**Manchukuo: A Select Annotated Bibliography**

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**Introduction**

Manchukuo was a Japanese-led client state occupying northeast China from 1932 until 1945, whose sovereignty and legitimacy remained contested since its violent inception: on 18 September 1931, high-ranking Japanese officers including Ishiwara Kanji (b. 1889–d. 1949) plotted a manufactured Chinese “terrorist attack” on rail-lines near Shenyang as pretext for Japan’s Kantô (Kwantung) Army invasion of northeast China, which in several months drove warlord Zhang Xueliang (b. 1901–d. 2001) beyond the Great Wall, while Ma Zhanshan (b. 1885–d. 1950) continued resistance until 1932. Koreans bordering colonial Korea fought until 1933, with Japanese forces ultimately succeeding.

In 1931–1932, the League of Nations Lytton Commission came to observe conditions: they condemned Japan for exploding tracks near Chinese barracks, and recommended Manchuria’s return to China—also blamed for fomenting anti-Japanese propaganda. These findings prompted Japan’s decoupling from multi-lateral organizations, and 1933 League of Nations departure. Japan’s government dithered over recognizing Manchukuo: not until Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi’s (b. 1855–d. 1932) assassination by a junior navy officer on 15 May 1932 was it recognized as an “independent” new nation.

Organizations under Japanese control began propaganda campaigns convincing foreign countries, especially the United States and Great Britain, of Manchukuo’s legitimacy. Rationale for its creation included serving as imperial Japan’s natural resource “lifeline” and as political bulwark against Communism, with “empty” northeastern lands bordering the Soviet Union to relieve rural pressures for Japanese farmers. As a client state, it enabled resource extraction, where southeastern port cities like Dairen became trade nexi with Korea, China, and Japan.

Japanese-occupied Manchuria provided spaces for innovation in technocratic planning, experimental agricultural stations, and transportation networks, largely run by the South Manchuria Railway (SMR) Company, which gained a toehold after its 1907 Dairen incorporation. Manchukuo’s key internal political and economic problems arose in failing to integrate diverse populations into a cohesive whole, though Japan’s intellectuals saw it as a utopian “blank slate” for developing new cultural forms and social management. Japanese bureaucrats and officials ran Manchukuo under Kantô Army influence where propaganda slogans like “racial harmony” and “Paradise of the Kingly Way” rang hollow for largely Chinese residents.

With the Second Sino-Japanese War’s (1937–1945) eruption, factions in China, including the Guomindang (KMT) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP), saw Manchukuo as a contested arena: after his 1931 defeat, “exiled” warlord Zhang Xueliang retreated to Xi’an and briefly allied with Chiang Kai-Shek (b. 1887–d. 1975) to eventually retake Manchuria, while Mao Zedong (b. 1893–d. 1976) organized CCP resistance from his Yan’an base. Manchukuo contributed to imperial Japan’s war effort as rear operations base for military incursions into China and Southeast Asia: as reservoir for natural resources and manpower, it helped sustain warfare, while the controversial Pingfang-based Unit 731 under army microbiologist Ishii Shirô (b. 1892–d. 1959) perpetrated experimentation on Chinese and Allied POWs to develop biological weapons. Japanese settler families populated areas bordering the Soviet Union, cultivating land and producing livestock, including patrolling borders.

The 9 August 1945 Soviet invasion forced the capitulation of Manchukuo’s troops and precipitated imperial Japan’s defeat of 15 August. Thereafter, Manchuria returned to Chinese control, initially under Communist forces, which prevailed in uniting China as the People’s Republic of China in 1949. English-language studies of Manchukuo began with a small group of US scholars, who used primarily Japanese, and some Chinese, materials. This budded from 1980s-era developments in Japan, where people identifying as *zanryû koji* (“left-behind orphans”) and their descendants began discovering Japanese roots. With Manchukuo’s wartime defeat, Japanese colonists fled for their lives, sometimes leaving children with sympathetic Chinese families for survival. Japan’s government first addressed “left-behind orphans” as a human rights issue in the 1980s, following renewed official diplomatic relations with China in 1972, and Deng Xiaoping’s (b. 1904–d. 1997) 1979 “Opening and Reforms” that allowed resuming business connections, with travel and cultural exchanges enabling personal connections.

This openness helped Chinese scholars pick once-taboo topics, like collaboration with Japan during the wartime occupation. In the late 1980s, initial Japanese studies began emerging, prompting a 1990s “Manshû bûmu” (Manchuria Boom) featuring numerous secondary studies, followed by encyclopedias. In Japan, besides Tsukase Susumu at Nagano University, Yamamurô Shin’ichi and Kishi Toshihiko at Kyoto University are top authorities on Manchukuo’s history, while Liu Xiaoli at East China Normal University in Shanghai is an expert on Manchukuo’s literature like Kawamura Minato at Japan’s Hôsei University. This East Asian efflorescence inspired iconic English-language studies on Manchukuo, including an annotated bibliography of Chinese and Japanese sources by American historian Ronald Suleski ([Suleski 1994](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml" \l "obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0007" \o "), cited under [General Historical Overviews, Manchukuo and Japan’s Empire](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-div1-0002)), then president of the Tokyo-based Asia Society of Japan while an international publishing executive, who pioneered English-language studies of Manchuria/Manchukuo, followed by two US-based scholars, Louise Young ([Young 1998](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0013)), then at New York University, and Prasenjit Duara ([Duara 2003](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml" \l "obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0002" \o "); both cited under [General Historical Overviews, Manchukuo and Japan’s Empire](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-div1-0002)), once based at University of Chicago.

A second generation of scholars whom they trained or inspired, began publishing in the early 2000s, like Canadian historian Norman Smith ([Smith 2005](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0044), cited under [Manchukuo Drugs and Intoxicants](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-div1-0006); and [Smith 2007](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0056), cited under [Women in Manchukuo](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-div1-0008)) and American Asian studies scholar Mark Driscoll ([Driscoll 2010](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0041), cited under [Manchukuo Drugs and Intoxicants](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-div1-0006)). A third generation includes US-based historians Annika A. Culver ([Culver 2013](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0067), cited under [North American Perspectives](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-div2-0001)), Janice Mimura ([Mimura 2011](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0018), cited under [Economic Development](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-div1-0003)), and Emer O’Dwyer ([O’Dwyer 2015](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml" \l "obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0036" \o "), cited under [Manchukuo Cities](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-div1-0005)), who examined Manchukuo’s intellectual and political underpinnings.

A current younger generation of scholars increasingly focuses on cultural history and arts, primarily film and literature. Manchukuo studies, composed of research on a multi-ethnic Japanese-led state in Northeast Asia characterized by intersections between nations and peoples, is now a thriving field whose transnational perspectives foster interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary studies.

(NOTE: This annotated bibliography is comprised mainly of secondary sources and is not meant as comprehensive, and reveals my scholarly expertise as a cultural historian of imperial Japan who researches visual cultures of imperialism utilizing multidisciplinary Japanese, Chinese, and English sources. While inclusivity is attempted, sources prevail in these fields. My limited Korean reading ability precludes inclusion of Korean-language sources, which clearly warrant future attention.)

**General Historical Overviews, Manchukuo and Japan’s Empire**

Inspired by postwar studies in the United States, the author of [Ogata 1964](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0006) was the first scholar to complete an English-language study on Manchukuo’s violent beginnings, while [Yi 1981](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0012) and [Yi 1989](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0011) bridged historical overviews between Chinese and Japanese scholarship on Manchukuo. Beginning in the 1980s, for broader reflections upon Manchukuo’s history, Chinese scholars often used *wei* (false, or “bogus”) to refer to Manchukuo and *lunxian* (“occupied” or “subjugated”) in their titles, including Kangri (“resistance to Japan”), revealing how the earliest scholarship in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was heavily preoccupied with a resistance versus collaboration paradigm. This continued into the twenty-first century, including [Che and Xin 2006](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0001), whose authors compiled over two decades of Chinese research on Manchukuo. Some of this language translated into Anglo-American scholarship, in particular, by [Mitter 2000](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml" \l "obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0005" \o "). Subsequent Japanese scholarship characterized Manchukuo as an ideological “fantasy” or “chimera,” like [Yamamurô 1993](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml" \l "obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0010" \o "). English-language sources often included “empire” or “sovereignty” in their titles, revealing scholarly preoccupations with Manchukuo’s links to Japanese imperialism and the nation among scholars in the United States and Canada who began publishing their works in the last two decades or so, including [Young 1998](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0013), [Duara 2003](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml" \l "obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0002" \o "), [Han 2004](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0003), and [Tamanoi 2005](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml" \l "obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0008" \o "). In Japan, historians, including those represented in [Kishi, et al. 2012](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0207.xml#obo-9780199920082-0207-bibItem-0004), began to create dictionaries and encyclopedias on Manchuria and Manchukuo, in a trend which continues into today.

* **Che Jihong 车霁虹 and Xin Wei 辛巍. “Dongbei lunxianshi yanjiu shuping” (东北沦陷史研究述评). *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu* 抗日战争研究 2 (2006): 226–253.**

This is an important Chinese assessment of the Chinese-language research on the topic of Manchukuo. Seen through the lens of “occupation history,” such a viewpoint represents the prevailing Chinese government attitude, but also steers scholars toward available primary and secondary sources in a growing field in Chinese history.

* **Duara, Prasenjit. *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.**

Duara covers Manchukuo’s formation from imperial Japan during interwar years, when Japanese framers asserted its sovereignty to Western countries questioning authenticity. Manchukuo appears as a case study on historical binaries like nationalism versus imperialism and modernity versus tradition, where the new state exemplified “modernity” under Japanese auspices and assimilated earlier utopian ideas from Chinese nationalism. Duara also discusses a key women’s association and writer, Liang Shanding, who wrote an influential 1940s novel.

* **Han, Suk-Jung. “The Problem of Sovereignty: Manchukuo, 1932–1937.” *positions: asia critique* 12.2 (2004): 457−478.**

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Han, a Korean historian, views Manchukuo’s national sovereignty in two distinct stages: 1932–1937 and 1937–1945. Initially, Manchukuo functioned as an independent state, with its own authorities, albeit friendly to Japan, and after 1937, during wartime, resembled a Japanese colony as operational base and rear-supply line to Japanese troops in China. Han critiques Duara who posits Manchukuo as “inauthentic” and derivative of Chinese nationalisms co-opted by Japan to justify Manchuria’s takeover.

* **Kishi Toshihiko 貴志俊彦, Matsushige Mitsuhiro 松重充浩, and Matsumura Fumiki 松村史紀., eds. *Nijû-seiki Manshū rekishi jiten* (二〇世紀満洲歴史事典). Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012.**

(Historical dictionary of 20th-century Manchuria.) As the key editor of this historical dictionary, Kishi Toshihiko is one of the top Japanese researchers on visual media and visual cultures of Japanese imperialism. This book is an invaluable resource for important terms, figures, themes, phenomena, and dates for researchers of Manchukuo utilizing Japanese sources. It is very helpful to young researchers, especially, who are seeking specific details and primary sources.

* **Mitter, Rana. *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.**

**DOI:**[**10.1525/california/9780520221116.001.0001**](https://dx.doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520221116.001.0001)

This well-cited key study utilizes Chinese sources, plus Japanese government records, newspapers, and journals, and employs (and critiques) Chinese viewpoints. Though challenging popular narratives of “resistance” in Chinese political ideas, Mitter’s study contributed to understandings of the 18 September 1931 “Manchurian Incident” through the lens of collaboration versus resistance binaries regarding Chinese interactions with Japanese overlords. Based at Oxford University, Mitter is a leading historian of China and its politics.

* **Ogata, Sadako. *Defiance in Manchuria: The Making of Japanese Foreign Policy, 1931–1932*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964.**

The first English-language study of Manchukuo’s early history and Kantô Army military beginnings, its author Ogata Sadako (b. 1927–d. 2019) was a diplomat, professor, and administrator. It examines how the 1931 Manchurian Incident initiated dangerous precedents for Japanese foreign policy, where junior military officers dictated radical approaches to Japan’s role in China and elsewhere. This prevented more rational (and peaceful) foreign policy toward Asia.

* **Suleski, Ronald. *The Modernization of Manchuria: An Annotated Bibliography*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1994.**

Suleski’s compilation of primary and secondary texts on Manchuria in English, Chinese, and Japanese informed early scholarship on Manchukuo in English, which includes useful lists of Japanese government documents. Though influenced by “modernization theory” popular in English-language scholarship of Japan beyond the 1970s, this pioneering annotated bibliography of an American scholar well-versed in Japan’s publishing industry gathers together important materials published on Manchuria and Manchukuo in three languages.

* **Tamanoi, Mariko Asano, ed. *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press and the Association for Asian Studies, 2005.**

This volume edited by Mariko Asano Tamanoi, an anthropologist at UCLA who has written about ethnicity in Manchukuo, features interdisciplinary chapters by leading scholars on Manchuria/Manchukuo and empire, including Michael Baskett, Suk-Jung Han, Thomas Lahusen, Rana Mitter, Dan Shao, Mariko Asano Tamanoi, and David Tucker on history, politics, film, and urbanism. Themes include press propaganda, city planning, Manchu identity, “goodwill films,” ethnicity and colonization, sovereignty issues, and Pan-Asianism in a scholarly approach that began to emphasize notions of transnationalism.

* **Xie Xueshi 解学诗. *Wei Manzhouguo shi xinbian* (伪满洲国史新编). Rev. ed. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008.**

As a Changchun-based historian at the Jilin Province Academy of Social Sciences, Xie originally published this work in 1995. In nearly a thousand pages, it covers “bogus” Manchukuo’s organizational structure and political system, among other topics. He also edited a twenty-volume series on railway construction and transportation in Manchukuo (满洲交通史稿, 2012), among other projects in a five-decades-plus career centering on Sino-Japanese relations.

* **Yamamurô Shin’ichi 山室信一. *[Kimera: Manshûkoku no shozô](https://www.worldcat.org/title/56423747" \t "_blank)*[(キメラ : 満洲国の肖像](https://www.worldcat.org/title/56423747" \t "_blank)) Tokyo: Chûô kôron-sha, 1993.**

(Chimera: A portrait of Manzhouguo, harmony and conflict.) Kyoto University historian Yamamurô Shin’ichi published this pioneering Japanese book on Manchukuo. He utilizes Chinese and Japanese primary materials to examine Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans involved in construction of a new nation as utopian paradise. Actually, Japan’s Kantô Army worked with civilian groups like the Concordia Association (Kyôwakai) to spin propaganda narratives for Manchukuo hiding exploitation of Chinese and Koreans. This book was published in English translation by Joshua Fogel, as Yamamuro Shin’ichi, *Manchuria under Japanese Dominion*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

* **Yi Xianshi 易顕石.**[***Nihon no tairiku seisaku to Chûgoku tôhoku* (日本の大陸政策と中国東北**](https://www.worldcat.org/title/21825073)**). Tokyo: Rôkkô shuppan, 1989.**

(Japan’s continental policy and northeast China.) A Chinese scholar demonstrates imperial Japan’s control over northeast China, beginning with the South Manchuria Railways Company’s 1906 establishment after the Russo-Japanese War, and tensions with Chinese lines escalating by the 1920s. In 1928, Japanese conspirators of the Kantô Army, created to protect rail-lines, assassinated Zhang Zuolin. In 1931, they blew up SMR track to completely invade Manchuria. Koreans influenced the “Manchuria Question,” while Jiandao (Liaoning’s Yanbian area) resisted until 1933.

* **Yi Xianshi 易顕石, et al., eds. *Jiu. Yiba Shijian-shi* (九.一八事件史). Shenyang, China: Renmin chubanshe, 1981.**

(History of the September 18th incident.) This volume edited by a Chinese scholar of international relations and military history equally adept at writing in Japanese showcases multifaceted views by Chinese historians and other authors of the Manchurian Incident, described in more detail in his later work above. This book appeared five years later in Japanese translation by Hayakawa Tadashi.

* **Young, Louise. *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.**

Young’s heavily cited work, combining cultural, economic, and political histories, is a foundational text on Japanese-occupied northeast China. She mainly utilized Japanese sources, and examines economic and political motivations for Manchuria’s Japanese development and settlement, and explores propaganda of groups like the Concordia Association, created to justify Japanese control and “harmonize” racial or ethnic differences. Highlights include chapters on the South Manchuria Railway Company and Japanese settlers in northern Manchuria.