAR B13091027800; "Daini Tōakyoku daisan ka kanksei, daigo shō Mansen kokkyō kyōryō kasetsu kyōtei mondai," JACAR B02130133000
[21] " Ōryokkō kyōdō gijutsu iinkai no ken," JACAR B09030253700
[22] Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha Keizai Chōsakai, *Manshū suiun hōsaku* (Dairen [Dalian]: Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha Keizai Chōsakai, 1936), 7-13.

Kwantung Army commander Minami Jirō, Governor-General of Korea Ugaki Kazushige rejected this proposal, explaining that the colonial Korean government had borne sole responsibility for the maintenance of the Yalu river route after "pioneering" its development in 1904. Having perennially ignored earlier Chinese petitions for joint river management, colonial bureaucrats in Korea had little intention of relinquishing their monopoly in this new era of border relations.[23] It was only after protracted negotiation, and assurances by Manchukuo officials that they would not actively challenge the Korean government's claim to Hwanch'op'yŏng and other river islands, that a partial agreement on joint maintenance of river markers and buoys was concluded on March 10, 1936.[24] This agreement was an important precursor to the creation of the "Joint Committee" in January 1937, which finally realized Manchukuo authorities' ambition, inherited from the Chinese officials who preceded them, to break the colonial Korean monopoly on management of the Yalu river route.

Closely following this transformative agreement on joint Yalu River management was an even more radical plan to dam the river for hydroelectricity. The dream of harnessing the river's powerful energy into electrical currents had been held by imperial planners and promoters in the region long before the era of "Manchurian-Korean unity." Engineers from the South Manchuria Railway Company (SMRC) conducted multiple surveys of the Yalu between 1922-1928, collecting data on the river's current and possible sites for future dam projects while avoiding attacks from Korean guerrillas. In 1923 SMRC officials also secured a concession for Yalu dam construction from Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin by suggesting the possibility of

[23] A 1922 proposal by the Deputy Commissioner of the Andong Customs T.T. Ferguson for joint management of the river and a definitive delineation of the river border can be found in Japanese translation in Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha Shomubu Chōsaka, *Tashitō no kenkyū* (Dairen [Dalian]: Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha, 1926), 28-36.
[24] "16. Manshūkoku," JACAR B09030266300.

establishing a joint Sino-Japanese hydroelectric company that would structurally resemble the Yalu River Timber Company created a decade and a half earlier.[25] Not to be outdone by their Manchurian counterparts, officials from Korea conducted their own hydroelectric surveys of the Yalu. The Government-General of Korea's Communications Bureau (*Teishinkyoku*) first measured the streamflow of the Yalu as part of their larger Second Hydropower Study (1921-1929) of rivers throughout the Korean peninsula, followed by even more detailed surveys of the river in 1936.[26]

The importance of harnessing the Yalu's volatile current to border pacification was clear for early dam proponents. In a 1923 report, Japanese technician Kurihara Chūzō expounded the benefits of a proposed Yalu dam for border security in addition to industrial development and river transportation.[27] But it was precisely factors like continued political instability and cross-border tensions that postponed the realization of these plans until August 1937, when a memorandum on the hydroelectric development of the Yalu River was drawn up between the Manchukuo and Japanese governments. After debate among technicians in Manchukuo and colonial Korea, the decision was made to build the first of seven proposed dams along the river at Sup'ung-dong, a site located some forty miles upstream from Sinŭiju.[28] Construction would be directed by separate Manchukuo and Japanese corporations, but they were collectively referred to as the Yalu River Hydropower Company (Ōryokkō Suiryoku Hatsuden Kabushiki Kaisha), because both entities shared the same management and personnel. The founding capital for the Yalu River Hydropower Company was set at one hundred million yen. The Manchukuo

[25] Tao Mian, *Yalu Jiang sushuo: 19 shiji-20 shiji zhongye lueduo jishi* (Shenyang: 2010), 174-178.
[26] Aaron Stephen Moore, "'The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia," 120, 119.
[27] Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha Chōsabu, *Ōryokkō suiryoku hatsuden chōsa keikaku shiryō* (Dairen [Dalian]: Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha, 1940), 13.
[28] Satō Toshihiko, *Doboku jinsei gojūnen* (Chūō Kōron Jigyō Shūppan, 1969), 140.

government supplied half of this amount, while the other half was raised from a group of private and quasi-governmental organs in colonial Korea that included the Bank of Korea and Noguchi Jun's Chōsen Nitrogenous Fertilizer Company, which planned to use the electricity to power new chemical fertilizer plants.[29]

As conceived by imperial technocrats, the Sup'ung dam would be centerpiece of a new "Yalu River industrial belt" that would include not only the Sup'ung Dam but also six additional dams, bridges, grand harbor projects at the mouth of the river, and mineral exploitation of the upper Yalu.[30] Such industrialization would be the harbinger of a new regional order based on cross-border cooperation in the spirit of "Manchurian-Korean Unity." More importantly, the Yalu's hydroelectricity would power the industrial transformation of Korea and Manchukuo into "military supply bases" for bloody campaigns in China, and after 1941, the greater Asia-Pacific.[31]

Challenges to "Korean-Manchurian Unity"

Throughout the process of Yalu industrialization, the obstacles traditionally posed by the Yalu's liquid geography continued to challenge colonial rule. These included persistent raids by anti-Japanese guerillas, lingering rivalries between local populations and governments on both sides of the river, and summer floods.

Skirmishes with anti-Japanese guerillas continued even as imperial planners made grand plans to develop the frontier river. The Northeastern United Anti-Japanese Army (*Dongbei kang*

[29] Aaron Stephen Moore, '"The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia," 120; Harada, 23.
[30] Nihon Chiso Hiryō Kabushiki Kaisha, *Nihon chiso hiryō jigyō gaiyō* (Osaka, Tokyo: Nihon Chiso Hiryō Kabushiki Kaisha , 1940), 131; Morisaki Minoru, *Tōhendō* (Tōkyō: Shunjūsha 1941), 166-168.
[31] Chōsen Ōryokkō Suiryoku Hatsuden Kabushiki Kaisha, *Ōryokkō suiryoku hatsuden keikaku no gaiyō* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Ōryokkō Suiryoku Hatsuden Kabushiki Kaisha, 1940), 4.

Ri lianjun), formed under the aegis of the Chinese Communist Party as an alliance of previous guerrilla groups, was one major group that defied border assimilation.[32] The same year that construction of the Sup'ung Dam began, a raid by two hundred guerilla fighters under *lianjun* commander Kim Il-sung shook the confidence of border police officials in Korea. The June 3, 1937 attack on the upper Yalu town of Poch'ŏnbo succeeded in destroying local government offices as well as setting fire to a Japanese police box, the local elementary school, and post office. Altogether, Kim's forces occupied the town for a full day before retreating into Manchuria.[33] Preparation for the attack began days earlier as Kim's forces established contact with anti-Japanese activists on the Korean side of the river and later constructed a raft bridge across the Yalu.[34] As was later related in Kim's autobiography, "a strange tension" allegedly gripped his "entire body" as he and his forces made their way across the river, which he was surprised to find less heavily patrolled than he had expected.[35] The temporary success of Kim's guerrillas at Poch'ŏnbo drew comparisons by colonial police to earlier wintertime attacks like the Tonghŭng Incident of 1935 (discussed in chapter three), and as a result, renewed efforts were made to increase the security apparatus around the Yalu.[36]

Amidst the pressing need to secure the Sup'ung Dam and other new industrial projects, "bandit suppression" accelerated under the new regime of "Manchurian-Korean unity." After high-level police and military officials from colonial Korea and Manchukuo met during the

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[32] Dongbei kang Ri lianjun shiliao bianxiezu, *Dongbei kang Ri lianjun shiliao* , vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi shiliao chubanshe, 1987), 297. For more on the Communist-led anti-Japanese guerrilla movement in Northeast China during this period, see Chong-Sik Lee, *Revolutionary Struggle in Manchuria: Chinese Communism and Soviet Interest, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
[33] Dae-sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 34-35.
[34] Hyesan Kunji Py'ŏnch'an Wiwonhoe, *Hyesan kunji* (Seoul: Hyesan Kunji Py'ŏnch'an Wiwonhoe), 1999.
[35] Kim Il-sŏng. *Segi wa tŏburŏ*, Volume 6 Chapter 17.2, Ebook;
[36] "Hamgyŏng kukkyŏng e chei Tonghŭng sagŏn," *Maeil sinbo*, June 6, 1937; Kankyō nandō keimubuchō to Chōsen Sōtokufu keimukyokuchō, "kokkyō keibi no jūjitsu kyōka ni kansuru ken," Kannan keihi dai 502 go, National Archives of Korea.

October 1936 Tumen Conference, both sides agreed to provide greater support and increase mutual communication during bandit suppression campaigns.[37]

Seasonal patterns of border security continued to define these counterinsurgency efforts. In a 1940 report to Communist officials, Chinese guerrilla leader Wang Zhengmin described how Japanese police and military utilized the summer months to conduct reconnaissance missions and distribute soldiers throughout the geographically remote forest and mountain regions preferred by guerrilla forces.[38] The most intensive anti-guerrilla suppression campaigns then took place during the late fall and winter, when climatic and material conditions posed greatest difficulties for guerrilla fighters and their paths were exposed by the freshly-fallen snow.[39] These border suppression campaigns yielded some significant results, including the capture and execution of "bandit" leader Wang Fengge in March 1937.[40] Yet the newly formed Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army continued to actively resist Japanese military and industrial campaigns in the region. A 1939 report published by the Manchukuo province of Tonghua, which included the upper Yalu counties of Changbai and Linjiang, detailed how nearly a thousand "Communist bandits" still operated within the province's boundaries. The majority of these "bandits," the same report explained, were ethnic Koreans who participated in anti-Japanese guerrilla activities during the 1920s. These groups now comprised a multiethnic body led by figures such as the Koreans Kim Il-sung and Ch'oe Hyŏn, and Chinese guerrilla leader Yang Jingyu.[41]

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[37] "Mugi tanyak tŭng kwangch'ong hwakch'ung ŭro kukkyŏng kyŏngbi ilchŭng kanghwa," *Maeil sinbo*, January 19, 1936.
[38] *Dongbei kang Ri lianjun shiliao* , vol. 1, 203.
[39] Wada Haruki, *Kin Nichisei to Manshū kōnichi sensō* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1992), 265.
[40] Dongbei kang Ri lianjun shiliao bianxiezu, *Dongbei kang Ri lianjun shiliao* , vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi shiliao chubanshe, 1987), 404.
[41] Tsūka-shō Kōsho, *Kōtoku Gonendo fukō kōsaku jisseki hōkokusho* (Tsūka-shō Kōsho: 1939), Manuscript, Takushoku University Library.

In response to continued security concerns, early construction of the Sup'ung Dam took place under intense surveillance and a prominent police presence. In his memoir, Japanese engineer Satō Toshihiko later recalled being accompanied by five machine-gun wielding border policemen on an initial 1936 Yalu dam survey.[42] Once work began, border police were mobilized not only to continually patrol the massive construction site against possible attack or infiltration, but also to monitor the movements of the more than 70,000 Korean and Chinese villagers displaced by the dam's construction.[43] The same security measures were undertaken for other Yalu industrial projects. The Dongbiandao Development Company (Tōhendo kabushiki kaisha), a quasi-governmental Manchukuo corporation founded in 1938 to exploit mineral resources along the upper Yalu River basin, hired a private police force from Japanese border police and soldiers experienced in "bandit suppression," establishing a direct personnel link between border pacification efforts and regional industrialization.[44]

Despite the proclaimed unity of efforts to subjugate unruly guerillas and tame the river itself, massive infrastructure projects like the Sup'ung Dam exposed continuing rivalries that existed along the river's banks. No matter how diligently imperial boosters proclaimed the metaphorical elimination of the border, the boundary in people's minds, buttressed by long-held regional rivalries and imperial Japan's own contradictory insistence on Manchukuo sovereignty, showed few signs of breaking down.

Competing local interests on the border were especially clear when it came to the twin harbor projects of Dadong and Tasado. Since major settlement along the Yalu River basin began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, promoters of regional development on both

[42] Satō, 137.
[43] Heian hokudō keimu buchō to Chōsen Sōtokufu keimu kyokuchō, Heihoku keihidai 967 go, November 26, 1938, National Archives of Korea,
[44] Tsūka-shō Kōsho, *Tsūka-shō gairan* (Tsūka-shō Kōsho, 1940), 326.

sides of the border had bemoaned the river's insufficiencies as a channel for waterborne trade. These included the river's shallow depth and its dramatic seasonal variability, especially flooding in the summer and a layer of thick ice that covered the river for almost a quarter of the year.[45] Larger marine ships bound for the railway boomtowns of Andong and Sinŭiju had to stop and unload their wares at ports located far away at the river's mouth. While such arrangements sufficed for a time, in the eyes of local officials these facilities were insufficient for the region's further development, which would require the construction of new harbors at the lower Yalu delta. Among the locations long considered for new harbor construction were two small Korean islands near the mouth of the river collectively referred to as Tasado. Tasado's value as an ice-free port that could be readily linked by railway to Sinŭiju was first recognized by Japanese officials in 1904 during the Russo-Japanese War.[46] Despite repeated surveys and multiple attempts by private entrepreneurs to develop the harbor, however, it was not until 1935 that construction of the full-fledged railway link began under the quasigovernmental Tasado Railway Company.[47] Construction of the harbor itself proceeded in three stages, with the first beginning in 1927 and later phases commencing in 1936 and 1938. Each stage of construction brought greater ambition and heftier budgets, with projected expenditures growing from 500,000 yen in 1927 to 13,000,000 yen by 1938.[48]

While Tasado was originally conceived as the primary port of call for future Yalu development,[49] by 1937 officials and entrepreneurs in the city of Andong were pushing for their

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[45] The Maritime Customs, *Decennial Reports on the Trade, Industries, etc. of the Ports Open to Foreign Commerce, and on Conditions and Development of the Treaty Port Provinces*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Statistical Dept. of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1924), 61. Tani Mitsuyo, *Ōryokkō* (Shinkyō [Changchun]: Manshūkoku Tsūshinsha, 1937), 7-8.
[46] "Tashitō rinkō tetsudō to Ōryokkō ryūiki no kaihatsu," *Manshū nippō*, February 28, 1935.
[47] *Ōryokkō keizaiken chōsa hōkokusho*, 556. "Tasado ch'ŏldo hoesa owŏl kyŏng ch'angnip ch'onghoe," *Tonga ilbo* February 21, 1935;
[48] "Ōryokkō ni okeru Senman chikkō to toshi keikaku," *Shokugin chōsa geppō*, February 1940, 40.
[49] Tani Mitsuyo, *Ōryokkō*, 8.

own ice-free harbor on the Chinese side of the river's mouth. Plans for the "Dadong" (Great east) harbor project called for a massive industrial port city that would house over four hundred thousand people and feature dozens of factories powered by cheap Yalu electricity.[50] Once construction began in 1939, the project's proponents were all too eager to denigrate the value of the Tasado harbor while highlighting Dadong's advantages. A January 1940 series of articles in one Manchurian newspaper criticized Tasado's lack of facilities for industrial development while maintaining that "development of Dongbiandao should of course take place through Dadong."[51] Meanwhile, a June 1940 article in a northern Korea-based edition of the Japanese-language *Asahi Shimbun* pointed out multiple flaws in the Dadong plan while stating that Yalu development "must still rely on Tasado."[52] Despite multiple proclamations by top-level Japanese authorities that both harbors were necessary for the Yalu's development, regional loyalties demonstrated the persistance of border divisions in the era of "Manchuria-Korea unity."[53]

Cross-border rivalries were also evident in debates over Yalu fishing rights. As discussed in chapter two, these feuds first emerged in the Protectorate Period (1905-1910), when Japanese officials aggressively expelled Chinese fishermen from the Yalu's fishing grounds. A 1935 study on Yalu fishing published by the South Manchurian Railway Company study complained that little had changed since then, as officials in colonial Korea continued to pursue "monopolistic" fishing policies. [54] The promotion of "Manchurian-Korean unity" after 1936 failed to dissipate

[50] For more detailed discussions of the Dadong harbor project, see Koshizawa Akira, "Daitōkō no keikaku to kensetsu (1937 – 1945)—Manshū ni okeru mikan no dai kibo kaihatsu purojekuto," *Nihon dobokushi kenkyū happyō ronbunshū* 6 (1986): 223-234; Aaron Stephen Moore, *Constructing East Asia: Technology, Ideology, and Empire in Japan's Wartime Era 1931-1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 139-148.
[51] "Taedonghang ŭi kŏnsŏl," *Mansŏn ilbo*, Jan 13, 1940.
[52] "Tashitō minato o ooini riyō," *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun Seisen ban*, June 11, 1940.
[53] Tani Mitsuyo, *Taitōkō to hōko Tōhendō* (Shinkyō [Changchun]: Manshū Jijō Annaijo, 1940), 48-49; Manabe Gorō, *Tōhendō annai* (Dairen [Dalian]: Ajia Shuppan Kyōkai, 1940), 99.
[54] Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha, *Manshū suisan jigyō hōsaku* (Dairen [Dalian]: Minami Manshū Tetsudō Keizai Chōsakai, 1935), 209.

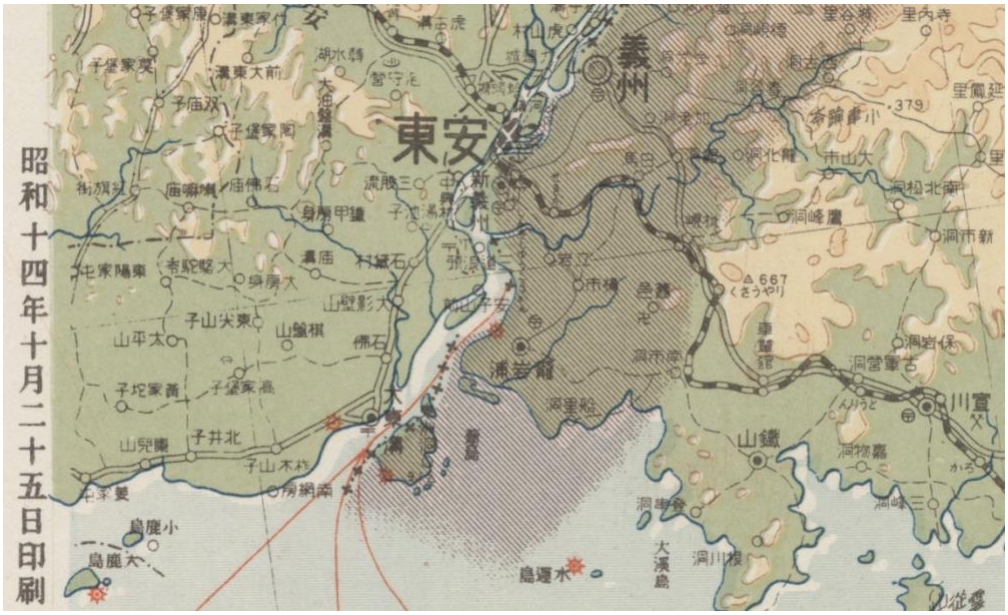
these tensions. Throughout the 1930s and into the early 1940s, local officials in North Pyŏngan Province and Andong Province repeatedly failed to reach a compromise. Adding urgency to the fisheries issue was the fact that springtime icefish harvests were rapidly declining. This was primarily due to both overfishing and industrial pollution of the river caused by concrete runoff from the Sup'ung Dam construction site and waste from other new industrial sites. In June 1938, major newspapers in Korea reported that whereas the annual icefish catch typically amounted to 25,000-30,000 *kan* (or roughly 93,000-112,000 kilograms), as of late May 1938 fishermen had only harvested 4,000 *kan*, a fraction of the yearly average. As fish populations plummeted competition intensified for this lucrative underwater resource.[55] Just when both parties finally seemed to be reaching a consensus in September 1940, however, talks collapsed again due to what Korean newspaper called the "fickle attitudes" of Manchukuo officials and the concerted pleas of Korean and Japanese fishermen "willing to die" before they yielded their three-decade long control of the lower Yalu's icefish fishery.[56]

Maps were also mobilized by the participants of this fiery debate. When North Pyŏngan and Andong officials reconvened to discuss the fisheries issue in April 1941, the Andong delegation tried to refute colonial Korea's claims to almost all of the river's fishing rights by explaining how even official Japanese Army maps drew the border between Manchukuo and Korea in the middle of the river.[57] As such arguments demonstrated, as long as the border's existence was reified on official maps it would remain a point of division and contention between Korea and Manchukuo (See figure 5.1). By April 8, 1941, both sides eventually came to

[55] "Sementŭ ŭi yuha ro Amnokkang baekŏ kamso," *Chosŏn ilbo*, June 1, 1938.
[56] "Hŏta han ŏmin ŭl hŭisaeng," *Maeil sinbo*, September 9, 1940.
[57] "Shirauo no gyoken o meguri," *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun Seisen ban*, April 2, 1941.

an agreement that allowed for a limited number of licensed Chinese fishermen to harvest icefish in the lower Yalu—a first since 1909.[58]

Figure 5.1: Detail from 1939 map of Manchukuo produced by the Japanese Army. The map shows much of the lower Yalu River as being on the Manchukuo side of the borderline (drawn with crosses).



Source: Manshūkoku yochizu: hyakumanbun no ichi, https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/9684408.

While firmly entrenched mental and cartographic boundaries between Korea and Manchuria challenged efforts to build "Korean-Manchurian unity," the Yalu River itself remained a formidable obstacle to border industrialization. This became evident in the construction of the Sup'ung Dam, which was increasingly framed as an attempt to "conquer nature" (*taishizen o seifuku shi*) and subjugate the river.[59] "Conquering" the river through dam construction involved mobilizing hundreds of thousands of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese

[58] "Shirauo mondai yōyaku kaiketsu," *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun Seisen ban*, April 8, 1941.
[59] Harada, 75. Variations of this phrase can be found throughout this publication and in other period reporting on the Sup'ung Dam.

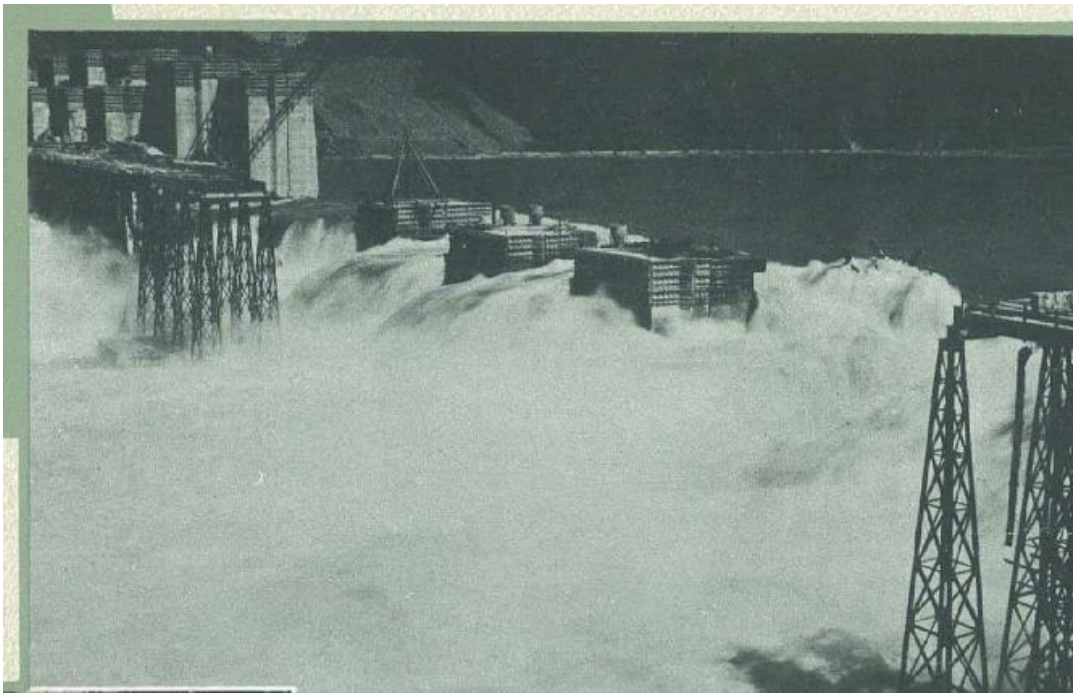
workers, some of whom were prisoners and forced laborers.[60] It also meant displacing approximately from 70,000 Korean and Chinese farmers from the dam site, who were given only minimal reimbursement for their lost land before being sent to locations as far away as northern Manchuria.[61] But even as the considerable labor and disciplinary resources of the Japanese empire were marshaled for the Sup'ung project, the river had its own way of fighting back. Annual summertime floods posed the most intractable problem for dam construction. In 1938, torrential floods of 20,000 cubic meters per second destroyed ongoing work, while floods continued to delay dam construction the following summers (see figure 5.2).[62] Altogether, such damage pushed back the dam's final completion by two years.[63]

The power of the Yalu's torrential floods humbled the engineers who supervised the dam construction. In a memoir, Japanese engineer Satō Toshihiko recalled meeting a senior colleague who had worked on the Yalu River Railroad Bridge completed in 1911. When the latter remarked how "crazy" it was to try to dam the powerful Yalu River, Satō countered by explaining how construction plans for the dam had already made careful allowances for the rivers' natural force. Most of the pouring of concrete for the structure would take place during the winter when the river's current was at its weakest, Satō explained. In the summer, construction would mostly cease as powerful floods would be allowed to wash over the site. Although this plan managed to convince the skeptical bridge builder, in practice accommodating the Yalu's seasonal variability was more of a challenge.[64] Later in his memoir Satō recounted how a 20

[60] Moore, "The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia," 130.
[61] Ibid., 127-130.
[62] Chūō Nikkan Kyōkai, *Chōsen denki jigyōshi* (Tokyo: Chūō Nikkan Kyōkai, 1981), 439.
[63] "The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia," 123.
[64] Satō,143-144.

meter tall and 1.5 meter thick concrete block was suddenly washed away one day without a trace during a summer flood. "This made me realize just how powerful water is," Satō remarked.[65]

Figure 5.2: Photograph showing a June 1940 flood that destroyed a construction bridge in front of the Sup'ung Dam



Source: Chōsen Ōryokkō Suiryoku Hatsudensha, *Suihō kensetsu kinen shashinchō* (Sakju: Chōsen Ōryokkō Suiryoku Hatsuden Kabushiki Kaisha, 1943)

The intensity of the Yalu's summer floods was not simply an inevitable natural occurrence, but a result of decades of human interference in the forested ecosystems of the upper Yalu watershed. The link between deforestation, soil erosion, and flooding was well-understood among foresters and state officials throughout East Asia. In his study of Japanese colonial forestry in Korea, David Fedman describes how colonial foresters often repeated the four-character phrase *chisan chisui* (tame the mountains, tame the waters) in their injunctions to

[65] Ibid., 147.

colonized Koreans to plant trees.[66] At the same time, revered "founder of modern China" and first president of the Republic of China Sun Yatsen similarly urged his government to adopt afforestation methods to combat rampant flooding.[67] Despite such rhetoric, the sheer size of the Yalu's forests, protected for centuries by Qing isolationist policy and their remoteness, led many to ignore the flooding problem while assuming that the region's timber resources were uniquely "limitless."[68] Logging of the rich stands of timber along the upper Yalu River Basin accelerated at a rapid pace following Japanese expansion into the region and the 1908 creation of the Sino-Japanese Yalu River Timber Company. By the 1930s, dozens of timber processing facilities were operating in the twin border cities of Sinŭiju and Andong.[69] Timber-felling grew more rapid following the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, as the Japanese state mobilized forestry resources throughout the empire to fuel the war effort. By 1942 total forest cover in northern Korea had fallen to just 68% of its 1927 level, while forest cover in Manchuria also declined precipitously.[70]

In addition to the mass extraction of timber sponsored by the colonial state, the activity of swidden farmers, known in Korea as "fire-field farmers" (K: Hwajŏnmin), also hastened Yalu forest degradation. Like slash-and-burn agriculturalists in other parts of the world, these farmers subsisted on marginal mountainous lands by burning down forests (often state-owned)) and harvesting crops in the resulting open land. In the eyes of Japanese officials, slash-and-burn agriculturalists not only subverted the imperial state's command over forest resources, but also

[66] Fedman, 453.
[67] Patrick Caffrey, "The Forests of Northeast China, 1600—1960: Environment, Politics, and Society" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2002), 232-233.
[68] "Daikibō no Chōsen seishi," *Keijō nippō*, October 20, 1917.
[69] Fedman, 212; Antō Shōkō Kōkai, *Antō keizai gaiyō* (Antō [Dandong]: Antō Shōkō Kōkai, 1938), 42-44.
[70] Jae Soo Bae et al., "Forest Transition in South Korea: Reality, Path and Drivers," *Land Use Policy* 29 (January 2012): 202; Caffrey, 320, 326.

posed a larger security threat along the Manchurian-Korean border.[71] Among fire-field farmers, many of them former tenant farmers driven by poverty to this desperate existence, illicit practices like salt and tobacco smuggling were a way of life and necessary means of survival.[72] The various measures undertaken by Japanese officials to sedentarize these slash-and-burn agriculturalists included resettlement programs as well as strict punishments for those who violated the state's forestry laws. Despite these measures, the numbers of hwajŏnmin continued to climb. As of 1936 over 300,000 families were engaged in such marginal farming, a 300 percent increase since 1916.[73]

As the Yalu's forests were slowly depleted, observers near and far ruminated on the link between timber-felling and the region's floods. In his 1942 book about Manchurian forests, forestry science expert Murayama Jōzō bemoaned the "naked, red earth" along the upper Yalu caused by timber over-harvesting that began in the late Qing period and continued under the Yalu River Timber Company.[74] When dramatic floods hit the region earlier in 1935, Korean intellectual Yun Chi-ho commented in his diary, "The conscienceless and heartless cutting down of the forests on the mountains from which the Yalu receives its mighty volume of water must be largely responsible for this fearful flood."[75] As such observations indicate, engineers trying to dam the Yalu amidst powerful summer floods were realizing the results of decades of intensive timber-cutting. The same problems also affected other industrial projects along the river. In

[71] Chōsen Sōtokufu, *Chōsen buraku chōsa hōkoku. Dai 1-satsu, Kadenmin raiju shinajin* (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1924), 1.
[72]"Paektusan ŭl nŏmŏ tongp'o tŭl ŭl ch'ajasŏ," *Tonga ilbo*, March 26, 1932.
[73] Michael E. Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 83.
[74] Murayama Jōzō, *Manshū no shinrin to sono shizenteki kōsei* (Hōten [Shenyang]: Hōten Ōsaka Yagō Shoten, 1943), 73-74.
[75] Yun Ch'iho, *Yun Ch'iho ilgi*, July 31, 1935. Accessed through National Institute of Korean History Korean History Database (Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe Han'guksa Deit'ŏbeisŭ), db.history.go.kr

August of 1940, for example, rising river levels caused an estimated 750,000 yen of damage to the Dadong harbor site.[76]

In addition to summertime floods, other recurring disasters at the Sup'ung Dam construction site included fires, landslides, and deadly falls. In December 1939 one Korean-language Manchurian newspaper, the *Mansŏn ilbo*, reported how landslides had taken the lives of seven laborers and seriously injured five others.[77] Such "accidents" were exacerbated by unsafe work conditions, which included twelve-hour work shifts under the unrelenting surveillance of Japanese police and overseers. Estimates of the total number of worker deaths during construction, many of them caused by accidents as well as the communicable diseases that spread rapidly in the cramped workers' quarters, range from a few hundred to several thousand.[78]

The inhumane conditions for laborers at Yalu industrial sites are captured in the recollections of Zhou Hongzuo, a laborer at the Dadong harbor project interviewed decades later by a local historian in Northeast China.[79] As Zhou recounts, laborers at the Dadong site subsisted on a meager diet of cornbread and pickled radish while working under pickax-armed foremen who would violently strike any workers seen slacking off on the job. The same kinds of communicable diseases that ravaged workers at the Sup'ung Dam site also afflicted the Dadong workers, though Japanese overseers took few measures other than to isolate the most sick in "quarantine rooms" (*gelifang*). As Zhou recalled, "once someone was sent to the quarantine room, we knew they were done for." As recounted by Zhou, laborers also bore the brunt of the Yalu's climatic extremes. Workers trying to escape the hot summer sun would wrap the

[76] "Apkang sangnyu ŭi hou ro 'ttaem' e p'okp'o ch'ulhyŏn," *Mansŏn ilbo*, August 11, 1940.
[77] "Apkang Sup'ung 'ttaem' esŏ inbu shipsam myŏng sisang," *Mansŏn ilbo*, December 29, 1939.
[78] Hirose, 18-20; Moore, "The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia," 131.
[79] Tao, 164.

underside of empty cement bags around their arms, a desperate tactic that resulted in "their arms being covered with scars." The intense heat alternated with heavy summer rains, which added to the worker's grueling conditions by flooding the construction site. Once winter approached, workers would then tie empty cement bags around their bare feet to alleviate the pain of working the frozen earth. The bodies of workers who died the same season were thrown into the river to flow into the ocean.[80]

The suffering of ordinary laborers was downplayed, however, in Japanese reports which stressed Japanese engineers' own exertion and ingenuity in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges from the river environment. The *Overview of the Construction of the Sup'ung Dam* (*Suihō hatsudenjo kōji taikan*), published by a Japanese civil engineering publishing house in 1942, contained transcripts of interviews with several leading Japanese engineers on the project. While these engineers and project overseers were quite eager to detail the natural challenges to dam construction and the ways in which they were skillfully overcome, far less often mentioned was the back-breaking labor needed to move the tons of dirt and concrete that ended up blocking the river's flow.[81] Reports like the *Overview of the Construction of the Sup'ung Dam* only briefly acknowledged the role of Koreans and Chinese involved with the dam project, whether as skilled engineers, contractors, clerks, or laborers.[82]

[80] Ibid.
[81] Harada.
[82] In a table of contractors involved in the dam's construction, the *Overview* listed a total of twenty-five identifiably Korean and Chinese names. This list did not include, of course, the thousands of day laborers who toiled on the project. Harada, 92-99.

The Yalu Conquered?

The Sup'ung Dam's promoters saw its completion as a definitive symbol of their "conquest of nature" and successful integration of the Sino-Korean border. Imperial engineers and officials greeted the first successful transmission of electricity from recently imported German turbines at the Sup'ung Dam with considerable fanfare. At a special "transmission of electricity ceremony" in August 1941, president of the Yalu River Hydropower Company Noguchi Jun declared that the dam showed the "greatness of our country" and the "fulfillment of Japanese-Manchukuo unity," while Governor-General Minami proclaimed "the conquest of nature by human might."[83]

"Conquering" the Yalu entailed not only the channeling of the river's flow into electric currents, but also the shortening, and eventually, erasure of the wintertime ice-bound period. For years, the ice had been one of the most distinctive features of the Yalu's seasonal topography. But beginning in early 1941, just as the dam's initial phase of construction was nearing completion, observers noticed that part of a two-kilometer stretch of the river below the dam had failed to freeze over despite temperatures plunging to thirty degrees below Celsius. The explanation for this strange phenomenon, as proposed by the author of a *Mansŏn ilbo* article, was rising water temperatures caused by the movement of the river's water through the dam's water gates and turbines. [84] While this might have played a part, water stored at the bottom of the massive Sup'ung reservoir was also insulated against changes in surface temperature. Once released downstream, it caused the lower stretches of the river to become comparatively colder in the summer and warmer in the winter. The following winter (1941-1942), the same phenomenon occurred on a wider scale as the frozen-over period for the entire stretch of river

[83] For full text of their addresses and others who spoke at the event, see Harada, 7-16.
[84] "Amnokkang ilbu ka kyŏlbing ch'ianhyŏ," *Mansŏn ilbo*, Jan 19, 1941.

from the Sup'ung Dam to the Yalu's mouth was shortened by over a month.[85] In subsequent winters, the river below the dam would not freeze over at all.[86]

The changes that occurred in the Yalu region as a result of dam construction and regional industrialization can be understood as part of a global environmental transformation which began during the Second World War and continues to impact ecosystems worldwide to this day. Total war meant the total mobilization of wartime landscapes; as Micah Muscolino describes, throughout the years 1937-1945 "militarized economies pursued energy and materials to fuel conflict with sometimes reckless abandon."[87] The extent of global environmental change during this period is encapsulated in contemporary debates over the term "Anthropocene," a proposed geologic epoch demarcating when anthropogenic impacts overtook geophysical factors in shaping global climate and ecology. While a number of dates have been proposed for the beginning of the Anthropocene, one oft-discussed date is July 16, 1945. This was the day when the first successful testing of a nuclear bomb by the United States in its war against Japan deposited radioactive traces around the world.[88] The advent of the Anthropocene along the Yalu was signified by such ruptures as the dramatic disappearance of the lower Yalu's winter ice. By building a climate observation station at the Sup'ung Reservoir in 1941, Japanese officials at the

[85] *Antō sangyō keizai gaikan*, 135.
[86] Tamaoki Shōji, "Chōsen no suiryoku hatsuden ni tsuite," T50 (unpublished oral history interview). Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūsho, Gakushūin University, 1960.
[87] Micah Muscolino, "Woods and Warfare in Korea and the World: A View from China," *Journal of Asian Studies* (February 2018): 370. For more on the environmental impact of WWII in Asia and worldwide, see Micah S. Muscolino, *The Ecology of War in China: Henan Province, the Yellow River, and Beyond, 1938-1950*(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); William M. Tsutsui, "Landscapes in the Dark Valley: Towards an Environmental History of Wartime Japan," *Environmental History* 8 No. 2 (April 2003): 294-311; Simo Laakkonen, Richard P. Tucker and Timo Vuorisalo, eds., *The Long Shadows: A Global Environmental History of the Second World War* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2017).
[88] Jan Zalasiewicz et. al, "When Did the Anthropocene Begin?" *Quaternary International* 38 , (5 October 2015), Pages 204-207; Richard Monterasky, "First atomic blast proposed as start of Anthropocene," Nature International Journal of Science https://www.nature.com/news/first-atomic-blast-proposed-as-start-of-anthropocene-1.16739. Accessed February 22, 2018.

time also signaled their awareness of the major environmental changes that were occurring.[89] As a result of dam construction and other elements of wartime industrialization, the Yalu−and landscapes around the world−would never be the same again.

By lessening the dramatic effects of the icebound period, dam construction made the river's seasonal cycle more congenial to the aims of the colonial state. The frozen paths across the border that had bedeviled customs officials and police officials for decades no longer existed along the lower Yalu.[90] Police deployment statistics showed this effect of the declining seasonal threat as officials no longer felt the need to bolster police numbers during the winter after 1940.[91] It seemed to many that Japanese technology had finally conquered this colonial frontier. The disappearance of the winter ice did cause some to reflect with wistful nostalgia on the passing of an earlier era. In his 1943 book *Ōryokkō* (The Yalu River), Japanese writer and former border police officer Noritake Kazuo remarked how dam construction had robbed the Yalu of its free-flowing essence by turning it into an electricity-producing "lake."[92] But other observers were more optimistic. For instance, the authors of the 1942 *Antō sangyō keizai gaikan* (Summary of Andong's Economy and Industry) argued that the shortened ice-bound period and division of the river into "lakes" as a result of dam construction would significantly aid river transport and regional development.[93]

In addition to the disappearance of the lower Yalu's ice, Japanese officials' optimism in the wake of dam construction was inspired by an increasingly stable security situation around the Manchurian-Korean border. Successive joint counter-insurgency campaigns by Japanese and

[89] "Jinkōko no kishō ni mesu," *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun Seisen ban,* February 14, 1941.
[90] Tamaoki Shōji, "Chōsen no suiryoku hatsuden ni tsuite."
[91] "Kokkyō Dai issen, "Dai nisen keisatsukan haichi kankei."
[92] Noritake, 164.
[93] *Antō sangyō keizai gaikan*, 128-135.

Manchukuo soldiers and police officers, which included brutal "scorched-earth" tactics aimed at alienating popular support for guerrillas, seemed to have dealt the final blow to the fierce insurgency that had challenged Japanese hegemony for decades. "Bandit suppression" had been a goal of Manchukuo security forces ever since the puppet-state's inception. It was not until after the Japanese invasion of mainland China reached a stalemate in 1938, however, that military forces in Manchuria devoted their full attention to the remaining guerrilla resistance. Beginning in October 1939, a massive combined Japanese and Manchukuo Army force of 75,000 troops launched simultaneous counter-insurgency campaigns in the Manchukuo provinces of Jilin, Jiandao, and Tonghua.[94] On February 23, 1940, influential Communist guerrilla leader Yang Jingyu, commander of the First Route Army of the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army, was killed in a gunfight with Manchukuo policemen.[95] Kim Il-sung and Ch'oe Hyŏn managed to escape such a fate only by fleeing to the Soviet Union later that year.[96] Just as the ice of the "frozen-over period" along the lower Yalu was fading into memory, wintertime border raids appear to have ended as well. By 1944 the Government-General magazine *Chōsen* confidently stated that the history of bandit raids in the region had been relegated to the watery depths of the new Sup'ung reservoir.[97]

In the wake of dam completion and guerrilla pacification came grand schemes to develop the Sup'ung Reservoir as the "world's number-one fish hatchery."[98] Pollution from dam construction and regional industrialization had an initially detrimental effect on the river's fish populations. Suggestions to install a fish ladder on the Sup'ung Dam to help fish travel over the

[94] Wada, 265
[95] "Hishu Yō Seiu no saiki," *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun Seisen ban*, Sep 3, 1940
[96] Wada, 289-292.
[97] Mine Kenichi, "Suihō damu sobyō," *Chōsen*, January 1944.
[98] "Sekai ichi no yōgyojō" *Maeil sinbo*, January 30, 1944.

massive concrete boundary were refused by dam engineers, who believed that the costs of ladder installation and maintenance outweighed any potential economic benefit.[99] Instead, officials on both sides of the border began promoting the idea of farming fish in the Sup'ung Reservoir, which they predicted would increase the value of the Yalu's annual yield to 3-4 million yen from its previous value of 60,000-70,000 yen.[100] In July 1941, fisheries officials in colonial Korea and Manchukuo announced plans to build hatcheries on the reservoir that would raise salmon, pond loach, eels, and various types of carp, with a total projected budget of one million yen.[101] Wartime scarcity meant that these plans were later scaled back. [102] Yet despite such limitations, by October 1943 fishery technicians had already moved thirty million sweetfish eggs from an aquacultural facility in the nearby Ch'ŏngch'ŏn River to the Sup'ung Reservoir. The results were "encouraging," officials reported, and provided the basis for additional aquacultural experiments the following year.[103]

Completion of the Sup'ung Dam also aroused ambitions to turn the reservoir into a tourist hotspot. In her study of tourism in the Japanese colonial empire, Kate McDonald argues that Japanese officials actively promoted travel as a means of "legitim[izing] imperial claims to colonized land."[104] Before 1940, tourist guidebooks produced by the South Manchurian Railway Company or the Government-General of Korea's Railway Bureau typically mentioned the Yalu border region as part of a brief stop in Andong or Sinŭiju on the railway route from Korea to

[99] Mantetsu sangyōbu, "Ōryokkō suiryoku hatsuden ni okeru gyodō oyobi shūbatsuro ni kansuru ni, san no chosa kekka," in Liaoning Sheng danganguan, ed., *Mantie diaocha baogao*, v. 14 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2005), 167.
[100] "Suihō suiden damu riyō ōgakari no tansuigyō shiyō," *Seisen nippō*, March 5, 1938.
[101] "Segye il ŭi ingong hosu," *Maeil sinbo*, July 4, 1941.
[102] "Taeyang ŭi tamsuŏ," *Maeil sinbo*, August 13, 1944.
[103] In 1944, for example, the budget for fisheries officials on the Korean side of the Yalu was only 209,207 yen, 148,402 yen of which was supplied by the Yalu River Hydropower Company. "Tansuigyo no sōsyoku," *Keijo nippō*, February 14, 1944.
[104] Kate McDonald, *Placing Empire: Travel and the Social Imagination in Imperial Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), xv.

Manchuria.[105] While such guides often highlighted the railway bridge or historic Russo-Japanese war sites in Andong's immediate vicinity, travel further up the frontier Yalu would have been less likely for the well-heeled Japanese tourists reading these publications. But as "bandit suppression" and Yalu industrialization picked up speed, local boosters promoted a new image for the formerly violent border region. In a September 1940 article published in the Sinŭiju Chamber of Commerce's monthly newsletter titled "The Value of the Sup'ung Dam for Tourism," author Iino Shōtarō argued that the dam offered opportunities for new types of recreation such as sport fishing and boating. Iino also played up the fact that the Sup'ung Dam reservoir was only a two-and-half hour drive from Sinŭiju, putting the dam in closer proximity to major rail lines than more remotely-located large dams in the countryside of the Japanese archipelago.[106] Such writings show how the Yalu was being imagined not as a remote, dangerous colonial periphery, but as a sedate and assimilated tourist site within easy reach of the urbane Japanese traveler.

The Limits of Yalu Assimilation

Completion of the Sup'ung Dam brought with it optimism that the unruly liquid geography of the Yalu River border had finally been tamed, especially as the subjugation of anti-Japanese guerrillas spelled the end of previous seasonal cycles of border violence. Yet while officials and engineers proudly declared the dam a hallmark of "Scientific Japan," not all local stakeholders saw the accompanying transformation of the Yalu in rosy terms.[107] Among the

[105] See, for example, Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha, *Chōsen Manshū tabi no shiori* (Tokyo: Minami Manshū Tōkyō Shisha, 1938), 68-69.
[106] Iino Shōtarō, "Ōryokkō suiden no kankōteki kachi," *Shingishū shōkō kōgi geppō*, September 1940, 4.
[107] Moore, "The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia," 115. For more on how science figured in Japanese wartime discourse, see Hiromi Mizuno, *Science for the Empire: Scientific Nationalism in Modern Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

disenchanted were the poorly remunerated laborers whose "sacrifice" was hardly acknowledged by dam proponents. There were also the poor Korean and Chinese farmers forcibly displaced to make way for the massive new Sup'ung reservoir. Compelled to sell their homes at the artificially low prices set by Japanese officials before being relocated to new settlements hundreds of miles away, these forced migrants and their mournful plight caught the imagination of local writers. In a series of articles for the Korean-language *Mansŏn ilbo*, journalist Kang Ik-hyŏn followed them (while under heavy police surveillance) as they prepared to abandon their homes. While Kang himself was generally supportive of Japanese plans for the region, he ruminated on the fate of their migrants in the face of colonial policy and their nostalgic attachment to a landscape that would soon disappear: "For those villagers forced to leave behind their beloved hometowns, land, familiar mountains and rivers, and their friends and family only to enter relocation groups and start their lives anew, can you really expect them to understand the policy of 'constructing a New Asia'? For them it is simply the greatest disaster of their lives."[108]

Even privileged Japanese timber merchants in the Yalu border cities of Sinŭiju and Andong saw the dam's completion as an all-out attack on their way of life and the region's traditionally most profitable industry. Since the dam's construction was first announced in 1937, timber merchants in these cities aggressively lobbied dam engineers for measures that would allow timber rafts to continue to float downstream. As discussed in previous chapters, these timber rafts−commemorated in popular songs such as the "Ōryokkō bushi"−were a veritable economic lifeline for the downstream "timber cities" of Andong and Sinŭiju, with their annual presence on the springtime Yalu numbering well into the thousands. Dam engineers' inability to accommodate the movement of timber rafts and imperial planners' unwillingness to forsake

[108] "Pingjŏm ha ŭi Amnokkang molji," *Mansŏn ilbo*, February 1, 1940.

larger plans to industrialize the region signaled that the electricity-producing "economic river" had replaced the "timber river" of old.[109] As a result, the heart of the Yalu's lumber processing industry was compelled to move from Andong and Sinŭiju to the upper Yalu cities of Manp'ojin and Ji'an. And in order to stem similar protests from river boat captains about the dam damaging their livelihoods, the Yalu River Hydropower Company simply purchased most river transportation companies and brought them under its monopoly.[110]

Additionally, while the threat of "banditry" had been effectively dispatched by 1941, the perpetually thorny issue of smuggling and illicit border trade continued to puncture holes in the thin veneer of "Manchurian-Korean unity." After flourishing for years in the uneven spaces of riparian sovereignty along the Andong-Sinŭiju corridor, local authorities did manage to crush the threat for a brief period after 1937. A major factor that helped contain smuggling was increased cooperation between customs and police authorities in Andong and Sinŭiju on measures such as banning nighttime river traffic.[111] In addition to greater collaboration between crossborder officials, a final factor that discouraged smuggling was the abolition of Japanese extraterritoriality in Manchukuo in December 1937 and the subsequent dissolution of the Japanese settlement in Andong. The settlement's extraterritorial status long provided a safe haven for smugglers and their sponsors outside of the administrative reach of the Chinese and Manchukuo customs. By the mid-1930s, however, calls mounted to abolish such railway settlements and bring them under the legal jurisdiction of the Manchukuo regime. Not only did the legal privileges enjoyed by concession residents expose the hypocrisy behind the Manchukuo

[109] "Ōryokkō o shōkai seyo," *Ōryoku*, Jan 5, 1909, 13. For more on the timber raft controversy, see Hirose Teizō 's article on the issue: "Shokuminchiki Chōsen ni okeru Suihō hatsudenjo kensetsu to ryūbatsu mondai," *Niigata Kokusai Jōhō Daigaku Jōhō Bunka Gakubu kiyō* 1 (March 1998): 39–58, as well as Moore, "The Yalu River Era of Devoping Asia," 124-126.
[110] Satō, 149.
[111] "Kakkoku ni okeru mitsuyunyū kankei zakken: Manshūkoku no bu," JACAR B09040535600, 149.

nation-building project, but Japanese authorities also saw residents' continued exemption from Manchukuo taxes as a major fiscal liability amidst the Kwantung Army's capital-intensive commitment to Manchukuo's heavy industrialization.[112] The disappearance of the Andong settlement, along with newly lowered customs rates, seemed to end the perennial spectacle of large smuggling "gangs" making their way across the liquid channel between Andong and Sinŭiju. Whereas Andong customs officials prosecuted a total of 2982 smuggling incidents in 1936 and 1518 in 1937, by 1938 the number had dropped dramatically to a mere 169.

The relief provided by such measures proved short-lived, however. The Japanese military's increased demand for materials to fuel its ongoing war in China led both the colonial Korean and Manchukuo governments to implement increasingly strict economic controls. These included the rationing and setting of officially-mandated prices on basic commodities to curb inflation and the creation of special "economic police" (*keizai keisatsu*) to enforce these regulations with greater urgency following the outbreak of the Asia-Pacific War in December 1941.[113] But even with these measures, growing demand for increasingly scarce basic commodities and a desire to circumvent wartime rationing encouraged smuggling and other forms of illicit trade to flourish. From a low of only 69 persons cited for smuggling in Andong in 1938, the number jumped to 310 in 1939 and 603 by 1942.[114] Smuggling thrived even as the Yalu's "frozen-over period," a traditional period of heightened smuggling activity, grew shorter in the wake of dam construction. After the delayed onset of the "freezing-over period" in 1941-1942, the *Maeil sinbo* reported a "sudden spike" in the number of smuggling incidents in the

[112] Asano Toyomi, *Teikoku Nihon no shokuminchi hōsei: Hōiki tōgō to teikoku chitsujo* (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2008), 425-431.
[113] On economic police in Korea and Manchukuo, see Hŏ Yŏng-ran, "Chŏnsi ch'ejegi (1937-1945) saenghwal p'ilsup'um tongje yŏngu," *Kuksagwan nonch'ong* 88 (2000): 289-330; Tanaka Ryūichi, "'Manshūkoku' keisatsu to chiiki shakai: keizai keisatsu no katsudō to sono mujun o chūshin to shite," *Chungang saron* 32 (December 2010): 237-271.
[114] Zeikan Gaishi Hensan Iinkai, *Manshūkoku zeikan gaishi* (Shinkyō [Changchun]: Keizaibu Kanseika, 1944), 189.

Andong-Sinŭiju region. Police estimated that an average of fifty incidents occurred daily as smugglers took advantage of a dramatic rise of wartime commodity prices in Manchukuo.[115]

Smuggling and other border issues were raised in special meetings that sought to address the lingering tensions behind "Manchurian-Korean Unity." On November 14, 1941 and again on March 22, 1942, the Andong and Sinŭiju Chambers of Commerce held discussion forums featuring local officials and businessmen from both border cities. While the stated goal of the gatherings was to help bring the local economy more "in line" with national policy, the discussion quickly turned to a laundry list of outstanding grievances against the wartime border regime. As stated by one attendee, "Manchurian-Korean unity is far easier said than done."[116] Many attendees complained about escalating price differences between Andong and Sinŭiju, a major factor behind the smuggling resurgence. As Andong Chamber of Commerce President Senoguchi Fujitarō explained, while earlier "free-trade" policies had kept commodity prices on both sides of the border more or less equal, after the implementation of price controls in Korea the cost of goods in Sinŭiju was artificially more similar to the southern Korean port city of Pusan than Andong. Meanwhile, in Andong prices reflected the planning of officials in the far-off Manchukuo capital of Shinkyō rather than local circumstances.[117] The implications of government-set prices were dramatic for those living along the Yalu border. Whereas 15 kilograms of rice cost 4.30 yen in Sinŭiju, for example, the same amount cost 5.96 yen in Andong, a difference of approximately 38.6%.[118] Little wonder that an illicit trade in rice and other goods thrived along the river. As a November 1940 article in the *Mansŏn ilbo* declared,

[115] "Milsugun kyŏkchŭng," *Maeil sinbo*, January 30, 1942.
[116]Antō Shōkō Kōkai, *Angi keizai kondan kaigi jiroku* (Antō [Dandong]: Antō Shōkō Kōkai, 1941), 11.
[117] Ibid, 9-10.
[118] Ibid, "Angi kōri bukko taishōhyō "

"One just has to cross the Yalu and they can earn nine yen of profit on one sŏk of rice."[119] The temptation was also great for railway workers and officials along the border to engage in corrupt speculation. On December 14, 1942 a twenty-year old Japanese employee of a customs office in Manp'ojin was arrested along with another young Japanese railroad assistant conductor for impersonating customs agents, capturing contraband from smugglers, and then selling these goods on the black market for exorbitant prices.[120]

Another source of frustration for attendees at the November 1941 "Andong and Sinŭiju Economic Discussion Forum" was the failed promise of hydroelectric development and other Yalu industrialization projects to improve life along the border. Not only had the dam severed Andong and Sinŭiju's access to waterborne timber rafts, the traditional economic lifeblood of the two cities, but the promise of cheap and plentiful hydroelectricity for industrial development had also run aground on wartime realities. As detailed by Aaron Moore in his Sup'ung Dam study, the Yalu River Hydropower Company and the Government-General of Korea received permission from the Manchukuo government in 1941 to raise the electricity rate from the originally agreed eight rin per kilowatt-hour to one sen one rin per kilowatt-hour.[121] The cost hike, which came as a result of expanding construction costs from dramatic floods and the higher cost of wartime materials, caused industrial promoters in Andong and Sinŭiju to worry that the increased price for electricity would pose an undue "shock" for factories in the region.[122]

In addition to the higher cost of electricity, wartime material shortages were also hampering grand schemes to turn the Yalu River into a unified Manchurian-Korean "industrial

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[119] "Amnokkang man kŏnnŭ myŏn il sŏk e ku wŏn iik," *Mansŏn ilbo*, November 23, 1940. One sŏk is equivalent to roughly 140 kilograms.
[120] "Mitsuyushutsusha kan no gōtō jiken ni kansuru ken," Korean National Archives, CJA0004016.
[121] One sen is one one-hundredth of one yen. One rin is one one-thousandth of one yen. From Moore, "The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia," 121.
[122] Ibid., 121-122.

belt." This was especially evident in the case of the ongoing harbor construction projects at the river's mouth. At the 1941 "Andong and Sinŭiju Economic Discussion Forum," Kishikawa Shunsuke, a government civil engineer based in Sinŭiju, noted that the recently completed cargo unloading docks at the Tasado harbor were only 30% of their original projected size, while a representative of a shipping company called the current facilities at Tasado "extremely insufficient."[123] The pace of construction at the Dadong harbor project was also slowing due to wartime material shortages. A 1944 publication by the Manchukuo government's Bureau of Transportation euphemistically noted that it was "difficult to be optimistic" about the project's completion.[124]

Conclusion

Japanese involvement in a prolonged war with the United States and other Allied powers dealt the final blow to the hubris-filled imperial project of assimilating and industrializing the Yalu. The celebration that heralded the first transmission of electricity from the Sup'ung Dam in August 1941 proved short-lived as the tides of war turned against Japan. Successive defeats in the Battles of Midway (1942) and Guadalcanal (1942-1943) translated into increasingly desperate attempts to provision Japan's over-extended wartime empire which, in the euphoric rush of initial post-Pearl Harbor victories, had ballooned dramatically.[125] As critical materials were diverted to the battlefront, Japanese engineers and officials along the Manchurian-Korean

[123] *Angi keizai kondan kaigi jiroku*, 27-28.
[124] Kōtsūbu Daijin Kanbō Shiryōka, *Kōtsūbu yōran* (Shinkyō [Changchun]: Kōtsūbu Daijin Kanbō Shiryōka, 1944), 230.
[125] For more on the Japanese wartime empire, see Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996)

border attempted to adapt by modifying existing plans for river engineering projects, a decision that came with its own deadly consequences.

Following the completion of the Sup'ung Dam, engineers from the Yalu River Hydroelectric Corporation turned their attention to two new dam projects at Yunfeng and Ŭiju. The Yunfeng Dam, which began construction in July 1942, was located near the upper Yalu border cities of Manpo'jin and Ji'an. These formerly remote cities on opposite sides of the border were linked by a new railway route completed in 1939, and with the completion of the Yunfeng Dam Japanese engineers hoped that cheap electricity could further drive the region's industrial transformation.[126] Yet from the start, construction was hampered not only by material shortages but also by Japanese engineers' own pride and miscalculation. In his memoir, Japanese engineer Satō Toshihiko recalled how he and his colleagues felt over-confident coming off the successful Sup'ung project, and as a result, decided to use a simple suspension bridge for work on the dam's body rather than a more sturdy structure like the one used at Sup'ung. This plan failed to anticipate strong winds in the narrow river valley where the project was taking place, and the bridge had to be replaced.[127] While completion of the dam was originally set for 1948, it was only about 30% complete at the time of Japan's defeat in 1945.[128] The Ŭiju dam project, begun at the same time along the lower portion of the river, also saw delays and material shortages, with deadly consequences for on-site workers. As also detailed in Satō's memoir, the upper portion of the airtight caissons used in the dam's foundation work were built of wood due to the difficulties of procuring steel. The lack of a back-up electrical generator to power the caisson's air-pressure

[126] "Manp'osŏn ŭi chŏnt'ong," *Tonga ilbo*, January 28, 1939; Nagatsuka Riichi, *Kubota Yutaka* (Tokyo: Denki Kōhōsha, 1966), 221.
[127] Satō, 157.
[128] Nagatsuka, 221; Doboku Gakkai Nihon Dobokushi Henshū Iinkai, *Nihon dobokushi: Taishō Gannen - Shōwa15 nen* (Tokyo: Doboku Gakkai, 1973), 1171.

regulating compressor also meant that when an un unexpected power outage occurred at the dam site, water quickly flooded into the chamber, drowning all of the workers laboring inside.[129] Such nightmarish working conditions ended only with Japan's defeat, which left the Ŭiju dam just 20% complete.[130]

The urgency of the wartime situation accelerated the assimilation of the Yalu border through the abrogation of previous customs laws, though these changes were nullified by Japan's surrender. First, in 1943 Manchukuo customs officials granted customs tax exemptions for goods destined for use on the Yunfeng and Ŭiju dam construction sites. Done in response to requests from the Yalu River Hydropower Company, official explanations for the new exemptions cited the importance of border engineering projects to both Korea and Manchukuo.[131] Finally, in July 1944 officials from the Government-General of Korea, Manchukuo, and the South Manchurian Railway Company abolished customs taxes altogether on goods traveling across the Manchurian-Korean border. The Japanese government's commitment to preserving the facade of Manchukuo sovereignty along the Yalu border is evident in the fact that it took until 1944 for such a law to be passed. Even when the new rules were announced—effectively "eliminating the economic border between Japan and Manchuria" as one newspaper article put it—officials stressed that it was only a temporary measure that would be removed one year following Japanese victory in the Asian-Pacific war. While custom taxes were abolished, border inspections continued as part of an ongoing (and ultimately unsuccessful) effort to limit the outflow of hard currency from Manchukuo.[132]

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[129] Satō, 158.
[130] *Nihon dobokushi*, 1171.
[131] *Manshūkoku zeikan gaishi*, 112.
[132] "Nichi-Man kan no kanzei o menjo," *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun*, April 30, 1944.

As symbolized by the appearance of American B-29 bombers in the skies above the Yalu by February 1945, the hoped-for wartime victory that would cement Japanese power in the region and across the Asia-Pacific never came. As difficult as it was to defend the Yalu border on the ground, the aerial Manchurian-Korean boundary was even more difficult to secure. The river itself was never bombed during the Second World War, but by 1945 American pilots en route from bombing raids in the Manchurian interior crossed the boundary line with impunity as the limited aircraft resources of the Japanese military were diverted elsewhere.[133] Japanese military officials also looked with increased concern to the Soviet-Manchukuo border as Soviet leaders mulled declaring war on Japan, a decision finally made on August 9, 1945. The subsequent Soviet occupation of Manchuria and northern Korea, combined with the Japanese surrender to the Allied forces on August 15, spelled the abrupt end of the Japanese empire.

As the rapid collapse of the Japanese imperial project along the Yalu demonstrates, the "conquest" and assimilation of the region's liquid geography proved an unsustainable ambition. On the one hand, industrial projects like the Sup'ung Dam did dramatically transform the Yalu, overcoming floods, ice and other challenges to make the river more amenable to imperial control. The disappearance of winter ice below the dam heralded an approaching era in which human-induced changes to landscapes like the Yalu would occur on an unprecedented scale. Promotion of "Manchurian-Korean Unity" also encouraged successful crossborder cooperation on issues like river management and anti-guerrilla counterinsurgency campaigns. The violent guerrilla resistance which had challenged Japanese rule in the region for decades was destroyed by 1941, and for a fleeting time the border region no longer seemed to pose any overt challenge to Japanese rule.

[133] "B-29 igi Chosŏn chinip," *Maeil sinbo*, February 15, 1945.

But even prior to the ultimate dissolution of the Japanese empire in 1945, the lingering tensions underlying the rhetoric of "Manchurian-Korean unity" were clear. Illicit trade continued to thrive along the Yalu despite increased enforcement measures. Smugglers flouted wartime economic controls as corrupt Japanese officials also attempted to profit from demand for scarce goods. In addition, regional rivalries between local governments along the border persisted into the wartime period over issues like harbor construction and fishing. This was in large part due to the contradictions inherent to the Japanese imperial project, especially its attempt to mobilize populations and landscapes on both sides of the Yalu border for war while maintaining the pretense of Manchukuo sovereignty. As long as the Yalu border continued to be depicted on imperial maps, spoken of in administrative boardrooms, and reified through the daily practice of customs inspections, it would be difficult to say, as proponents claimed, that the border was ever truly eliminated.

Finally, the subjugation of the Yalu River itself required a level of material commitment that was difficult to sustain during wartime. The flooding of the Ŭiju dam caisson and other incidents like it revealed the "power of water" (*mizu no chikara*): a subversive force that would continue to challenge the post-1945 regimes that emerged in the wake of Japan's surrender.

Conclusion

According to a recent United Nations report, there are 286 river basins worldwide that cross multiple national boundaries.[1] Rivers are not the only landscapes in which human and nonhuman actors work together to complicate states' claims to sovereignty. Oceans, forests, mountains, deserts, and other types of border environments also pose challenges to the rationalizing impulses of state control. Yet as this study has shown, rivers like the Yalu could function as salient agents of historical change and conflict in the border regions they intersect by flooding, freezing, and shifting course throughout the year. More than mere lines on a map, river borders have a volatility of their own that inextricably shapes the politics of the surrounding borderland and makes it difficult, to say the least, for states to enforce alleged lines of sovereignty.

The colonial Yalu River boundary offers a compelling case for understanding the challenge border environments present to modern states. Far from being a sealed-off edge of empire, the Yalu was a strategically vital conduit for migration and exchange integral to Japanese colonizers' expansionist vision. By encouraging trade and the movement of Korean and Japanese subjects across the river, imperial Japan attempted to project power north into Manchuria as well as cement control over Korea. But the illicit border crossings of smugglers, anti-Japanese guerrillas, and others across the river's liquid surface also posed an existential threat that local police and customs officials tried, often unsuccessfully, to counter. This tension between accessibility and restriction was definitive not only of Japan's historical experience along the Yalu but also that of many contemporary states along riparian boundaries.

[1] Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme, "Transboundary Waters Systems – Status and Trends," United Nations Environment Programme, January 2016. https://uneplive.unep.org/media/docs/assessments/transboundary_waters_systems_status_and_trends_crosscutting_analysis.pdf. Accessed March 18, 2019.

Imperial Japan's efforts to maintain this selectively permeable membrane collided with the physical realities of life along this seasonally changing riparian border. Centuries prior to the arrival of Japanese soldiers, settlers, and bureaucrats, generations of Korean and Chinese timber-cutters, ginseng harvesters, and other migrants had already honed techniques for circumventing dynastic controls on who could cross the river boundary. By paying off local guards or crossing the frozen river in wintertime, these frontier populations quickly learned that rulers' aspirations to "seal off" the frontier meant more on paper than they did in practice. These entrenched patterns of local life—characteristic of what I call the liquid geography of the border region—persisted even after the Qing and Chosŏn dynasties lifted previous bans on local settlement in the late nineteenth century. Beginning with the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) Japanese military forces began violently intruding into the politics of the region. Having occupied Korea during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japanese Army officials drew plans to build the first permanent bridge across the river to connect Korea to newly-acquired Japanese railway concessions in Manchuria. At the same time that these plans were drafted, Japanese forces also sought to enforce a strict monopoly over local timber-cutting and fishing. But just as frontier populations circumvented proclamations from previous rulers, so too did local Korean and Chinese communities rebel against Japan's newfound presence along the river. By creating river islands out of sediment or flooding its banks and washing away newly felled timber, the river also posed its own challenge to imperial control. Though in some cases Japanese rulers learned how to exploit the variability of the river environment to their advantage, the potential for subversion always remained.

The environmental and human challenges of the region's liquid geography became especially clear in the colonial effort to police the Yalu border against so-called "bandits" and

smugglers. Following the brutal suppression of the March First Movement, the border region became a hotbed of armed resistance to the Japanese colonial state in Korea, and, after 1931, the puppet-state of Manchukuo. Opponents of the Japanese order found refuge in the forested mountains of the upper Yalu, while the river itself became a key conduit for procuring supplies from local communities and raiding Japanese outposts. Meanwhile for Japanese police and military forces, the logic and rhythms of border surveillance came to be closely linked to seasonal changes in the river environment. The summertime "flourishing season" saw both flooding and increased cross-border raids by anti-Japanese guerrillas who took advantage of the dense vegetation cover and greater availability of supplies on the river's banks. Meanwhile, the wintertime freezing of the river allowed for what officials saw as an anarchic freedom of movement on the river's icy surface. These links between seasonal changes in the river and the flouting of border controls also existed for smuggling: for Yalu customs officials no other time of year offered as great a challenge as winter.

In addition to highlighting these environmental dynamics, this dissertation has also shown the persistence of Yalu border disputes in a period where imperial logic dictated integration rather than division. Following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the creation of the puppet-state of Manchukuo a year later, the Yalu River was putatively transformed from an international border into an intra-imperial boundary. But even amidst official proclamations of "Manchurian-Korean unity" the border between Manchukuo and Korea remained a site of violent conflict. Disputes over smuggling regulation, fishing rights, border policing, and other cross-border issues showed that the incorporation of Manchukuo into the Japanese colonial system was not a given, but rather a protracted and contentious process that frequently ran aground on local rivalries and bureaucratic divisions along Manchukuo's borders.

Japan's own insistence on sustaining the administrative and legal trappings of Manchukuo sovereignty, including separate customs regimes on both sides of the Yalu border, also helped contribute to the longevity of these divisions as local bureaucrats defended the interests of stakeholders on respective sides of the border. Finally, the Yalu's fluid geography further exacerbated cross-border conflicts by freezing, flooding, and making it impossible to draw distinct administrative lines between Korea and Manchukuo.

Post-colonial Liquid Geographies

While Japan's surrender brought a quick end to its imperial presence along the Yalu, material reminders of colonial rule remained firmly embedded in the Yalu landscape. One of the most prominent physical legacies of the Japanese occupation, which also offered a rich prize for the region's new rulers, was the Sup'ung Dam. After occupying Northeast China and northern Korea in the days following Japan's surrender, Soviet forces quickly dismantled and carted off three of the dam's water turbines and two of its generators. As one Japanese engineer recalled, Korean and Japanese technicians working on-site were commanded to help advise the dismantling process, though their advice was often ignored as bolts and wires were haphazardly cut to remove the generators for transport.[2] After the dam's remaining generators were later restored to operating condition, the issue of how its electricity would be distributed became a sticking point in negotiations between Soviet forces in North Korea, which occupied the region until 1948, and postcolonial governments in Northeast China. The dam negotiations also became a touchpoint for Korean nationalists arguing against the foreign-imposed policy of "trusteeship" that divided the Korean peninsula between Soviet and American spheres of influence north and

[2] Chūō Nikkan Kyōkai, *Chōsen denki jigyōshi* (Tokyo: Chūō Nikkan Kyōkai, 1981), 454.

south of the 38th parallel. A January 1947 editorial in the Seoul-based *Kyŏnghyang sinmun* not only labeled ongoing negotiations "inappropriate" until a unified Korean government was established, but also claimed that, as a painful reminder of Japanese occupation built with Korean labor, the dam rightfully belonged to Korea. "As the example of the Sup'ung Dam shows us," the article opined, "only a unified and autonomous government can be true to the needs of the nation."[3]

The sudden disintegration of Japan's East Asian empire reinforced cultural distinctions between China and Korea along the Yalu that the assimilationist policies of the wartime empire had violently tried to erase. The semi-autobiographical short story "Yalu River" (Amnokkang), published by Korean author Kim Man-sŏn in 1949, depicts a Korean migrant to Manchuria, Wŏnsik, who is trying to return to Korea with his family in the immediate wake of Japanese surrender, or "Liberation" (haebang). Joining his family on a crowded train from northern Manchuria are hundreds of fellow Korean refugees. After the train is forced to stop in the border city of Andong, Wŏnsik joins the other refugees in nervously heading for a nearby ferry crossing. "If only I can cross the river and set foot in Sinŭiju, then all of my worries will disappear," Wŏnsik thinks to himself. It is not until after finally setting foot on the Korean side of the river that "his heart was put at ease."[4]

However, the postcolonial moment that allowed people to readily cross the border and dream of new lives beyond the Yalu would prove fleeting. Following the end of the Soviet occupation of Manchuria, the region became a battleground between competing Chinese Communist and Nationalist armies in the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949). Border policies

[3] "Sasŏl: Sup'ung ttaem ŭi kyohun," *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, January 31, 1947.
[4] Kim Man-sŏn, Amnokkang: han wŏlbuk chakka ka oech'ŏ purŭn haebang ŭi norae!: Kim Man-sŏn chakp'umjip (Seoul : Kip'ŭn Saem, 1989), 145-156.

adopted by dueling Communist and Nationalist forces in Northeast China and Soviet occupying forces in North Korea marked a distinct departure from Japanese colonial precedent. Whereas the constant cross-border flow of peoples and goods formed an important (if perennially problematic) part of Japanese imperial policy, Soviet and Chinese forces took a much more heavy-handed approach to border surveillance by severely limiting civilian river traffic. As one former Japanese settler repatriated from the region recollected, the arrival of Soviet troops saw the end of the distinctive "propeller boats" that had previously plied the river's course.[5] While propeller boats and other river vessels had been integral to Japan's project of welding together Korea and Manchuria, the postcolonial era viewed open borders as an indisputable security threat.

Justifying such policies in the minds of border administrators was the violent geopolitics of the post-WWII Yalu. Chinese Nationalists, who briefly controlled parts of the Yalu River basin from 1946 to 1947, were especially concerned about Soviet officials in North Korea providing cross-border aid to Chinese Communists. In June 1946, Soviet occupying forces allowed Communist soldiers fleeing Nationalist offensives in the border cities of Andong and Tonghua to cross the river and take refuge in northern Korea.[6] These tensions led to the re-emergence of border territory disputes that Japanese rulers had previously suppressed, including competing claims over the Hwangch'op'yŏng river islands. Beginning in 1946 the Nationalist government began pressing China's previous sovereignty claim to Hwangch'op'yŏng, which had been abandoned during the Manchukuo period. At the same time, Nationalist forces also accused

[5] "Antō, Shōtoku chiku jijō," November 2, 1953, *Chūkyō jijō*, riku 677 (September 14, 1955), Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (Tokyo), Post-WWII record, A'-0237, 19.
[6] Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 108.

the Soviet occupation of using the islands to harbor Chinese Communist rebels.[7] Such protests did little to bolster Chinese claims to the islands, however, which remained under the control of Soviet-occupied North Korea until 1948 and the newly-created Democratic People's Republic of Korea afterwards. It also did little to reverse the eventuality of Nationalist defeat in the Chinese Civil War. By June 1947 Communist forces succeeded in driving Nationalist troops out of the border city of Andong, and by 1949 the northern bank of the Yalu became part of the newly-created People's Republic of China.

The tumultuous conflicts that racked the postcolonial Yalu saw little break between Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953) one year later. What began as a civil war initiated by North Korea's attempt to re-unify the peninsula soon erupted into a proxy conflict for the global Cold War. Seeing its commitment to "containing" international Communism threatened, the United States intervened in Korea under the banner of a United Nations-authorized "police action." After achieving quick victory over North Korean forces in an ambitious amphibious attack on the Korean city of Inchŏn, the UN commander Douglas MacArthur pushed for an ill-fated "march to the Yalu" that he imagined would eradicate the Communist presence on the entire peninsula.[8] In a euphoric and hubris-filled string of post-Inchŏn victories, UN forces reached the border in a matter of weeks. South Korean troops accompanying UN forces even sent a canteen full of "Yalu water" to South Korean president Syngman Rhee.[9] But what MacArthur, Rhee, and ordinary soldiers failed to anticipate was the psychology of Chinese officials across the Yalu's waters. The UN march to the Yalu's

[7] "Zhong-Han guojing jiufen," Records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Academia Historica (Taipei), 020-010202-0003.
[8] For a recent in-depth study of the Korean War, see Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Brothers at War: The Unending Conflict in Korea* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).
[9] This event continues to be commemorated to this day, with a canteen bearing the words "Yalu water" (Amnokkang su) proudly displaced in South Korea's military history museum, the War Memorial of Korea. War Memorial of Korea, "6.25 chŏnjaengsil," https://www.warmemo.or.kr/front/exhibition/exhibit.do?bbsId=1401.

southern bank alarmed Mao Zedong and other leaders of the newly-formed People's Republic of China. Determined to both aid their Communist ally North Korea and protect their own vulnerable periphery, Chinese leaders began deploying thousands of "volunteer" troops across the Yalu in October 1950.

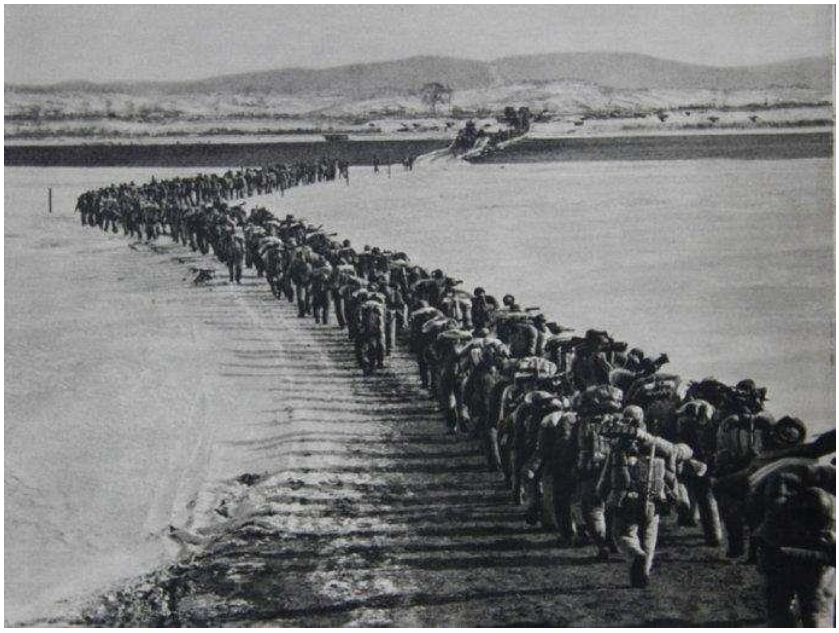
Less than five years after the end of WWII, the challenging geography of the Yalu would test the aspirations of a new set of regional hegemons. US troops near the border were rapidly overcome not only by attacking Chinese troops but also by an early, harsh winter. In the words of a *New York Times* reporter, the frigid cold "caused more trouble to our troops than did enemy action."[10] Meanwhile Chinese troops found their attempts to maintain critical bridge routes across the Yalu challenged by unrelenting US air raids and an altered river environment. American bombers destroyed the original 1911 Yalu River Railroad bridge and severely damaged a neighboring bridge completed by the Japanese in 1943. Built to Japanese fanfare decades earlier as a symbol of the Yalu's "obliteration," the 1911 bridge itself was now obliterated.[11] The onset of the Yalu winter would ordinarily have obviated the need for such bridges, but the effects of the Sup'ung Dam on shortening the region's "ice-bound period" meant that the Yalu's ice could no longer reliably provide a land bridge in the winter. While much of the upper Yalu remained frozen in the winter and thus conveniently accessible to Chinese supply lines, Chinese engineers were compelled to maintain temporary bridges across the still-flowing lower river even in the depths of winter.

[10] Charles Grutzner, "G.I.'S IN KOREA BATTLE COLD AND ENEMY, TOO," *New York Times*, November 19, 1950

[11] One Chinese local history claims that American forces bombed the Yalu River bridges near Andong a total of 5391 times between October 1950 and August 1951. Liaoning Sheng weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, *Yalu jiang pan de fengbei: Liaoning kangmei yuanchiao jishi* (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1990), 57.

One of the most iconic images of China's involvement in the Korean War is a February 1951 photograph showing a line of troops using a makeshift bridge to cross the Yalu in the middle of a snow-covered landscape (image 6.1). Prior to the Sup'ung Dam's completion, this portion of the wintertime Yalu would have been covered with a thick layer of ice. But now that dam construction had altered the water's flow and temperature, the river's ice had disappeared. Although other parts of the river remained frozen, the reliance on bridges to cross the lower Yalu required greater technological resources and amplified Chinese troops' vulnerability against the threat of air raids. Despite considerable political and environmental changes, security in the region remained bound to nature and the march of seasons.

Figure 6.1: Chinese troops near Andong cross Yalu into Korea.



Source: "Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun zhange," *Jiefangjun huabao,* April 1951.

Decades after the Korean War, the Yalu today remains a heavily militarized and seasonally variable border between China and North Korea. Disastrous floods exacerbated by

rampant deforestation struck the region in August 2010, resulting in thousands of evacuations.[12] Meanwhile, the sanctioned, as well as unsanctioned, movements of peoples and goods also continue to thrive in this seasonally changing frontier space. Stories abound of defectors and smugglers making the wintertime crossing from North Korea into China across the frozen upper Yalu.[13]

Although surrender led to the collapse of Japan's empire along the Yalu, the problems of liquid geography and fluid borders resurfaced in postwar maritime disputes between Japan and its neighbors. At stake in these oceanic battles were issues of sovereignty, fishing rights, and national pride. After the initial devastation of WWII, Japan's fishing fleets re-emerged with force in the oceans surrounding the Japanese archipelago. Outcries about Japanese "poaching" in South Korea led the government to declare the "Syngman Rhee Line" in 1952: a ring of sovereignty named after the first South Korean president which, in ignorance of Japanese protests, stretched far into the Sea of Japan (East Sea) between Japan and the Korean peninsula. Disputes over marine territorial issues remained acute even after both countries concluded a new fishing agreement in 1965, with the rocky twin islets known as Tokto in Korea and Takeshima in Japan becoming key flashpoints in these border conflicts.[14]

Despite decades of diplomatic haranguing and reams of historical documents amassed to authenticate both countries' claims to these remote islands in the middle of the Sea of Japan, the

[12] Wang Huazhong, "Yalu flood forces 99,000 to evacuate," *China Daily*, August 23, 2010. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-08/23/content_11186198.htm. Accessed March 18, 2019.
[13] One recent best-selling memoir by a North Korean migrant that features an icy crossing over the Yalu River is Hyeonseo Lee's *Girl With Seven Names: A North Korean Defector Society* (London: William Collins, 2016).
[14] "Koŭijŏk ch'imbŏm punmyŏng: Ilbon mirŏtan chasuk yomang," *Tonga ilbo*, April 9, 1951; Alexis Dudden, *Troubled Apologies Among Japan, Korea, and the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 80-83. According to one encyclopedia of Japanese foreign relations, approximately 3,929 Japanese were arrested for violations of the Syngman Rhee line between 1952 and the conclusion of the 1965 fisheries treaty. See Mayako Shimamoto et al., eds., *Historical Dictionary of Japanese Foreign Policy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 285.

settling of the border question seems far from over. When used today in Japan the phrase "border security" refers not only to disputed territories like Tokto/Takeshima, but also the policing of Japan's broad exclusive economic zones (or EEZs), which are defined to include the ocean 200 miles from the Japanese coast according to a 1982 UN convention. Not only does the ambiguous nature of these marine boundaries make them difficult to police in practice, but these border disputes also have a seasonal element, as the migration patterns of specific fish species amplifies tensions over these spaces during certain times of the year.[15]

Looking beyond the historical and geographical confines of Northeast Asia reinforces the importance of human and nonhuman agency in the making of state boundaries. Decades of neoliberal campaigns to integrate global markets and flatten national distinctions now meet with populist demands worldwide for border retrenchment. Amidst campaigns to "strengthen" borders against unwanted goods and migrants, riparian borders such as the Rio Grande between Mexico and the United States have become sites of heightened territorial anxiety. At the same time, as numerous commentators have pointed out in the case of the US-Mexico border, proposals to strengthen river borders by building fences or other physical fortifications betray a lack of common-sense knowledge about how rivers flood, shift course, and otherwise function as dynamic environments.[16] Climate change also poses new challenges to border policing in the form of increased flooding along river borders or rising sea levels along ambiguous marine boundaries. The link between expanding fossil-fuel use and global climate change blurs the already fuzzy distinctions between human and nonhuman agency in the contesting of these

[15] Emily Feng and Leo Lewis, "China warns neighbors over territorial disputes," *Financial Times*, August 1, 2017, https://www.ft.com/content/0bc4fe08-7683-11e7-90c0-90a9d1bc9691. Accessed March 18, 2019.
[16] Laura Packer, "6 ways the border wall could disrupt the environment," *National Geographic*, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/01/how-trump-us-mexico-border-wall-could-impact-environment-wildlife-water/ (accessed April 8, 2019).

boundaries. Narratives that elucidate the dynamics of these liquid geographies across time and seasons will be best poised for grappling with the consequences of this new era of border governance.

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