

## Encountering the Silk Road in Mengjiang with Tada Fumio: Korean/Japanese Colonial Fieldwork, Research, Connections and Collaborations

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While much has been written about Imperial Japan's encounter with geopolitics and developing ideas about Geography as a political and cultural discipline, little if anything has been written about relational and research Geographies between Japan and Silk Roads both ancient and modern. Memories of the ancient Silk Road were revived in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in tandem with the Great Game of European nations, as Japan modernized and sought new places and influence globally following the Meiji restoration. Imperial Japan thus sought to conquer and co-opt spaces imagined to be part of or influenced by the ancient Silk Road and any modern manifestation of it. This paper explores a particular process in that co-option and appropriation, research collaboration between institutions of the Empire. In particular it considers the exploration of Mengjiang/Inner Mongolia after its conquest in 1939/1940, by a collaborative team of Korean and Japanese Geographers, led by Professor Tada Fumio. This paper considers the making knowable of spaces imagined to be on the ancient Silk Road in the Imperial period, and the projecting of the imperatives of the Empire back into Silk Road history, at the same time as such territory was being made anew. This paper also casts new light on the relational and collaborative processes of academic exchange, specifically in the field of Geography, between Korean and Japanese academics during the Korean colonial period.

**Keywords:** Silk Road, Geography in the Japanese Empire, Geography in Colonial Korea, Geopolitics, Mengjiang, Tada Fumio, Research Collaborations

## Introduction

Contemporary conceptions of new or revived Silk Roads have relatively short histories, routed in the national ambitions of either the People's Republic of China or, more importantly for the journal this paper appears in, South Korea. There is something seemingly intrinsically nationalistic to the efforts to conceptualize extensive trading and logistics routes between East Asia and lands and nations to the west and the south. The Lee Myung-bak administration in particular visualized an Iron Silk Road stretching from South Korea to Europe, which would see Korean products and enterprises travel speedily from one side of the planet to the other, connecting the Central Asian republics along the way, with Seoul as its locus. The New Silk Road and China's Belt and Road Initiative (which in many ways seems a cooption of the Lee Myung-bak administration's dreams of global reach (Kim and Blank, 2014)) are conceptualized in much the same way, as projections of soft or soft-hard power through logistics and economic engagement through territories, which have, more often than not, been overflowed in recent decades as opposed to travelled through. Both are concrete national products of modern manifestations of Korean and Chinese nationhood and rooted in the post-1945/1948/1949 status quo in East Asia. It would seem a challenge to project back historically into the past before the post-1945 reconfiguration of the region, prior to the politics, ideology, and practices of sovereignty and society that have generated and sustained both the People's Republic of China and South Korea. But that is what the authors of this paper and the project which it represents aim to do, to consider an earlier historical moment through the contemporary framing of the notion of the New Silk Road.

The paper, co-authored by a Human Geographer whose specialism is Korean and East Asian Geographies and a Historian of Chinese borderlands, incorporates the framework and style of both disciplines. Human Geography privileges and, some would say, reifies the role of work in the field and so historical exercises in the field for research are considered very important. Historians equally privilege the role of the source and the original document and, from this perspective, records recounting such fieldwork exchanges and exercises are also vital. Neither discipline in their written output, in their British traditions at least, set specific detailed research questions as may be familiar to other disciplines and traditions but instead frame the geographic, conceptual, and temporal spaces of their interest. Therefore, this paper extends from the period of the early, or functional, Silk Road to the late 1930s and early 1940s when Imperial Japan sought to dominate East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific and was coming into contact through conquest and annexation with territories earlier conceptualized as being along or connected to the ancient Silk Road. This paper focuses on the colonization of Mengjiang (now known as Inner Mongolia and now a province of the People's Republic of China) and the processes of Imperial Japanese knowledge making and knowledge consolidation and their connections otherwise with cultural and historical legacies of the Silk Road. The authors ultimately seek to shed light on the processes of knowledge and space making in a newly conquered territory and whether these more ancient memories of the Silk Road play a role in the presumptions of those tasked with making the area knowable.

The paper and its authors do this with a transnational perspective, with writing and

theory from work on border spaces and cultural contact zones in mind, and is rooted in a wider project of the authors, considering the connections between the Geographic and Geopolitical theories of academics from Third Reich Germany, who had theorized the notion of “lebensraum,” and Geographers of Imperial Japan and the impact of these connections in colonies and territories of the Japanese Empire such as Chosen (Korea). Thus, the authors situate their writing in this paper and their research as well as writing on the Silk Road, as it is conceptualized in contemporary Korea, alongside writing on borders and contacts zones generally, such as that of Mary Louise Pratt (2007), William van Schendel (2002), and James Scott (2009) (the latter in their writing and analysis on “Zomia” and ungoverned or ungovernable spaces) and more specifically in the writing of Nianshen Song on bordering in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century on the Chinese/Korean peripheries (2018). In relation to the processes of colonization and assimilation as experienced by Japanese Imperial territories, the authors draw on the work of Todd Henry (2016) and Mark Caprio (2011) and on that of Yuka Kishida for her work on Higher Education in colonized spaces (2019). Finally, at the intersections of Japanese Imperial power and notions of transnational fascism, the authors utilize the analysis of Bauerkämper and Rossoliński-Liebe (2017) and, more specifically in relation to connections between the Japanese and German academics, the writing of Christian Spang is also invaluable (2006 and 2013).

With the paper’s aims and area of interest outlined as well as the conceptual and disciplinary areas from which the authors draw their research and writing, and the wider academic and empirical context in which this work situates itself, finally in this introductory section, we aim to give a more detailed sense of its structure. Firstly, we detail how the notion of the ancient Silk Road was received by the developing powers in Asia in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely Imperial Russia and post-Meiji Japan. In this, we recount the importance of work in the field by Japanese diplomats and information gatherers in areas connected to the ancient Silk Road, but whose importance had been reactivated by the Great Game between the great powers of the age. Secondly, we explore the connections between a rising Japan and a powerful German state and those intellectuals who would drive its understanding of geography, particularly those who would articulate the theory of geopolitics and its utility in the hands of a developing nation requiring “lebensraum,” and those who make connections in East Asia, specifically in Korea. The paper then considers the collaborations and exchanges in colonized spaces in the Japanese Empire between academics working on geographic matters and, particularly, recounts the experience of Tada Fumio. Having done so, the paper then moves to Mengjiang and fieldwork done by Tada Fumio and colleagues from Keijo Imperial University, which sought to begin to make a space considered to be on or of the Silk Road knowable to Japanese modernity before concluding with a review of the ground travelled by the paper, its context within our wider research project, and the directions it will take in the future.

## Returning to the Silk Road(s)

When the original manifestation of the Silk Road finally collapsed in the 1720s due to the disintegration of the Safavid Empire, after a long period of disruption following the collapse of the Mongol Empire and its long-standing and deep connections with territories and powers of Europe and what is now considered the Middle East, relations and trade connections between East Asia, Europe, and the wider world were temporarily lost after nearly two millennia of interaction. However, this disconnection lasted a comparatively short time, as within a century, driven by the energies of the Imperialist, expansionist sensibility so key to concepts of European nationhood at the time, what became known as the Great Game between powers such as Britain, France, and Russia, reached Central Asia and East Asia.

Russia had been in the process of expanding eastwards since its defeat in 1577 of the Siberian Khanate. With the Khanate removed, Russian adventurers, trappers, hunters, and explorers headed north and east. Thus, Ivan Moskvitin and a group of hired Cossacks finally reached the Pacific coast and the Sea of Okhotsk in 1639 (Gibson 1970). Russia would expand throughout the Far East until checked by resistance from Qing China and the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1679, the hostile Chukchi of the Chukchi Peninsula, and Koryaks of Kamchatka (both peoples Imperial Russia would later try to exterminate) (Forsyth 1994). The United Kingdom had long been concerned about Russian infiltration into Afghanistan and the sub-continent as well as its potential future interests in a declining Qing Empire. French, German, and other interests were also at play in the east, seeking opportunities (Volodarsky 1984). All of these European and Russian interests leveraged memories of the ancient Silk Road and the possibilities of trans-continental trade and exchange as legitimation for their ambitions (Akiner 2011).

Alongside the familiar powers, another nation was becoming involved, especially in the territories of the weakening Qing. Following its unwanted opening of Japan to foreign trade and interests in 1853/1854, the numerous “unequal treaties” signed with European powers and the United States, and the Meiji Restoration in 1868, which ended the Boshin War and the Tokugawa shogunate and restored Imperial power, (the newly renamed) Tokyo sought rather than to resist western models of governance and geopolitical interests, to learn, adopt, and utilize them itself (Jansen 2015). While the most famous of these efforts initially were the early embassies of Japan to the United States in 1860, 1862, and 1863, the most influential and long-lasting in its impact globally was the Iwakura Mission (岩倉使節団), which travelled between 1871 and 1873 (Nish 2008). Iwakura Tomomi and colleagues absorbed much about European and American educational, industrial, agricultural, and government processes and structures during their travels, knowledge that would heavily influence the development of the Meiji state in years to come.

It was not simply the structures and processes of statecraft, society, and economics within powerful nations that Japan was interested in but also, apparently, the spaces and territories they sought to explore and colonize themselves. Count Ōtani Kōzui 大谷光瑞, an

important religious figure as the abbot of Jōdo Shinshū (浄土真宗 True Pure Land Buddhism), ostensibly on the grounds of exploring ancient Buddhist sites, co-funded a number of extensive field trips to western China, what is today the troubled Xinjiang province (Galambos 2010). These became known as the Ōtani expeditions and were profoundly troubling to both the British and Russian governments (and the adventurers and local consular officials from both countries). Tachibana Zuichō 橘瑞超 and Nomura Eizaburō 野村栄三郎's activities in Kashgar (now close to the Xinjiang and the border with Kazakhstan and the site of much recent destruction of religious architecture and Uyghur culture by the People's Republic of China's policies in the region) in 1908 and 1909 warranted concern in the British diplomatic service that they might be spies for Japan (Ibid). Regardless of whether Ōtani, Tachibana, or Nomura were actually doing anything else other than exploring Buddhist archaeology and history, their activities at the turn of the century inspired great interest in Japan on the ancient Silk Road and, more relevantly for a developing military and colonial power, what value might be had in contemporary times of holding or controlling the territories along or in the vicinity of the Silk Road for the Japanese Empire (Esenbel 2017).

This paper, as suggested in the introduction, reaches forward in time to the late 1930s and early 1940s when the Japanese Empire was at its height and maximum power. Japan had long ago colonized Korea and Taiwan and had made inroads into China itself, annexing northeast China as the puppet state of Manchukuo. While much of Japanese interests lay in the northeast and along the coast of the failing Qing state, the imperatives and drivers of Imperial conquest meant that its forces reached inland and began to connect with territories that had once been adjuncts of and influenced by the Silk Road, if they were not directly on them. In this paper then, the authors focus on the processes of colonization around Mengjiang, what is now the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia, for a short period between 1939 and 1944 at the frontier of the Japanese Empire. This was an exotic territory for Japan, with cultural and socio-economic practices both unfamiliar to Tokyo, and reminiscent of the spaces encountered by Ōtani Kōzui and his colleagues some thirty years previously. However, while previous writing on the spaces of the Silk Road and similar territories had been, in part, adventure writing, often told second or third hand, it was necessary for the Japanese Empire in 1939 for its knowledge of a place to be more scientific, more empirical, and certainly firsthand. This paper explores an example of knowledge-making and knowledge construction in the Japanese Empire, in the guise of a particular series of field trips and research expeditions to Mengjiang, which were both highly unusual for the time and very much a product of them. Scholars in these expeditions from Higher Education institutions of both the Imperial metropole and colonial periphery collaborated together on the making knowable of a place present in the histories of the Silk Road and ancient China/Mongolia, yet in their own time was unknown. These collaboration partners had themselves been deeply influenced by another transnational enterprise, the Geographic and Geopolitical theories espoused by academic Geographers from what was then Third Reich Germany, itself seeking to colonize and appropriate new territory for its own "lebensraum" and to dominate the European end of the ancient Silk Road.

## Germany and Geography

Germany, far away from Meiji Japan and the Silk Road, was also a state in flux at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The collapse of the feudal remains of the Holy Roman Empire led to a complete reconfiguration of the patchwork of German-speaking nations and principalities that spread across central Europe in the remains of the old empire (Confino 1993). The German Federation of 1815-1866, under pressure from Austria and Prussia, was finally reorganized into the German Empire in 1871 but its states had themselves been deeply impacted by the European enlightenment of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Reill 1975). Developments in bureaucratic, political, and economic organization were matched by changes in artistic, cultural, and scientific sensibilities (Reill 1994). These included the work of Christian Wolff and Immanuel Kant, thinking and writing that put empirical enquiry and ideas of objective research firmly at the heart of a German notion of development (Senn 1997). At the same time, the artistic writing of Goethe, Schiller, and many others sparked, what has been termed elsewhere, German Romanticism (Wetzels 1971). This intellectual sensibility gazed backwards into history for the powerful, mystical connections with Germany's past to articulate narratives of greatness and national superiority onto the nation of the present as well as historical mythologies about European connections to the Orient through the ancient Silk Road. These narratives would be heard in the music of Richard Wagner but also in the efforts of German science and technology, which would underpin the new power of the German Empire (Streb, Baten, and Yin 2006).

Just as Japan would, a unified Germany sought out its new place in the world and to be the equal of nations such as Britain, France, the United States of America, and the Russian Empire. This Germany would need power and capability. It would need a large army and navy and it would need colonies through which it would express and project its power on the global stage and from which it would extract the materials and resources necessary to become a global player, capable of taking on both old and new foes. This Germany would soon develop a navy, which was the envy of the world, and become a technological and engineering powerhouse. It would also claim colonies in Asia and the Pacific (Knoll and Hiery 2010).

Japan's connection to the complicated fabric of German nationalism following its unification was as complicated as that unification. Originally, Prussia had been one of the European nations which forced Japan at its opening to sign an unequal treaty of "amity and commerce." Prussia, then the North German Confederation, and finally the German Empire (from 1871) continued to maintain a legation in Japan (Spang and Wippich 2006). The German model appeared a particularly interesting example for Japan to follow, having recently been through its own tumultuous revolutionary moment in 1868. German unification in 1871 produced a centralized bureaucracy, military power, and global trading enterprise (Confino 1993). Given this, Japan recruited a number of what were called "hired foreigners" (お雇い外国人) from Germany to help with the redevelopment and reorganization of bureaucracies and institutional structures (Jones 1980).

German-Japanese relations, however, would not run smoothly. Germany's developing colonial energies meant that it would impinge on what Japan felt was its home territory and sphere of influence, so much so that Japan was an ally of the United Kingdom during the First World War (Dickinson 2013). The fact that Japan received Germany's former Pacific and Asian colonial possessions from the League of Nations following Germany's defeat in 1918 was highly problematic for any resumption of relations between the two nations. However, the memory of German power, energy, and the ideas of a cohesive ethnic nationalism drove Japanese Imperial ambitions themselves. Those former German colonies in the South Pacific were a perfect first testing ground for Japan's ambitions and the weakened states of both Russia following 1917 and China in the 1930s were too much to resist. The rise of German nationalism and new energy for exploration and intellectual conquest (as well as later practical conquest) from Berlin would see Japan connect with its old ally once again (Spang and Wippich 2006).

This reconnection would see German intellectuals again head for Asia, this time to interact with a new Japan, now in possession of colonial territories with new philosophical frameworks, but also with the memories of ancient Oriental places and distant journeys in mind. In this regard, Karl Haushofer is surely the most famous and certainly the most infamous. The son of an economics Professor from Munich, Haushofer joined the Bavarian Army, later transferred to the Imperial German Army, and became an instructor at the Bavarian Army War Academy in 1899. In 1908, the Imperial German Army sent Haushofer to Tokyo to serve as an artillery instructor for the Japanese Army and to report back to Germany on military developments there (Spang 2013). Haushofer met Emperor Meiji and the elite of the Japanese army, bureaucracy, and government. In the autumn of 1909, Haushofer and his wife travelled throughout Korea to see developments in railway construction before travelling back to Europe via the Trans-Siberian railway (Ibid). Between 1911 and 1913, Haushofer completed a doctorate inspired by his experience of Japanese politics and military development, finally completed as *Dai Nihon, Betrachtungen über Groß-Japans Wehrkraft, Weltstellung und Zukunft* ("Reflections on Greater Japan's Military Strength, World Position, and Future") (Ibid). His academic career was interrupted by the trauma of the First World War, though he rose to the rank of General and commanded on the Western Front as well as meeting Rudolf Hess for the first time, someone who would become enormously important to the spread of Haushofer's ideas on geopolitics (Ibid).

Haushofer was deeply marked and influenced by the disaster that befell Germany because of the war, the post-war dismemberment of its territory, and the reparations demanded of it. Haushofer was concerned with matters of Geography and geopolitics and felt that Germany had failed during the war because of a lack of understanding of its geography and a problematic geopolitical position (Ibid). Returning to the University of Munich, Haushofer developed his ideas on the role of Geography and geopolitics and their intersections with political science and national organization. He founded an institute for Geopolitics in 1922 and the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* journal in 1924. Building on the work of Karl Ritter, Friedrich Ratzel, and Rudolf Kjellen, Haushofer elaborated on notions of the state as an organic entity,

which depended on self-sufficiency and centralized power for its health (Ibid). This sort of state would require as much space and as many resources as possible to grow and develop in modernity. States which were small or underdeveloped could not possibly attain this level of autarky and Haushofer saw many of these in Europe (Ibid). However, he would also see many such underdeveloped and underpowered states in Asia. Great powers would require the territory of smaller states for what he termed “lebensraum,” which would allow the organic state to grow and flourish (Herwig 1999). Haushofer’s concepts were also scaled to a global level and his vision of geopolitics saw the world divided into the spheres of influence of the primary powers (Wolkersdorfer 1999). Such thinking had a huge impact on the later ideologies of the Nazi party and the Third Reich but they were also entirely applicable to other states with colonial ambitions. Colleagues of Haushofer interested in Asia could not help but see these concepts work themselves out in the context of Asia and the spaces of the ancient Silk Road, with China as a power on decline, Korea as one of the small nations, and Japan as a developing global organic power with a requirement for lebensraum.

The Geographer Gustav Fochler-Hauke, Karl Haushofer’s mentee and colleague who did the most to build on the specifically Asian aspect of Haushofer’s work and the practical geographical strand of that work, was born in 1908. A Sudetenland German, Fochler-Hauke worked as a bookseller and as a young man visited Asia a number of times, first in 1927-1928 as a 20-year-old. He visited Korea and Manchuria in 1932-1933 for the first time and then while undertaking his Ph.D. with mentor Haushofer and supervisor Erich von Drygalski undertook further fieldwork in Manchukuo (Manchuria). Fochler-Hauke’s work on the geopolitics and geographies of Asia and Asian colonialism was published in *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* and a series of other publications before his 1941 *Die Mandschurei* (Fochler-Hauke 1933 and 1934).<sup>1</sup> Both Fochler-Hauke and Hermann Lautensach, a fellow geographer and co-editor, along with Haushofer, of *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* saw Asia as a geopolitical space of ancient roots and importance but which was now in motion and in play in the service of Japanese colonial power. Lautensach, specifically in his Geographic work, focused on the Korean peninsula following an eight-month visit to the nation in 1933 and saw Korea through this lens and the frame of Haushoferan geopolitics, a small unsuccessful nation, ripe for conversion into Japanese lebensraum to serve a greater good in the colonial developmental process (Lautensach 2012). Only through the occupation and assimilation of territories, both familiar through ancient stories of the Silk Road and now exposed by contemporary geopolitics, like Korea and Manchuria, could Japan gain and secure the resources which would serve to underpin its place on the world stage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>1</sup> Gustav Fochler-Hauke completed his Ph.D. at the University of Munich, where he worked under the formal supervision of Erich Dagobert von Drygalski, the famous and rather aged polar explorer; Fochler-Hauke would later take up a teaching post at the same university from 1954 until his retirement in 1971



## Collaborations in Korea

Given the huge importance of history and its rewriting, theory and philosophy, and their reconfigurations to the Imperial project of Japan, education and academic research were vital to the developing structures of the Empire. Japan had adopted a new model of education after the Meiji restoration, with different categories of schools and a Higher Education system in common with European states and America. Between 1886 and 1939, a system of nine Imperial Universities (帝国大学), were established, through which research and analysis were conducted to support the development of the Empire and dissemination of its militarist nationalist ideology. Keijo Imperial University was one in the network of Imperial universities, but unlike those on the Japanese mainland or *Taihoku Imperial University* (臺北帝國大學) in Formosa (Taiwan), now known as Taiwan National University, Keijo was not under the direct control of Tokyo's Ministry of Education but instead funded and managed by the Government General of Chosen (Korea), in Keijo (Seoul) itself. Keijo was a very important institution for psychiatric surgical research and medical anthropology and was particularly focused on physiological and anatomical differences between Korean and Japanese bodies (Nakao 2005). Keijo Imperial University also taught courses and engaged in research in literature, philosophy, economics, and history, often attempting to bend conceptually from Korean traditional approaches to Imperial subjectivities and to focus on Japanese historical perspectives, including ancient Asian and Silk Road histories.

The education system of colonial Korea also served ethnic Koreans and Japanese citizens differently. Korean education was reorganized after 1910 along Japanese hierarchical lines, with elementary, middle, and high schools feeding into technical colleges and, for the absolute elite, Keijo Imperial University. Education received by Koreans followed a hybrid Japanese/Korean model for most of the colonial period, which taught Korean culture and social matters in Korean but History, which was mainly Japanese history, and language in Japanese. Elementary schools were even called *kungminhakkyo* (국민학교); *kokumin gakkō* (国民学校) or "National Schools," as their primary aim was to produce citizens/subjects of the Japanese Empire (Tsurumi 2020). As was the case elsewhere in the colony, much greater resources were directed at Japanese settlers and citizens on the peninsula when it came to facilities and provision for education than were directed at ethnic Koreans. Access to higher quality institutions and, indeed, access to Higher Education was also restricted for Korean citizens, only one quarter to one-third of students at Keijo Imperial University could be ethnic Koreans and the majority of students (and the vast majority of staff) were Japanese (Lee 2002).

However, though it was difficult for non-Japanese to become students or faculty they were not entirely excluded. A number of Koreans would study and teach at these institutions, some of whom would later teach at institutions in other parts of the globe. David Fedman, for instance, has identified Chōng T'ae hyōn, a forestry researcher, who alongside Japanese colleagues and with Government General Forestry Bureau funding set up a research laboratory and field station, which supported the embedding of traditional soil management

within colonial forestry efforts (Fedman 2021). There was also Hyōn Sin-kyu, a graduate of one of the Government General's technical schools, Suwōn College of Agriculture and Forestry, who was able to study for postgraduate qualifications at Kyushu Imperial University (the first-ever Korean to join its Forestry School) and after 1945 became hugely influential to South Korean forest research (Ibid). There are even Koreans who studied at Keijo Imperial University and its almost sister institution to the north, Kenkoku University, "Manchukuo's National Foundation University," who would go on to study in the United States and gain faculty positions in disciplines such as Mathematics and Anthropology (Kishida 2019).

Analysis of the Seoul National University Special Collections archives (where Keijo Imperial University's archives are now held) by the authors of this paper reveals an interesting set of curricula and advertorial statements from visiting scholars and Professors who made temporary engagements with Keijo Imperial University that cover aspects of university-level teaching, which the university itself did not permanently have. These were in part to attract potential student and professional viewers to these series of lectures and curricula in the contemporary sense, so that students or anyone auditing such lecture series could have an expectation of what was involved, the expertise or background of the lecturer, and any pre-reading they might have to do to get the most out of the course. A particular example of this tendency at Keijo can be found in documents relating to the 1938 visit to Keijo Imperial University by the University of Tokyo's Tada Fumio 多田文男 (Keijo Imperial University, 1938). Fumio was a Natural Geographer from Tokyo, born in 1900, who worked into the 1950s and 1960s, and is particularly known after the war for his parsing of Japanese Geography through aerial photography as well as an account of a 1930 research visit to the newly conquered Jehol region and a 1933 field trip to Manchukuo (Fumio 1937).

Tada was one of Japan's most successful academic geographers of the prior two decades and his work had engaged in a sustained way with continental Asia, particularly Korea. In 1945, Tada also managed to preserve more than a decade's work in the form of his research notebooks from the interior of China and places along the ancient Silk Road as well as Korean field research.<sup>2</sup> Tada Fumio would escape postwar purges and investigation and the maps that he gathered and his many notebooks would escape the gaze of US occupation forces. At a time when Japan's colonial research products were absorbed haphazardly and, in some cases, burned altogether, Tada's materials were preserved yet would await more than fifty years for their rediscovery (Hironobu 2000). He was able to continue his influential role in the development of postwar geography at the University of Tokyo and Komazawa University until his retirement in 1978 but certain aspects of his influence in the field during the war years were overlooked, forgotten, or actively repressed. Like the maps, which he secreted away, Tada's work in colonial Korea and elsewhere in Central Asia and near the ancient Silk Road would be more or less forgotten in the sands of time. Only recently have Japanese researchers begun to reassess his career and his broader interactions with Japan's

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<sup>2</sup> Tada Fumio, Notebooks no. 2,3, 21-24, 26, 28-31, 40-46, in Tada Fumio Papers, in Museum of Zen Culture and History, Komazawa University (駒澤大学禅文化歴史博物館), Tokyo. For a catalog of notebook contents, see Tada Fumio Collection Catalog (Tada Fumio 多田文男コレクション目録).

empire in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Takeuchi 2000). In this work, Tada's role in the building of the geographical academic capacity in Korea and his fieldwork there have been left unexamined.

## Mengjiang

Tada's fieldwork and his collaboration with Korean researchers in territories conceivably regarded as on, or adjacent to, the ancient Silk Road, involves spaces that the Japanese Empire sought to conquer in order to diminish Qing China still further. In April 1933, Japan, using proxy armies, invaded the Inner Mongolian provinces of Chahar and Suiyuan and, in 1936, utilizing Prince Demchugdongrub, a member of one of the Mongolian Imperial clans, as its head, organized these newly conquered lands into, firstly, the Mongol United Autonomous Government and then, in September 1939, Mengjiang (the Mengjiang United Autonomous Government 蒙疆聯合自治政府) (Boyd 2002). As had been the case with Manchukuo, Mengjiang was not colonized simply for political reasons, to fragment the Republic of China, and to counter any threat from the Mongolian People's Republic (which was allied to the Soviet Union) since its territory contained substantial mineral resources such as Iron Ore and Coal (Ibid). Just as had been the case when the Korean peninsula was colonized in 1910, while these territories were familiar from the ancient stories of the Mongol Empire and the Silk Road (and closer to Kashgar and Xinjiang, which had been visited by Ōtani Kōzui and his expeditions), it would be necessary for a proper set of surveys to be undertaken in Mengjiang so that its landscape and resources could become more coherently knowable by contemporary Imperial institutions. It appears that in 1939, soon after the declaration of its new name and format of government, scholars and researchers from Keijo Imperial University and Tada Fumio travelled to Mengjiang and engaged in a fieldwork exercise surveying, analyzing, and considering the new landscapes the Imperial writ would run over.

This field trip has been encountered by the author of this paper during archival field research in the Academy of Korean Studies' Jangseogak archive in Seongnam, South Korea. The Jangseogak's collection includes the report from Keijo Imperial University and Tada Fumio, which has a distinct social and cultural geographic approach and that does not simply record the spaces of mineral extraction and industry along with the infrastructures needed for logistics and the transport of those materials (Fumio, 1940). Instead, Tada Fumio and his fellow surveyors and researchers also consider the historical and social landscapes of Mengjiang, both those of its indigenous Mongolian residents and also the places and journeys of settlers encouraged into the territory by Imperial authorities in a similar fashion as was happening on the Korean Peninsula. The report begins with a statement of Imperial intent, describing the history of Inner Mongolia in relation to the ancient stories of the Silk Road, its place in the Mongol Empire, and its relationship to Qing China. This statement also details the Japanese claim to Mengjiang and the aim of the researchers to scientificize and understand this formerly unknowable (in contemporary terms) territory.

The researchers firstly demonstrate their placement within the colonial project, using a photograph of the team surrounded by Imperial Japanese Army soldiers and the security guards or police tasked with the protection of the researchers, flying the *Kyokujitsu-ki* (旭日旗) “Rising Sun Flag” (Fumio, 1940, 46). There is another photograph immediately afterwards of the research team themselves, dressed in desert khaki and colonial-era hats, positive and ready to engage in empirical work, next to what looks to be a Buddhist marker cairn (Fumio, 1940, 45). A very substantial element of the report focuses on the agricultural and nomadic landscapes of Mengjiang and the report is seemingly quite concerned with the social and human geography of this new territory and its relationship with the historical past and the connections made by past political entities in the region. The researchers’ first place of encounter during the fieldwork was a fortified market surrounded by nomadic Mongol families and their yurts (Fumio, 1940, 3). Outside the fortified market is a collection of mud-brick ovens, perhaps for baking flatbreads. The researchers then explore the landscape of the yurts and the temporary stockades behind them in which the nomadic families keep their sheep and goats (Fumio, 1940, 5). The researchers pay particular attention in this section of the report to the potential economics of the trade in sheep and the organization of such market spaces in conjunction with the temporary settlements that surround them (Fumio, 1940, 2). Interestingly, there is also a series of photographs and writings on the transportation of materials and caravans of both Mongolian families on the move and Han Chinese as well as Japanese settlers who are on the move elsewhere nearby the market along with its Mongolian nomads and sellers (Fumio, 1940, 7).

While this report is not a work of medical anthropology, the researchers make sure to take photographs of Mongolian families (mothers and fathers in particular), who pass by, passing a scientific eye over such families to see how they might fit into this new colonial territory (Fumio 1940). The Keijo research team then moves on from the agricultural territory and the temporary markets to examine religious spaces, both in the wild (small memorial spaces to family and communities, replete with skulls scattered liberally next to prayer flags) and in the much more formal architectures of worship (Fumio, 1940, 12). The report examines temporal technology, such as sundials, and more esoteric technology, such as dharma wheels (Fumio, 1940, 22). The researchers visit a temple, along with its dramatic Mongolian architecture, but particularly focus on religious practices and a group of Dragon dancers who have assembled for some form of Dragon festival, which resembles, from our perspective, a collision of Chinese, Mongolian, and Buddhist traditions (Fumio, 1940, 23). Following this anthropological moment, the researchers move on to Mengjiang’s second-largest urban space, Hohhot (known as 呼和浩特 in Chinese), still famous for the Dazhao Temple (大召寺 whose 10 foot tall silver Buddha statue had been consecrated by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism, Sonam Gyatso in 1586), and the White Pagoda (白塔) built during the reign of Emperor Daozong of Liao 遼道宗, 1055-1110), both structures mentioned in earlier writing on the area, which harks back to its Silk Road connections. The researchers do not include a photo of that famous pagoda, though one large Pagoda is visible in the report, but they do spend some time analyzing what they conceive to be the backward

and, decidedly, unmodern nature of Hohhot as it appeared at the time (Fumio, 1940, 38).

Hohhot, if Imperial Japan had survived longer than 1945 or if Japan had been a victor in the Pacific War, would have been an important border or near border town close to the Soviet-influenced People's Republic of Mongolia, therefore it would have been important for Japanese infrastructural and security planners to develop the area, at least to make it easier to support the logistics and supply of the Imperial Japanese Army. Whether Mengjiang's incorporation into the Japanese Empire had already begun this process of development and logistical change, it is not at all apparent from the photographs in the report of Hohhot, which looks quite authentically unmodern. Finally, the report engages with the natural landscapes of Mengjiang at its boundaries and peripheries, in a way that Geographers would understand in the twenty-first century. The mountains and high places of Mengjiang, such as the Helan Mountains (贺兰山), are presented as both a natural barrier with a protective element and a potential problem for future development and access to the central Tibetan plateau (Fumio, 1940, 37). If there were any Koreans involved in this research expedition and fieldwork among the researchers and academics from Keijo Imperial University, they might have recognized something of the Kungang Mountains in the shape and form of the Helan Mountains, though dry and arid instead of green and forest-covered Korean wilderness landscapes. Ultimately, the report is a fascinating opportunity to encounter empirical work conducted by Koreans or a Korean institution during the Japanese Empire. It is particularly interesting in its subject and approach, of being part of the construction of new Imperial spaces and territories, and for the connections included with earlier conceptions of places and routes on the more ancient Silk Road.

## Conclusion

The ancient Silk Road and its more modern re-imaginings as the New Silk Road (or even the People's Republic of China's Belt and Road Initiative) are certainly some distance from Mengjiang and the Japanese and Koreans whom this paper recounts exploring Hohhot and its surroundings in 1939/1940. The shipping of silk via Samarkand, Baghdad, and Byzantium, and even the act of medieval espionage that resulted in the smuggling of silkworms into Europe and the establishing of a Byzantine Silk industry (the silkworm larvae were smuggled into Europe by two monks acting on behalf of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian 1<sup>st</sup> between 552-563) are surely not in the minds of Tada Fumio and his research assistants. However, in their encounters with Inner Mongolia/Mengjiang, the collaborating researchers this paper has recounted draw on not only conceptions of academic Geography and Geopolitics sourced from relationships of academic exchange between Japan and Germany of the time but also revived connections with imagined places of the Silk Road, such as Kashgar in western China/Turkestan/Xinjiang encountered by Ōtani Kōzui and his colleagues in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as European analysts of the time, and the memories of the actual ancient Silk Road captured by creative and historical literature, travelling writing, and mythologies of the

period.

So much of the writing on South Korean perceptions of the New Silk Road, and its Chinese counterpart the Belt and Road Initiative, ultimately while couched in language harking back to the extraordinary journeys and exchanges between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, are located in the geopolitics and philosophical constructs of the post-1945/1948/1949 status quo and project notions of statehood, social interest, and economic engagement from the present back into the deep past. The research encounters and output focused on by this paper reaches back to before the rupture of the Pacific War to a moment when, driven by 19<sup>th</sup> century romanticism and earlier efforts to reimagine an Asian state through the lens of Imperial modernity, Japan sought to connect with an imagined version of the Silk Road at the same time as seeking to co-opt and appropriate territories which it perceived might have been part of it. In the research effort encountered by the authors of this paper, Japanese and colonial Koreans together seek to make knowable such lost and imagined spaces at the same time considering ways of making them more tangibly part of the Japanese Imperial project and connecting the spaces of a past Silk Road directly to the Japanese mainland. The authors of the paper hope to have shed a little light on the process of knowledge and space making in a newly conquered territory, such as Mengjiang, and to have done so from a transnational perspective in which scholars of Imperial Japan, and its colonized territories Chosen (Korea), explore what borderlands research might categorize as a contact zone, utilizing theory, conceptualizations, and methodologies drawn from contact and engagement with the academic Geography of post-Weimar-Republic and Third-Reich Germany.

This paper and the writing and research behind it are necessarily partial at this stage, given the paucity of material and gaps in archival documents available. It is also partial as it is part of a wider project and, at this stage, is still provisional and in progress. The authors intend to further develop their work on this topic and delve further into the details of the report on the Mengjiang fieldwork from Tada Fumio and colleagues and other documents held at the Academy of Korean Studies, Seongnam libraries and archive, and explore other material held by institutions on the Japanese mainland, such as the collection of Tada Fumio's notebooks held at Komazawa University in Tokyo. However, as partial and provisional as it is, the authors hope the writing and research within this paper have value, given the rare glimpses the material and its analysis provide into the focus and practices of colonial-era fieldwork in Mengjiang, the empirical processes of making unknown space knowable in the Japanese Empire, and the Imperial perception of the spaces and places of the Silk Road, both ancient and modern.

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