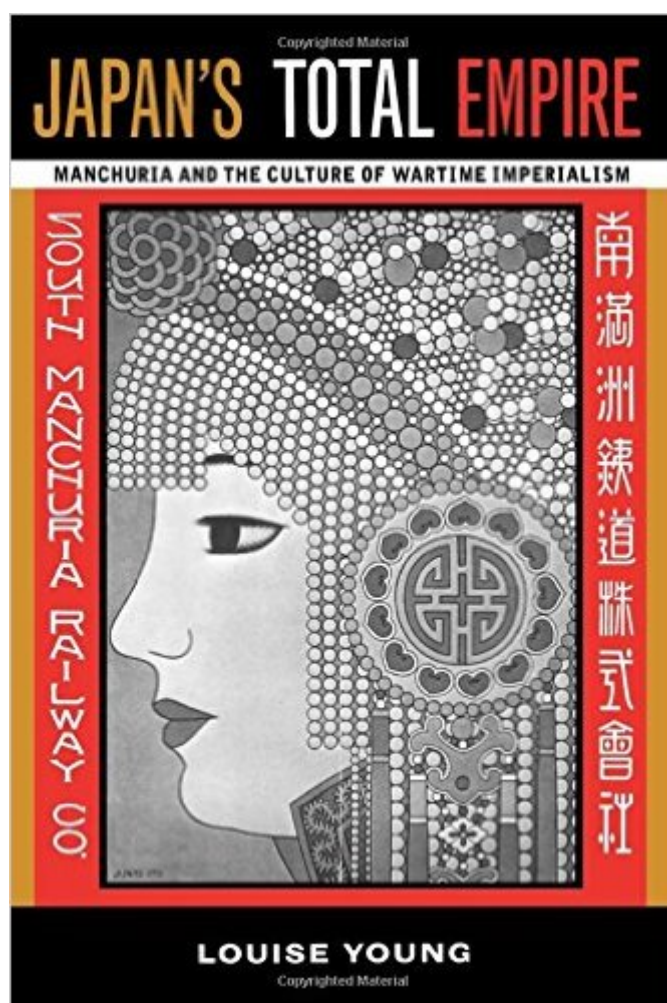


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Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria And The Culture Of Wartime Imperialism (Twentieth Century Japan: The Emergence Of A World Power)



Synopsis

In this first social and cultural history of Japan's construction of Manchuria, Louise Young offers an incisive examination of the nature of Japanese imperialism. Focusing on the domestic impact of Japan's activities in Northeast China between 1931 and 1945, Young considers "metropolitan effects" of empire building: how people at home imagined and experienced the empire they called Manchukuo. Contrary to the conventional assumption that a few army officers and bureaucrats were responsible for Japan's overseas expansion, Young finds that a variety of organizations helped to mobilize popular support for Manchukuo—the mass media, the academy, chambers of commerce, women's organizations, youth groups, and agricultural cooperatives—leading to broad-based support among diverse groups of Japanese. As the empire was being built in China, Young shows, an imagined Manchukuo was emerging at home, constructed of visions of a defensive lifeline, a developing economy, and a settler's paradise.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A very thorough and generally well written study of the Japanese effort to colonize Manchuria in the interwar period. This is not a narrative history but rather a more thematic and analytic discussion of the interactions between the colonial effort and Japanese life. Young's historiographic point of departure is the prior conception that the colonial effort was a manifestation of the general repression and reaction carried forward by the Japanese Army in the interwar period. While not disputing the important role of the Army, Young argues well for a much more complex interaction between the colonial effort and a number of currents in Japanese life, resulting in broad enthusiasm

for and engagement in the Manchurian adventure. Young points to real popular enthusiasm for the colonization effort, carried forward by the emerging mass media in Japan. This was certainly abetted by military propagandists but Young shows considerable independent action across Japanese society. The Manchurian effort was entirely created by the Army but to some extent was used opportunistically by the Army to recover political ground they lost to parliamentary parties in the preceding decades. For several, though not all, segments of the Japanese business community, Manchuria represented a way to maintain growth in the face of Great Depression. In an ambiguous outcome, the goals of the business community, aiming largely at developing markets for Japanese goods, conflicted with the Army's desire to develop heavy industry in Manchuria. In a particularly ironic development, Manchuria became something of a haven for leftist Japanese intellectuals who were the subject of repression in Japan.

Park's trip to Manchuria gave him a connection with the Koreans in the army based there and later, after he took power, to the Japanese who had also served there. The Japanese connections included Nobusuke Kishi (former prime-minister), who managed Manchuria as a deputy administrator of the puppet country and Shina (former deputy leader of the Japanese Liberal Democrats), who had been a director of the industrial development. These two had close ties with the Park Chung-hee administration after normalization of relations with Japan. As a city makes a man smart, the countryside sincere, the fields active, the turbulent times in Manchuria produced a group of bold, adventurous men. The characteristics symbolized by these Koreans at the time were unity, amity, political awareness and action. In contrast, the men from the Japanese Imperial Military Academy, Lee Jong-chan (former army chief of staff) and Lee Hyong-keun although smart were relatively neutral concerning politics, considering themselves the elite. Park, who later spent two years at this academy shared the characteristics of both, making him smart and philosophical, and politically aware and active. The first time Park travelled to Manchuria was on a school excursion in 1935 during his fourth year at the teachers college in Taegu. There is no record but his impressions can be assumed from the writings of his classmates. Lee Seong-yeol wrote, 'Manchuria was like being part of our own country. There were no passport checks or immigration. It was a vast, open landscape, a bleak new world. We visited Kwantung military command in Shinjing, where they showed us new weapons such as artillery and tanks. I felt despair as I saw the force of Japan reaching into every corner of this vast land.'

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