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CONSTRUCTING CULTURAL DIFFERENCE IN MANCHUKUO: STORIES OF GU DING AND USHIJIMA HARUKO

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This article explores the role of Pan-Asian ideology in Japanese imperialism and how it is reflected in literary texts produced in Manchukuo. Through the analysis of Chinese and Japanese literary works this study examines the construction of ethnic identities and difference which was central to both Pan-Asian discourse and Manchukuo national identity. In both types of works the Japanese and Chinese characters use the concept of ethnicity or culture to reveal different realities of Manchukuo's ethnic politics. While the insoluble separation between the Japanese and the Chinese in Ushijima Haruko's "A Man Called Shuku" betrays the ethnic harmony proclaimed by the Manchukuo regime, Gu Ding's "A New Life" suggests a possibility of true harmony between the two ethnicities. Where the Japanese vice governor's distrust of his Chinese subordinate in Ushijima's story reflects the author's own fear and guilt about her privileged social position, the Chinese protagonist in Gu's story emphasizes the importance of Japanese modern medicine during a plague outbreak as well as his importance as a mediator between the colonizer and his countrymen in order to justify the author's association with Japanese imperialism.

Keywords: Manchukuo; Japanese imperialism; colonial literature; Gu Ding; Ushijima Haruko

How Japanese imperialism should be differentiated from European imperialism has been an intriguing problem for many scholars of Asian studies. The key element of Japanese nationalism that helps us understand this problem is the Pan-Asian ideology – Japan's political proclamation of solidarity with Asian countries against Western imperialism. Studies by Eri Hotta, Louise Young, and Barbara Brooks illustrate the role of Pan-Asian ideology in Japan's foreign policy decision making.[1] In her book, *Pan-Asianism and Japan's War 1931–1945*, Eri Hotta investigates the conflicts and negotiations between different political groups in Japan and Manchukuo, and argues that "Pan-Asianism was a case of ideology becoming the national policy, providing fundamental continuity and cohesion in Japan's otherwise divided body politics."[2] Japan's war effort was sustained by Pan-Asian ideology, which was both a driving force and a justification for the invasion of Asian countries.

1 Brooks 2000, Hotta 2007, Young 1998.

2 Hotta 2007, p. 7.

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Louise Young's *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* looks at the case of Manchukuo and demonstrates the way in which various agents and media in both Manchukuo and Japan supported the rhetoric of Pan-Asianism. It illustrates how this ideology in fact brought the state and the masses closer to each other.

Recent work by Prasenjit Duara looks at the role of Pan-Asianism from a broader perspective by investigating what differentiates Japanese imperialism from European imperialism. Duara has come to categorize the imperialism of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Japan as a "new imperialism" in contrast to the older form of European colonialism. He argues that this "new imperialism" often maintained colonies as legally sovereign nation-states, emphasized cultural similarities, and promoted the economic autarky of subordinate states. In examining the Pan-Asian rhetoric promoted by Japan, Duara argues that their notion of brotherhood among Asian countries was not founded on the notion of federal association like today's European Union, but was "a self-contradictory ideology of the new imperialism, in which domination and exploitation coexisted with development and modernization."[3] This "self-contradictory ideology" refers to Japan's maneuver to call for Asian unity against the West even while Japan itself employed coercive violence to impose colonial control on other Asian countries. What made this contradiction acceptable to both the Japanese and some of their colonized subjects is that the modernization of Asian countries was a project aimed at defending themselves against the West under Japan's leadership. Duara uses the case of Manchukuo to illuminate this point. The shared culture among Asian countries, the Concordia Association, and the "Kingly Way" slogan that Manchukuo embraced, as well as the state's emerging political autonomy, represent characteristics of a "new imperialism" that we do not find in the old form of European imperialism.

This article follows the discussion of Young and Duara on Manchukuo's role in the Japanese empire by exploring the work of Chinese intellectuals who materialized and promoted the Pan-Asian ideology. Duara demonstrates how the Manchukuo regime's political and economic decisions made this state an exemplar of new imperialism, but he does not explain how the colonized, especially the Chinese people, reacted and participated in state projects.

In this article I will examine the Japanese text, "A Man Called Shuku" (Shuku to iu otoko 祝といふ男), written by Ushijima Haruko 牛島春子, and the Chinese literary text "A New Life" (Xinsheng 新生), written by Gu Ding 古丁, to illuminate the way in which literature embraced and shaped state ideology through its development of Pan-Asian rhetoric and discourse. This article will focus on the themes of ethnic and cultural construction that were central to Pan-Asian discourse and to the formation of Manchukuo's national identity. As Duara points out, despite their effort to join the world powers, Japan felt itself excluded on racial grounds and thus found it reasonable to stress the racial similarity of East Asian peoples.[4] The physical resemblance between the colonizer and the colonized is indeed a peculiar aspect of Japanese imperialism in East Asia that differs from the European imperialism that often used physical differences to separate colonizers from

3 Duara 2006, p. 50.

4 Duara 2006, p. 56.

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the colonized. The Japanese invoked racial similarities and shared culture in their calls for Asian solidarity with their colonized subjects. Yet in the case of Manchukuo, Pan-Asian rhetoric coexisted with Japan's attempt to stress ethnic and cultural differences of various minorities in order to construct a state identity.

Manchukuo's population was of multi-ethnic composition and the coexistence of these diverse cultures was considered one of the defining elements of this state. The Japanese writer Tominaga Makoto stated in 1945 that "the particularity of Manchukuo culture is that it incorporates characteristics of each ethnicity. Manchukuo culture has to emerge from each ethnicity and is unified like orchestrated music. This has to be the particularity of Manchukuo culture."[5] Rather than eliminate the ethnic and cultural differences and turn their colonial subjects into Japanese, the Manchukuo regime proclaimed its respect for ethnic differences and declared a state slogan of "Harmony Among Five Ethnicities" (*Gozoku kyōwa* 五族協和), which included Han, Manchu, Mongol, Korean, and Japanese. Manchukuo's "Foundation Declaration" (*kenkoku sengen* 建国宣言) states that "All residents living in the domain of this new state have neither ethnic boundaries nor borders between superiors and inferiors. Ethnicities besides the aboriginal Han, Manchus, Mongols, Japanese or Koreans, who wish for a long-term residency [in this state] can also obtain the same rights. We will protect their rights and will never commit even the slightest violation."[6] The advocacy of equality among different ethnicities in Manchukuo was strongly tied to the urgent need for the construction of a national culture in which these ethnicities would all be incorporated. In reality, however, the Japanese tried to maintain an ethnic hierarchy, which often manifested itself in the violent control of and consistent ethnic discrimination against colonized ethnicities.

The intricate nature of this cultural and identity politics in Manchukuo is reflected in the literary pieces produced in this state. Ushijima's "A Man Called Shuku" features a perplexing relationship between a Japanese vice-governor and his Chinese secretary, and Gu Ding's "A New Life" describes the author's own experiences in a quarantine during an epidemic. The characters in both stories constantly define the constitution of Japanese and Chinese identities, but the two stories reflect different aspects of Manchukuo's reality. Whereas Ushijima's story illuminates the Japanese notion of ethnic superiority and its uneasy coexistence with the contradictory state slogan of ethnic harmony, Gu Ding's story represents a Chinese intellectual's attempt to seek out the racial similarity between the Japanese and Chinese. What these two stories further suggest is the importance of the two authors' different political positions and personal interests. The Japanese vice-governor's distrust of his Chinese subordinate in Ushijima's story echoes the author's own distrust of the "other" as well as her sense of guilt for harboring such distrust. Thus, the story ends with an insoluble separation between the Japanese and the Chinese. The character in Gu Ding's semi-autobiographic story reflects the author's desire to justify his association with the imperialist in the name of a civilizing mission. The Chinese character in the story, identifying with the Japanese, tries to educate his Chinese countrymen with the modern science and civilized culture of the Japanese. In this account, Gu Ding sees ethnic differences as a hindrance to the project of modernizing

5 Tominaga 1945, p. 34.

6 The Manchukuo government issued the "Foundation Declaration" on March 1, 1932 in Changchun. The quotation is from Yamamuro 1993, p. 131.

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his countrymen. Thus, while Ushijima's story suggests there is an irresolvable cultural gap between the two ethnicities, Gu Ding's story suggests the possibility of true understanding and harmony between the Japanese and the Chinese. "A New Life" demonstrates that the primary goal of the colonized Chinese intellectual was to modernize his nation regardless of the means and regardless of the cost.

INSCRUTABILITY IN "A MAN CALLED SHUKU"

Ushijima Haruko was born in 1913 in Kurume, Fukuoka prefecture in Japan. When she was in high school she started publishing poems in journals such as *Shisaku* 思索 ("Speculation") and *Hakumei* 薄明 ("Twilight"). She was exposed to communist ideas when she was seventeen and decided to be a factory worker. She was gradually involved in communist activities and was arrested in a government round up in 1932. When she was arrested again in 1933 she went *tenkō* 転向 – a public declaration of one's abandonment of communist belief. Ushijima married Ushijima Hauo in 1936, and as he was appointed to a government post in Shenyang they moved to Manchukuo in the same year. Ushijima wrote numerous short stories while in Manchukuo. "A Man Called Shuku" was published in *Manshu Daily* in 1940[7] and later nominated for the Akutagawa literary prize. She and her family returned to Japan in 1946 after Japan's defeat in World War II.

"A Man Called Shuku" features a relationship between a Japanese vice-governor named Shinkichi and his Chinese subordinate, Shuku, and in the process depicts the complex role of ethnic identity in the project of Manchukuo state building. The frequent reference to cultural differences in this story points to the way Japanese elites were haunted by doubt about their Chinese collaborators. Japanese doubts about the loyalty of their Chinese subordinates reflect their fear of the unknown and their guilt about their privileged social positions.

The story begins with the narrator's account of the negative images of Shuku that are shared by his Japanese co-workers. Shuku is a Chinese translator working for Japanese officials at a government office, and his unpopularity derives from his unfriendliness and arrogant attitude. In addition, his involvement in a corruption case casts him in an unfavorable light. When his former boss, Mr. Yoshimura, was promoted and transferred to take up another position, Yoshimura ordered Shuku to collect money from farmers as his farewell gift, which was illegal. Consequently, Yoshimura was dismissed from his position and Shuku was allowed to stay after submitting a report.

Shinkichi replaces Yoshimura and becomes Shuku's new boss. After being informed about the corruption case, Shinkichi harbors doubt about Shuku's loyalty, but despite the wishes of the other workers that Shinkichi fire Shuku, Shinkichi comes to respect Shuku's intelligence, skills, and honest personality. In a murder case which turns out to be the product of a false accusation arising from a grudge, in a case involving the arrest of corrupt Chinese policemen, and in a case of a rich Chinese man's son fleeing a military draft, Shuku takes the initiative in finding the truth through careful investigation of the people involved, and always produces positive outcomes for Shinkichi. Every time they solve a case, Shinkichi becomes more

7 "A Man Called Shuku" was first serialized in *Manshū shimbun* 満州新聞 ("Manchukuo Daily") from September 26 to October 8, 1940. It also appeared in *Bungei shunjū* 文藝春秋 ("Literary Shunju") in March, 1941 in Tokyo, Japan. It was also included in *Nihon shōsetsu daihyōsaku zenshū* 7 日本小説代表作全集 7 ("Anthology of Representative Literary Works in Japan") in 1941.

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confused about Shuku. Although Shinkichi and Shuku develop a mutual respect and trust, Shinkichi is haunted by doubt about Shuku's loyalty because of the inscrutability of his words and behavior, most notably his habit of carrying a gun and his ongoing relationship with his former boss, Mr. Yoshimura. When Shinkichi is promoted to take a position in a different county, Shuku, who had been seen as an emotionless man, opens up his heart for the first time and tells Shinkichi that he will miss him. Yet the following day, Shuku returns as the same cold and unfriendly man as before. The story ends with Shuku giving farewell money to Shinkichi's wife a day before Shinkichi leaves his office.

The relationship of mutual necessity and dependency between Shinkichi and Shuku is evident in this story. Shinkichi is a newly appointed vice-governor of a province who does not speak Chinese and is not familiar with the local culture. He needs Shuku's knowledge and experience to handle local cases.

Shuku, who is unpopular in the office and at risk of losing his job, also needs Shinkichi's favor to keep his job and to undertake certain tasks to improve his community. In this relationship of mutual dependency, the concept of ethnic difference functions in various ironic and contradictory ways. First, Shuku seems to enjoy his work and his relationship with Shinkichi because he has a certain amount of freedom at work, but his freedom would not exist if he were not Chinese. It is precisely Shinkichi's dependency on Shuku's "Chineseness," particularly his knowledge of the Chinese community, that allows Shuku to enjoy working on the cases.

> Shinkichi hasn't had the training to accurately read the various reactions of the Chinese in a case like this. This is truly Shuku's territory. As a Chinese, Shuku can even understand the background conditions of this Chinese man (the accused).[8]

Shinkichi assumes from the beginning that he cannot understand Chinese people, culture, and society. Thus, he trusts Shuku's judgment in handling local cases. Shuku is a bridge that connects the unfamiliar world to the familiar world. Shuku's freedom to work his cases relies on his Chinese background and Shinkichi's insecurity in this regard. Only because Shinkichi sees in Shuku a representative of genuine "Chineseness" does he grant the privileges that Shuku enjoys. Yet, while Shuku is a necessary tool for Shinkichi to understand the minds of what he sees as the inscrutable Chinese, his ethnic identity also makes him, in Shinkichi's eyes, an enigmatic puzzle that casts doubt on his loyalty. "Chineseness" makes Shuku both an integral part of the state's policing activities and a figure of suspicion. The suspicion restrains Shinkichi's own freedom by haunting him with a continuous fear and sense of guilt. When Shinkichi learns that Shuku is carrying a gun, Shinkichi suspects that,

> When [Shuku's] sense of justice co-exists with extreme cruelty, I can't help suspecting that he might abandon his sense of justice without hesitation if it might directly affect his self interest. What is motivating Shuku [to work

8 Ushijima 2001b, p. 250.

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> with the Japanese] is a mere calculation that being loyal to the Manchukuo state goes along with the flow and is the wisest way of surviving.[9]

At the beginning of the story, Shinkichi's uncertainty about Shuku's loyalty seemed to be primarily driven by Shuku's involvement with corruption, but here Shinkichi indicates that his suspicion is in fact not against Shuku alone as an individual but is against the Chinese people in general. This is evident in Shinkichi's comment that "Japanese and Chinese clearly live in separate worlds … Chinese people share a cover that protects their own world, and they are consciously protecting each other from Japanese invasion [of their world]."[10] Shinkichi's doubt is an expression of fear that Chinese collaborators might rebel against the Japanese if the conditions allowed them to do so. This doubt that is generated by cultural and ethnic bias is latent yet so strong that Shuku's sense of justice and loyalty to Shinkichi cannot pacify it. Thus, Shinkichi keeps vacillating between his doubt about Chinese ethnicity as a whole and his wish to trust Shuku as an individual.

Second, in the story Shuku does not identify himself with any culture or ethnicity. He never says words such as "in Chinese society," "our people," or "in China" in an attempt to identify himself with the Chinese ethnicity. Nor does he ever discriminate against the Japanese. Shuku even wears a kimono at home, but according to the narrator he is not necessarily trying to be Japanese. The narrator explains that "Shuku wears a kimono very naturally with no special concern. [He wears it] not because of its exoticism."[11] Shuku does not try to be "someone" other than himself. His straightforward manner and rude attitude are the result of this honesty. Although Shuku does not identify himself with any ethnicity or culture, Shinkichi often imposes on him his own notion of Chineseness. It is ironic that Shuku's lack of a self-asserted identity would not be prominent if Shinkichi did not impose on him his own notion of what constitutes "Chineseness." In other words, without Shinkichi's constant imposition of ethnic identity on Shuku, Shuku' s lack of ethnic consciousness would not appear as a resistance to this imposition. Shinkichi's imposition of ethnic identity constrains Shuku with its expectations while at the same time enabling its own passive rejection.

Third, the Japanese office workers in the story express contrary expectations for Shuku. The very reason that they do not like Shuku at the beginning of the story is his imprudent behavior that was not "a trait of Chinese workers."[12] Japanese workers complain that they do not like "a kind of grimness and sharpness in Shuku that is not typical of Chinese."[13] Shinkichi also expresses his unpleasant impression of Shuku, stating that Shuku acts as if he is an "outrageous type of Japanese."[14] What is implied in their remarks is that Chinese should be humble and simple. The educated Chinese should conform to the Japanese image of "what Chinese should be" and never try to be a threat by acting like Japanese. They demand that Shuku be as loyal as other Japanese workers, while at the same time

9 Ushijima 2001b, p. 243.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

11 Ishijima 2001b, p. 244.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 239.

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criticizing him for acting Japanese. These paradoxical situations in the story exemplify the way in which culture and cultural identity serve as restraints on the personal subjectivity of the characters. When Shinkichi fails to understand Shuku's words and behavior, he often explains this incomprehensibility by appealing to the ethnic and cultural gap between the Japanese and Chinese. Thus, Shinkichi's imposition of ethnic identity on Shuku serves to justify Shinkichi's inability to understand Shuku as well as his reluctance to truly trust him as an individual.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SHUKU'S INSCRUTABILITY AND SHINKICHI'S DOUBT

The presentation of Shuku as an inscrutable and asocial man must be understood in the historical context of the social and political conditions of Manchukuo. Shuku's closed and guarded attitude is a general reflection of the tenuous position of collaborating intellectuals and functionaries under the auspices of Japanese power. Although Shuku works for the Japanese, this does not provide him security because his fate always depends on his personal relationship with his employer. Even though Shuku, through loyal service, is able to establish a modicum of security, when his employer moves on and is replaced by a new boss, he has to start this process all over again or lose his job.

This cycle of gubernatorial appointment serves as the basic structure for the plot of the story. The story begins with the new vice-governor, Shinkichi, replacing the old one, and the story ends with Shinkichi being replaced by someone else. At the beginning of the story, the reader is informed that Shuku gave *senbetsu* to the old vice-governor and the story ends with Shuku giving *senbetsu* to Shinkichi.

The cyclical structure implied in the story recalls in part the peculiar political history of twentieth-century Manchukuo, in which Manchus, Russians, Nationalists, regional warlords, and Japanese all struggled for control over the population of northeast China. Chinese residents in this region had to accommodate to recurrent changes in their rulers and in the ruling ideological and cultural agendas. Those like Shuku who served as technocrats and bureaucrats learned the importance of caution and reticence in their dealings with their rulers. As his position never becomes secure, he decides not to fully trust his bosses and maintains a certain distance from them. Hence, beneath the apparently sincere respect and trust for each other, Shinkichi and Shuku harbor latent doubts.

Just as Shuku's inscrutability has a historical implication, Shinkichi's doubt also represents a social trend in Manchukuo. His doubt in the story is the embodiment of the complex mentality of Japanese intellectuals, including the author herself. When Ushijima discusses her life of fear of bandit attack in Manchukuo, she states that "Chinese people treated us as their friends in everyday life, but I also had a tremendous fear about how they would react to us [if an anti-Japanese riot started]".[15] Ushijima's fear echoes Shinkichi's fear in that as long as Japanese rule is stable, they can be friends with the Chinese, but when the apparent peace is disturbed their latent suspicions come to the surface. Ushijima, like many Japanese, assumed that all Chinese were bonded together in a sense of nationalism and that no matter how close they were with the Japanese their

15 Ushijima 2001a, p. 290.

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nationalistic sentiment would always be stronger than this friendship. Thus, as long as he/she was Chinese, the person would be a subject of suspicion.

Besides fear, Shinkichi's doubt is also a projection of the author's sense of guilt and uneasiness. In her memoir she recalls:

> I have been carrying Manchukuo like I am carrying a heavy chain [on my leg]. I know that I won't be free from it unless I objectify it by publishing a book about Manchukuo. I have been meaning to do so for many years but still haven't been able to do it. [That is because] it will force me to deal with the problem of my internal guilt about the war.[16]

According to Ushijima's account, Shuku was based on a real person who existed in Manchukuo when Ushijima resided there. He was a translator for her husband who worked in a government office. Ushijima always had a "[s]trong and complex impression about the translator."[17] She wished to understand this mysterious man but she also hesitated to find out what this man meant to her, which was perhaps related to the sense of guilt that she expresses above. Understanding the Chinese translator meant understanding the issues that most colonial subjects struggled with, which would force her to face her responsibility as part of Japanese imperialism. Ushijima's "uneasiness" about recognizing her guilt was a common feeling among Japanese writers. In everyday interaction with other writers Ushijima sensitively detected this shared feeling of guilt.

> When I wrote "A Man Called Shuku" I became acquainted with many different kinds of people. Yamada Seizaburō[18] was one of them. Most of these people came to Manchukuo as if they were escaping from something after being defeated and hurt in the intellectual and political movements in Japan. These people were all quiet and didn't want to talk about themselves. As they worked in the government offices or companies they knew that they were the dominant group who ruled other ethnicities without legitimate cause. In addition, it seemed to me that these Japanese were struggling to find a path to rescue themselves [from something] in their daily lives.[19]

Although Japanese intellectuals including Ushijima officially supported Manchukuo, these former leftist writers still expressed their leftist belief in their works as they attempted to reveal the contradiction between their ideals and their reality. They were carrying the same chain on their leg that Ushijima was carrying and were struggling to release themselves from this chain. This struggle was manifested in the form of fear and doubt towards the Chinese. Their sense of guilt would be eased if it were the untrustworthy "other" that

16 Ushijima 2001a, p. 291.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 290.

18 Yamada Seizaburo was one of the most active Japanese writers in Manchukuo. He was a communist in Japan and went *tenkō* as Ushijima did.

19 Ushijima 2001a, p. 291.

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created the necessity of Japanese invasion. The image of the Chinese as untrustworthy and inscrutable produced an alienation from their colonial subjects. The emphasis on cultural differences and doubts about Chinese loyalty serve to rescue them from the chain – the guilty feeling that they were part of capitalist exploitation of the working-class people under the name of imperialism. Thus, instead of investigating the complexity of Shuku's social position and his inner thoughts, Ushijima demonstrates the limits of colonial understanding of the locals by presenting Shuku as an unknowable Chinese man.

As much as the freedom of colonial subjects was inhibited by the Japanese writers' suspicion, the Japanese were haunted by the fear and doubt created by their own suspicion. Here ethnicity is central to the relationship between the colonizer and colonized, as both a vehicle for freedom of action and as a hindrance to build a harmony between them.

GU DING'S LIFE AND "A NEW LIFE"

Just as the imposition of ethnic identity on the colonial subjects reveals the contradictions in the ethnic politics of Manchukuo in "A Man Called Shuku," Gu Ding's "A New Life" similarly addresses ethnic tensions under Japanese colonial rule. Where Shinkichi uses ethnic difference to justify his inability to understand his colonial subordinate, the main character in "A New Life" uses the notion of ethnic and cultural differences to justify his cooperation with the Japanese imperialist. His lament over what he sees as Chinese ethnic inferiority to the Japanese indicates his desire to identify himself with the Japanese. Yet he also expresses his genuine concern for his Chinese fellows and sincerely wishes to improve and modernize Chinese community. Thus unlike "A Man Called Shuku" which suggests the impossibility of mutual trust between the ruler and the ruled, "A New Life" appeals to the fundamental sameness between the Japanese and the Chinese.

Before examining his text I will provide a brief background of Gu Ding in order to contextualize his activities and political position in Manchukuo. Gu Ding 古丁 was born in Jilin province in 1916. His real name was Xu Changji 徐長吉. He studied literature in Beijing University and after graduation served as a director of the Organization of the Northern Leftist Federation (*Beifang zuolian zuzhi* 北方左聯組織). It has been suspected that Gu Ding reported a leftist meeting to the Nationalist police in Beijing which resulted in the arrest of some of his friends after a crackdown. Gu Ding returned to northeast China from Beijing right after this incident.[20] In Manchukuo, he worked for the Bureau of Statistics in the Department of State.

Gu Ding started writing in 1935. When his Japanese friend asked him to edit a journal, he agreed and published the Chinese language journal *Mingming* 明明 ("Brightness") in 1937, which later became the literary journal *Yiwenji* 藝文志 ("Journal of Arts and Literature") in 1938. He was also involved in various administrative functions for the cultural development of Manchukuo. He served on a committee in the literature department of the Literature Discussion Association (*bunwakai* 文話会) and attended the Greater East Asia Literary Conference (*Daitōa bungakusha taikai* 大東亜文学者大会) every year beginning in 1942 as a representative for Manchukuo writers. His work, *Yuanye* 原野 ("The Wilds") received the Shengjing literary award in 1938 and *Pingsha* 平沙 ("Sand Flats") received the literary award from the Minister of the Welfare Department of Manchukuo

20 Okada 2000, p. 264.

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in 1940.[21] Gu Ding was arrested and imprisoned by the Chinese Communist Party after the war and died from sickness in prison in 1964 at age 48.

The story "A New Life" is based on Gu Ding's own experience in a quarantine during an outbreak of an epidemic disease in 1940. The story begins with the protagonist trying to persuade his neighbor Old Chen to get a vaccination against the epidemic disease called "Hundred Death Poison." This disease spreads through fleas on rats. Old Chen does not believe in such a disease and instead claims that those who had vaccinations could die. The protagonist is speechless when confronted with Old Chen's ignorance about modern medicine.

On the following day, the protagonist learns that his other neighbor has suddenly died from an unknown disease. Since his symptoms, including high fever, resemble those of "Hundred Death Poison," people suspect that he is infected by this disease. The protagonist wants to report the death of his neighbor to the department of public health, but the landlord of this neighborhood and neighbors are all reluctant to report it because they know that the bureau will burn the infected victim's house as well as his neighbors' houses in order to prevent further spread of the disease. Late one night, someone knocks on the door of the protagonist's house. It is people from the bureau of public health, ordering the family to pack daily necessities and immediately move to the quarantine.

The protagonist's family and his neighbors are taken together to the quarantine by car. They are put in the large hall of a hospital where people from other neighborhoods had been living for several days. The protagonist gradually learns about their situation from the people there. His neighborhood was labeled as a dangerous area and the bureau has to disinfect the whole area and burn houses if they detect any disease. The protagonist and his family are staying in a hall for healthy people and the building across from theirs has infected patients. They are forbidden to go beyond twenty meters or to interact with people in the infected patients' building.

There are Japanese in the quarantine and the protagonist becomes friends with them through exchanging goods. The facility is managed by the Japanese, but Japanese and Chinese are treated fairly equally. The protagonist describes Japanese people in a positive light but sees the Chinese people as uncivilized and ignorant.

Those who develop a fever are removed to the infected patients' building one by one, and every time this occurs, people in the hall become nervous. After an intense two weeks, they are all released from the facility. The protagonist talks to his Japanese friend who describes the people in the facility as the once dead who have gained a new life. After the protagonist and his family return home, they are welcomed by his friends. He is grateful that he is still alive and he decides to treasure his "new life."

THE ROLE OF ETHNIC DIFFERENCE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF RECIPROCITY

Just as in "A Man Called Shuku," the concepts of ethnic identity in "A New Life" is an important theme that helps us understand the nature of Manchukuo's ethnic politics. In this story, the Chinese character uses moral cultivation and education as a vehicle for civilizing Chinese people in the quarantine. Once Chinese people are more educated about

21 Huang 1995, p. 90.

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disease and public hygiene, they will have a greater chance of surviving the disease. Although ethnic and cultural differences are used to enlighten the uneducated Chinese, the protagonist does not use them to form a nationalist solidarity against Japanese imperialism. Instead, he uses them to help people recognize the necessity of Japanese modern medicine and civilized culture, which ultimately benefits the structures of imperialist control. Just as Shinkichi and Shuku depended on each other in “A Man Called Shuku,” the Chinese and the Japanese are dependent on each other in this story, and in order to achieve their freedom they establish a relationship of reciprocity and cooperation. Gu Ding’s story demonstrates that this mutual dependency between the colonizer and the colonized is neither inevitable nor natural, but it is always constructed and made to seem inevitable.

At the beginning of the story, most Chinese people in the quarantine have no knowledge of the epidemic disease called “Hundred Death Poison.” They believe that those who died of the disease just had a bad cold. The protagonist has to explain the cause and the symptoms of the disease, but the Chinese still do not understand the danger of the disease. A doctor of Chinese medicine adamantly refuses to recognize the existence of any such disease. The doctor says, “You call it a disease? How can mere headache and fever be an epidemic disease!”[22] He then insists that he can cure this sickness with Chinese herbs.

These Chinese people also do not understand the necessity of disinfection. They believe that they are fine without it. Some of them even ask a medical assistant not to spray antiseptic in their room, for they do not like the smell of the chemical. The protagonist who mocks the Chinese doctor and who laments over the Chinese people’s ignorance of the disease tries to educate them. When the disinfection was completed, the protagonist recounts,

> I took advantage of this opportunity at the completion of the second disinfection to explain more seriously the terrifying symptoms of the disease to the people, using the case of how a patient got the disease. Perhaps because I exaggerated the disease or because the symptoms of the disease are indeed terrifying, many people started wearing masks.[23]

It is evident in his words that the protagonist is desperate to make people understand the terror of the disease for the sake of everyone’s life including his own. As he shares his knowledge about the disease with the people, he also uses this disaster as an opportunity to introduce the concept of public hygiene.

> “We have to take care of each other. Otherwise, nobody can dare to ensure the date that we can get out of here.” I purposely scare them, hoping to have some effects on [the improvement of] public hygiene.[24]

The protagonist is successful in controlling people by using the terror of the disease. Those who did not know the purpose of the facility and the reason why they were brought there

22 Gu 1998, p. 732.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 762.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 762.

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now understand the necessity of disinfection and the concept of public hygiene. The fear of the epidemic disease only comes into existence after the protagonist explains its cause and symptoms. Only after he "purposely scares them"[25] do they learn the importance of sanitation.

"The Hundred Death Poison" kills people regardless of whether or not they recognize the existence of the disease, and vaccines and modern medicine are indeed effective in preventing or curing it. People need these medicines in order to survive. The text, however, suggests that the dependence on modern medicine and Japanese management was established neither naturally nor easily. The people have to be taught to be dependent. They have to be taught that they need a relationship with the imperialist who can provide these medicines and teach them the concept of public hygiene. This is how the reciprocity – mutual haunting between the disease and the people and between the colonizer and the colonized is constructed. The use of "ethnic and cultural differences" is an integral part of this process.

In the same manner that the protagonist tries to educate his fellows about the disease, he also tries to teach them civilized manners. As he observes the habits of the Chinese people in the life of the quarantine, he often laments over their uncultured lifestyle, especially in comparison to the good manners of the Japanese.

One such example is the protagonist's observation of the serving of food. When food is served, the Japanese make a line and are served one by one, but when it is Chinese people's turn, they rush to the food counter and push each other. Some Chinese also steal other people's meals for which they are often scolded by the nurses. One evening the protagonist tells the Chinese to follow the Japanese people's manners and keep order when food is served. After the dinner, the protagonist is pleased that his words had some effect on changing their habits.

> Today's dinner was deep fried fish. So, the dish was served one by one and there was no fight over food. Everyone could eat enough. Order is a symbol of civilization. Regardless of where and when, we should not chaotically mess up the order. The maintenance of this order [at meals] was [finally] realized after going through a few days' distress. We must respect their (Japanese) order.[26]

By highlighting Chinese people's cultural inferiority to the Japanese inmates, the protagonist tries to make his fellows become more like the Japanese. Besides material dependence, the Chinese are also taught to be culturally dependent on the Japanese. This cultural colonization could be more effective than material colonization in controlling colonized subjects because a non-substantial quality like culture obscures the opposition between the imperialist and the colonized and makes Chinese people more vulnerable to Japanese rule. With the Chinese desire for the imperialist's cultural superiority they become more susceptible to Japanese influence. They attempt to transform themselves from ignorant to enlightened, from savage to civilized, and from traditional to modern without realizing the danger of what they are welcoming into their (metaphorical) body.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 762.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 768.

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The protagonist's frustration about Chinese ignorance and uncultured manners also indicates how he internalizes the Japanese notion of what constitutes cultured manners. The protagonist often mentions Chinese lack of manners in using the bathroom. For instance, when he sees a woman helping her small child to urinate in the sink where people wash their face, he sighs and says, "Oh, our people! When will you get [the principle of] communal life?"[27] The use of the bathroom, eating habits, cutting in line, and lack of bathing are also frequent topics in Japanese journals in Manchukuo. For example, a Japanese woman writes in a journal "As everybody knows, Manchurians (Chinese) are a very dirty race and there are many of them who only take a bath two or three times in their life."[28] She then boasts that due to Japanese women's efforts, Chinese people began to imitate Japanese bathing habits. Her husband also mentions that they implemented a prize contest in order to improve Chinese people's use of lavatories.[29]

The formation of collective social identity requires the formation of an "other" against which to position. Everyday practices that Chinese, including the protagonist himself, considered normal or common are singled out and projected as representations of Chinese identity. They become objects of criticism because the Japanese decide them to be. The protagonist, a Chinese intellectual who is educated, works with the Japanese, and has traveled to Japan, gradually employs this concept of Chineseness, and treats these qualities as something concrete that he inherits from the distant past. He unwittingly internalizes a Japanese vision of Chineseness by adopting the gaze of the imperialist. In this process, he uses a shared cultural identity to impose his internalized perception of Chinese identity on his people so that they would also accept and internalize this vision until these concepts become a common sense.

The protagonist's concept of culture and his construction of ethnic identity not only benefit the Japanese but also work in the protagonist's personal interest. As the protagonist observes the differences between Chinese and Japanese inmates in the quarantine, he repeatedly reasserts his responsibilities as a Chinese intellectual to enlighten his fellows. His embarrassment for Chinese people is due to his feelings that he represents these people and also because he understands how Japanese people would see his people. He wishes to distance himself from Chinese society while at the same time wishing to belong to the society, and thus, the more he is disappointed and frustrated with his people the more strongly he expresses his care and responsibility for his community.

> Regardless of time and place, the priority of the public good is a necessary spirit for citizens. I have to say that our people lack this spirit. Just taking the example of people here, most of them don't have this spirit. They don't know why they were brought here, they do not know for what they are sacrificing. But it is not totally their fault because we have never taught them this spirit even a little bit. I think that the job of enlightening the masses should begin before anything else.[30]

27 *Ibid.*, p. 792.

28 Young 1997, p. 174.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

30 Gu 1998, p. 803.

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He assures us that his responsibility is to civilize Chinese people through education and training. But why does the protagonist feel so strongly that he has to take part in enlightening his Chinese fellows? Why does he try to make Chinese people become like Japanese?

The protagonist often expresses his thoughts on his role in the community both inside and outside the quarantine. As he observes Chinese people's ignorance and uncivilized manners, he gradually comes to realize that literature by itself is limited in its power to enlighten and civilize his Chinese fellows. As he doubts the power of literature, he also asserts the importance of money. "Becoming rich is a virtuous act of enriching a nation and benefiting its people. If a nation is not rich and is content with poverty, isn't this a kind of immorality?"[31] He recognizes that the imperialist can provide both necessary materials and cultural inspiration that his fellows need in order to improve their lives. Nonetheless, he is at loss as to what role he should take in order to improve his people both culturally and materialistically. He states, "I continue thinking, and feel that I am standing at a cliff that I would never be free from once I fell. I feel a kind of anxiety. What kind of method should I use to cross this cliff?"[32]

The solution that he seems to choose is to take a part in the civilizing mission and work as a bridge between those who are in need of resources and those who can provide them. By teaching his Chinese fellows the backwardness of Chinese culture the protagonist makes people desire the imperialist's superior culture and resources. Thus, he works side by side with the Japanese even while he persists in his own civilizing mission.

For his project of combining the material and cultural benefits of the imperialist for the sake of his people, the concept of nation and ethnicity is almost an obstacle since it creates conflicts between the colonizer and the colonized. Thus, he makes a paradoxical attempt to stress the cultural differences between Japanese and Chinese while at the same time underscoring the sameness between them, especially their appearance. One such instance is in the bath scene.

On the day when they are released from the quarantine, the Japanese and the Chinese inmates all have to take a bath. After taking a bath, they are given the same Japanese-style cotton clothes and have to wear them. Looking at his fellows in the same clothes the protagonist states,

> Drivers, vegetable sellers, railroad workers, the Chinese-medicine doctor, office workers, they all wear the same clothes. . . . Because everyone here is wearing Japanese-style cotton clothes, their nationality is not clear. . . . Since we are all wearing the same clothes, each person's occupation would not be known if we didn't fill out this form [of residential status].[33]

The protagonist is content with the apparent equality among different classes and nationalities. This bathroom scene reveals the particular nature of Japanese imperialism. Unlike

31 *Ibid.*, p. 790.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 803.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 810, 811.

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the colonization of Eastern countries by Western imperialism, in which colonizer and colonized were often distinguished by their appearance, Japanese and Chinese could not differentiate themselves from each other by their appearance, especially when they were put in the same clothes. Taking advantage of this external resemblance, the protagonist highlights the fundamental sameness between the Japanese and Chinese race, implying that it is the cultural gap that separates them. Thus, while stressing the cultural differences between the two ethnicities, he does not forget to remind the reader that his ultimate goal is to bring equality and sameness between them.

Besides apparent equality, the protagonist also emphasizes that people in the facility are psychologically connected by the shared desire for freedom. As the protagonist observes people in the room, he states that "every minute they all long for the early arrival of the day of freedom. Every minute an indescribable silence arises throughout the room."[34] Because people have the same fate, they share the same desire for freedom; the freedom from the fear of death and the freedom from the facility. What is implied here is that because people look the same and think the same, they should work together as a team to fight against their common enemy, the epidemic disease. In order to achieve freedom they have to abandon ethnic sentiment and treat others as their comrades regardless of their nationality.

The protagonist's insistence on the "sameness" among people in the quarantine subsequently leads to his belief that the equality and solidarity between the Japanese and the Chinese can continue to exist outside the quarantine in their "new life" after they are released from the facility.

The day before people are freed from the quarantine, the protagonist and his Japanese friends, including Mr. Akita, celebrate their survival as they drink together. The protagonist begins,

> "We abandoned our racial discrimination because [we were under the same fate]. As a result, the 'Hundred Death Poison' was wiped out quickly and smoothly."
>
> "That is true." Mr. Akita had another sip. "When the two ethnicities encountered this calamity, the great result that we have achieved was to cooperate with each other and go through the hardship with a shared spirit."
>
> "Indeed. In Asia, Japanese and Han people have to harbor the communal spirit under the same fate like this. No matter if it is by race, geography, or history, we have to keep and seriously consolidate this faith in the communal spirit under the same fate." I received his wine cup and emptied it with one sip.
>
> "Exactly. Taking this case of the Hundred Death Poison as an example, it attacks anyone regardless of nationality. In other words, we, the two nationalities have a common enemy, which is the Hundred Death Poison. Not only do we share the same fate, but also our life and death are on the same line. We all passed the border between life and death. Congratulations! Congratulations!" Mr. Akita got somewhat excited.
>
> "Congratulations, Congratulations! We should remember the lessons from this experience and should struggle ahead for the two nationalities!" I had several

34 *Ibid.*, p. 792.

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more drinks. We almost finished a bottle of Japanese sake.

"In the end, we can say that we had died once in the epidemic disease. We should value our life from now on. We should have a fearless life." Mr. Akita's whole body is full of the mettle of youth.

"This is our new life." I was moved by his words.[35]

By regarding the epidemic disease as their "common enemy," the protagonist and his Japanese friends underscore the successful cooperation between the two ethnicities in the quarantine, and they reassure the necessity of further solidarity outside the facility.

It would be expedient for both the imperialists and their local collaborators like the protagonist if Chinese people would consider the imperialist not as an oppressive enemy but as a comrade who shares the same fate; if they would recognize mutual cooperation as integral for their survival. The protagonist of the story would not be criticized as a traitor, but instead he could be respected as a significant figure who benefits his Chinese fellows by using knowledge and materials from the imperialist. From the Japanese side he would be valued as a mediator who could solve ethnic conflicts. Therefore, it is better for him that the notion of nation or ethnicity is obscured by the slogan of "ethnic harmony." The protagonist's endeavors end in success when some Chinese people happily shout "Ethnic harmony!" as they are served wonderful Japanese meals at the last supper in the facility.

When the protagonist observed the solidarity that transcended gender, class, and nationality in the quarantine, he saw a possibility for an alternative form of nationalism or socialism. Taking advantage of having a common enemy and this temporary solidarity, he hopes to find his own place where he can pursue his civilizing mission in order to justify his association with the Japanese while at the same time expressing his concern for his Chinese fellows. In the name of a civilizing mission, the protagonist is able to present himself as a valuable and resourceful mediator between the Chinese and the Japanese rather than as a shameful traitor.

CONCLUSION

The ethnic concepts embedded in Pan-Asian discourse and in Manchukuo's slogan of "ethnic harmony" were full of contradictions. Pan-Asianism appealed to the racial and cultural similarities of Asian peoples, even as in practice Japanese ethnic superiority was institutionalized. These contradictions played out in Manchukuo, where its identity not as a colony but as an independent state made it a peculiar colonial society. As Duara points out, despite the Japanese government's interference with Manchukuo's state affairs, there was an emerging movement to seek autonomy for Manchukuo from both Japan and China. Besides the artificial signifiers of the state flag, national anthem, and currency, there was a serious effort to construct Manchukuo's national culture, including an attempt to produce a national language by combining Japanese and Chinese languages.[36] When the locals were included in this state building project, they began to recognize their complicity.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 812.

36 Shi 1993, pp. 73–81.

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Gu Ding's "A New Life" and Ushijima's "A Man Called Shuku" illuminate this reality and mirror the contradictions found in Pan-Asian ideology. "A Man Called Shuku" portrays the insecurity of both colonizer and colonized. Despite Shinkichi's and Shuku's sincere attempt to create mutual trust and harmony, Shinkichi's imposition of ethnic identity on Shuku creates an unbreakable wall between them. The protagonist in "A New Life" also imposes his notion of ethnic and cultural differences but he does so in an attempt to help his people improve their life by educating them with the "civilized culture" of Japan. Thus, the bath scene in which Chinese and Japanese inmates are indistinguishable from each other suggests the protagonist's projection of fundamental sameness between the two ethnicities. Although Gu Ding's story reveals the contradictions in the ethnic politics ingrained in Japanese imperialism, it still supports the Pan-Asian rhetoric since it promotes the necessary cooperation of the different ethnicities. The solidarity of the inmates against the common enemy of the epidemic disease in the story serves as a metaphor for the necessary cooperation among Asian countries against the West. One can observe from "A New Life" that Pan-Asianism was not an ideology that was simply imposed under Japanese imperialism but was also taken up by some colonial subjects like Gu Ding who internalized the colonial gaze. It was an orchestrated maneuver among various ethnicities to promote this ideology. It is indeed intriguing that it is Ushijima, married to a Japanese colonial official, who suggests problems with the idealism embedded in the Pan-Asian ideology, while it is the colonized intellectual Gu Ding who suggests the relevancy of imperial ideology. For Gu Ding, who cared for his Chinese countrymen but worked for the Japanese, accepting the Pan-Asian ideology and participating in the state-building project were probably the best option for modernizing his native place and people while at the same time advancing his own political and literary interests.

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