

“Imperial Japanese” Drug Trafficking in China: Historiographic Perspectives

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Introduction

This historiographic study places “imperial Japanese” opium operations—largely run through Chinese collaborator regimes—in the context of postwar Japanese scholarly debates on World War Two in Asia. This approach may seem circuitous and convoluted. Why not just describe the opium operations directly? Three factors necessitate this tactical detour. First, not all “imperial Japanese” were ethnic Japanese; colonial peoples such as Koreans and Taiwanese also plied the drug trade in their capacity as Japanese imperial subjects. Second, this topic suffers acute neglect in Japan today owing to a form of postwar political correctness that warrants as much attention as the wartime opium operations themselves. Third, such ideological constraints on historical scholarship warp our understanding of Japanese aggression in China—including the role played by colonial subjects. Below, I briefly outline the geopolitical contours of “imperial Japanese” opium operations on the Asian continent from 1895 to 1945, and then tackle the prickly issue of why academic historians in postwar Japan feel a need to portray Chinese and Koreans solely as victims of a “Fifteen-Year War” between 1931 and 1945. In other words, it is hoped that this study of Japanese drug trafficking will also unlock other doors.

Man-Mô: A Dilating Amoeba

Japanese expansionists spoke of Man-Mô or Manchuria-Mongolia from the Qing-Meiji War of 1894-95. Always favoring a maximal definition, they gradually enlarged Man-Mô to comprise four originally distinct areas. The first was “Manchuria” proper. Like many English place names suffixed by “-ia”—such as Yugoslavia or Arabia—Manchuria was a land of mixed ethnicity and disputed, fluid borders. It began as “land east of Shanhaiguan” (Kwantung or Guandong, whence the Kwantung Army derived its name); more specifically, the Liaodung peninsula and southern Mukden. After the 1904-5 war against Russia, Japanese expansionists began to construe Manchuria as comprising Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang. Common practice in the Republic of China after 1911, by contrast, was to call this area the Northeast Provinces which would form the collaborator state of Manzhoukuo in 1932. The Man-Mô amoeba engulfed a second area—the Inner Mongolian province of Rehe—when Japan affixed it to Manzhoukuo in 1932-3, restored the defunct Qing monarch Puyi, and renamed the region the Manchu Empire in 1934. Finally, Chahar and southeast Suiyuan—also part of Inner Mongolia under the Qing—accrued to Manchuria-Mongolia together with the northern part of

Shanxi between the Inner and Outer Walls, which had a Mongol population. This last area—made up of Chahar, southeast Suiyuan, and north Shanxi—came under the rule of a collaborator state, the Mengjiang Federal Regime for Mongol Autonomy. Set up in September 1939, it amalgamated earlier regimes for North Shanxi, South Chahar, and Mongol League Self-Rule.

Thus, in the end the artificial geographic construct of Manchuria-Mongolia grew to constitute the Manchu Empire plus Rehe and Mengjiang. By 1939 it comprised five provinces in whole and two others in part, with 60 million inhabitants, the vast majority of whom were Han Chinese and sinicized Manchus and Mongols. Japan, however, claimed that anything north of the Wall was non-Chinese territory and so could be added to Manchuria-Mongolia. Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) in effect agreed by signing the May 1933 Tangu Truce and tacitly refusing to contest the issue as late as October 1935.¹

Modern Sino-Japanese conflict on the Asian continent took the form of Han Chinese demographic expansion and cultural assimilation versus Japanese economic penetration backed by armed force when deemed necessary. Opium operations formed a key part of this Japanese economic penetration in Manchuria-Mongolia. After these operations intensified and spread to adjacent areas in China proper such as east Hebei in the mid-1930s, Han Chinese resistance heightened, the amount of Japanese armed force “deemed necessary” mounted, and a full-scale war broke out in 1937 that later spilt over into the Pacific in December 1941.

Opium Operations

Imperial Japan signed and ratified four international treaties between 1912 and 1931 that banned the sale or export of drugs and narcotics for non-medicinal purposes, and Japan was censured by the League of Nations for violating those treaties in the 1930s. Yet British, Americans, French, Germans, and other Western individuals continued to traffick in China in the 1930s; and, furthermore, Chinese warlords, the Guomindang (GMD), and collaborator regimes continued to exploit opium as a key source of revenue. GMD suppression campaigns did make progress in the 1930s and executed some 964 Chinese on drug charges in 1935. But overall, the desire and ability of Chinese regimes, including the GMD, to enforce anti-drug laws was highly dubious.² Within that broader historical context, however, the fact remains that imperial Japanese subjects began to smuggle opium in China as early as the 1890s. What is more, their activities changed decisively in nature and in scale during the 1930s and 1940s. In those decades, the *zaibatsu* became involved and the imperial government itself began to make and sell hard narcotics—not just opium—in contempt of international treaties and domestic Chinese law.

Related to this last point, a sea change in normative attitudes toward the use of opium and drugs derived from opium had taken place by the early twentieth century. Even in the second half of the nineteenth century, moderate consumption of opium was viewed in many quarters—Western and Chinese alike—as little different from that of

1. Shimada Toshihiko, “Designs on North China,” in James W. Morley, ed., *The China Quagmire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 133.

2. On the issue of foreign and Chinese involvement in the opium trade in China, see the various chapters in Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, ed., *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

alcohol. Regimes of various sorts—from the worldwide British Empire to local Chinese warlords—embraced opium as a legitimate source of revenue. But with the later manufacture of far more potent narcotics such as morphine and heroin, consumption perforce rose beyond moderation, and by the 1910s and 1920s, individuals and regimes that relied on such addictive drugs to gain revenue did so in the face of mounting moral censure.

Imperial Japanese opium operations sprang from three motives. Above all was the need to finance collaborator states such as the Manchu, Mengjiang, East Hebei, North China Provisional, Reformed, and Wang Jingwei regimes. According to the restored Manchu emperor, Puyi, for example, the Manchu empire garnered 300 million *yuan*, or about one-sixth of its total revenues, from opium.³ Second, opium funded undercover operations that facilitated Japanese aggression. Third, opium profits went to rightwing societies in Japan, and there is even some evidence to link laundered wartime opium monies with early postwar conservative parties.⁴ Wartime GMD propaganda averred that imperial Japan used drugs to poison China into submission, and some Japanese war criminals detained in the PRC testified to that effect in the 1950s.⁵ But it is probably more correct to say that opium raised sorely needed revenue for Japanese aggressors—just as it continued to do so for Chinese warlords, criminal elements, the GMD, and even the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Twentieth-century Japan lacked the wherewithal to be an imperial power, so its leaders latched on to opium as a poor man's fiscal panacea.⁶ Yet Tokugawa and Meiji Japan had virtually no drug problem at home and had never relied on opium as a form of government revenue. Only the will to empire created this fiscal need.

Opium operations took place in three overlapping stages. Stage one lasted from the 1890s through the Manchurian Incident which ended with the Tanggu Truce in May 1933. Stage two began in June 1933 with the creation of a demilitarized zone (DMZ) in east Hebei as stipulated by those Accords, and ended with the establishment of the Kô-Ain (Asia Development Board) in December 1938. Stage three began in December 1938 and ended in August 1945.

In stage one imperial subjects smuggled drugs in Chinese treaty ports under the protection of extraterritoriality. These riff-raff carpetbaggers or *tairiku rônin* enjoyed support from consular authorities in treaty port concessions and from imperial armed forces in colonial areas such as the Guandong Leased Territories. For instance, Consul (and postwar Prime Minister) Yoshida Shigeru described the situation in Tianjin in December 1922 as follows:

Of the 5000 Japanese residents in Tianjin, seventy percent deal in morphine or other illegal substances. Almost all businesses traffic in these goods, even eateries and general stores, not just medicinal firms.... Police crackdowns here are not as strict as in Dalian, and the Consulate's policy is to arraign only the most flagrant violators. We prosecute only those caught by [Chinese] customs authorities or those uncovered in

3. He quotes the figure from Furumi Tadayuki but does not give a period in Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi, *From Emperor to Citizen* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 384.

4. *Asahi shinbun*, July 8, 1993.

5. *Asahi shinbun*, April 5, 1998;

6. Much of the information, but not the periodization, is from Eguchi Keiichi, *Nit-Chû ahen sensô* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988).

other crimes. We don't arrest criminals or investigate crimes on our own. If we did so thoroughly, no Japanese would be left in Tianjin.⁷

In stage two, trafficking by carpetbaggers continued with connivance from consular officials. However, it also expanded south of the Wall in the eastern Hebei DMZ created by the 1933 truce. Under the terms of that truce, only Chinese units were actually forced to leave the DMZ whereas Japanese forces could enter at will. This DMZ fell under the control of Yin Rugeng's "Regime for East Hebei Autonomy and the Containment of Communism" set up at Tongzhou in November 1935, and imperial subjects sold opium with impunity in this area. Furthermore, *zaibatsu* such as Mitsubishi *shôji* and Mitsui *bussan* liberally interpreted provisions in the Accords to extend the DMZ out to sea and smuggle Iranian opium into north China under formal Foreign Ministry supervision.⁸ Thus imperial Japanese trafficking in stage two was no longer confined to individuals in Guandong or the treaty ports; the *zaibatsu* now operated in China proper with government backing.

Finally, stage three lasted from late-1938 to August of 1945. In December 1938 Japan created the Kô-Ain—headed by the prime minister plus his army, navy, foreign, and finance ministers—a body that later became the Greater East Asia Ministry. It ran opium operations through a Kalgan branch office that worked hand-in-glove with the Mengjiang regime, created in 1939, which also was headquartered in Kalgan. Historian Eguchi Keiichi shows that Japanese officials controlling this collaborator regime encouraged local consumption of the drug and taxed profits from it. They set up an opium monopoly, got farmers to grow poppies on a large scale, bought up the harvests, processed these into raw opium, refined that into heroin and morphine, and exported these narcotics to other parts of China and to Southeast Asia (see chart).

To sum up, then, in stage one, individual imperial subjects trafficked in Japanese treaty port concessions and colonies under the protection of extraterritoriality. In stage two, *zaibatsu* under Foreign Ministry direction extended smuggling south of the Wall by exploiting provisions of the Tanggu Truce. In stage three, the imperial Japanese government manufactured and exported narcotics from Mengjiang.

Besides concealing its involvement with narcotics, Japan parried foreign criticism of its opium policy in China by arguing that the drug problem there was too intractable to be cured by the GMD's strict prohibitions after 1935 and that a total cut-off in opium would cause severe withdrawal pains in addicts. So, from both practical and humanitarian motives, Chinese regimes seeking autonomy from GMD misrule—that is, collaborator regimes—chose a policy of gradual prohibition that had worked in colonial Taiwan. These regimes would forbid the sale of drugs to non-addicts and set up licensed halfway houses for dispensing drugs to current addicts so that they could be detoxified. Thus drug use would cease over time as current addicts died off and no new ones emerged in their place. In fact, this was exactly the same strategy adopted by the GMD in its own eradication campaigns.

That was Japan's official line; reality differed. Chinese-run halfway houses literally enjoyed the license to operate in return for hefty fees or taxes paid to Japanese authorities. Imperial subjects too dealt in narcotics—sometimes in the "comfort stations"

7. Okada Yoshimasa et al., ed., *Zoku gendaishi shiryô 12: Ahen mondai* (Tokyo: Misuzu shobô, 1986), pp. 190-91.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-101.

that they ran for troops.⁹ They even flew the Rising Sun to ward off Chinese authorities.¹⁰ This drug dealing was depicted in contemporaneous works of fiction. In 1930 Kuroshima Denji wrote *Busô seru shigai* which portrayed the 1928 Jinan Incident, set off in part by Japanese opium traffickers.¹¹ Lin Yutang's 1939 work, *Moment in Peking*, shows imperial subjects peddling narcotic-laced candy to Chinese school children in treaty port concessions. Partial translations of Lin's novel appeared in Japan but were expurgated of those scenes.¹²

The League of Nations condemned Japanese trafficking in the 1930s. Western eyewitness testimonies appeared at that time as well. The Institute of Pacific Relations published a monograph by Frederick Merrill titled *Japan and the Opium Menace* in 1942. The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal took up this issue from August 30 to September 6, 1946, and behind-the-scenes questioning of principals such as Guandong Army staff officer Tanaka Ryûkichi yielded still more information to Allied prosecutors.¹³ Finally, the GMD executed 149 imperial Japanese subjects on drug-related charges as B- and C-class war criminals, and the PRC detained Japanese war criminals involved with drug dealing until 1956.

Leftwing Political Correctness

All of this seems quite clear. Why, then, are imperial opium operations not common knowledge in Japan? The answer at first seems obvious. Here is another issue—along with comfort women, the Nanjing Atrocity, poison gas operations, and Unit 731's chemical and biological warfare—that conservative Japanese interests want to cover up. The Ministry of Education suppressed mention of such topics in textbooks until the mid-1990s.¹⁴ Nor are Mitsui and Mitsubishi eager to expose their deeds before world scrutiny—especially in the late-1990s and early 2000's, when faced with the possibility of lawsuits.

On second thought, however, this explanation is inadequate. After all, even though it has lost some influence in recent years, a powerful leftwing historical establishment exists in Japan; and, it should be having a field day with opium operations, just as it does with the other war crimes issues mentioned above. Many prominent Japanese historians of both Japan and China belong to or support the Communist and Socialist (now Social Democratic) Parties, and they would welcome another issue with which to berate the government's whitewashing of Japan's recent history. Therefore, the

9. Postwar confession by Lieutenant-General Sassa Shinnosuke in *Sekai* 648 (May 1998), pp. 133-34.

10. Ikeda Sumihisa, *Rikugun sôgi iinchô* (Tokyo: Nihon shuppan, 1953), pp. 43-44.

11. *Kuroshima Denji zenshû* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 1970), vol 3.

12. Lin Yu-tang, *Moment in Peking: A Novel of Contemporary Chinese Life* (Shanghai: Kelley and Walsh, 1939).

13. Awaya Kentarô et al., ed., *Tôkyô saiban shiryô: Tanaka Ryûkichi jinmon chôsho* (Tokyo: Ôtsuki shoten, 1994), pp. 41-61.

14. However, note that a group of 350 parents sued to block the use of middle school textbooks that mention the foreign comfort women. See *Asahi shinbun*, April 4, 1997. This was the impetus for the formation of a Society to Create New History Textbooks comprising conservative revisionists who seek to present a "non-masochistic" (in their terms) view of history. As a pilot project, the group under the direction of Nishio Kanji, has published *Kokumin no rekishi* (Tokyo: Sankei shinbunsha, 1999).

truly arresting question is: Why does the radical left in contemporary Japan remain reticent?

One purely academic explanation lies in a scarcity of reliable primary sources. Opium operations in the twentieth century—as opposed to those in the nineteenth—acquired an aura of criminality and moral opprobrium. Persons involved did not leave incriminating evidence strewn about; and, moreover, those who went on to enjoy illustrious postwar careers have remained tight-lipped. Aside from Yoshida Shigeru, for example, former Prime Minister Ôhira Masayoshi and former Foreign Minister Aichi Kiichi took part in opium operations.¹⁵ Somehow they never got around to unburdening their consciences. As noted above, the Tokyo Tribunal took up this issue in 1946; it called eyewitnesses to the stand and exhibited Western and Chinese sources as evidence. Yet those testimonies and documents tended to be impressionistic, anecdotal, or second-hand in nature. There was little hard data from Japanese sources to sustain war crimes allegations conclusively.¹⁶ Thus many postwar Japanese dismissed the “guilty” verdict as victors’ justice—especially those so inclined on ideological grounds.

Few scholarly or semi-scholarly treatments of the topic of imperial Japanese opium operations exist before the 1980s. One essay by Takeuchi Yoshimi dates from 1949. Fujiwara Akira, Imai Seiichi, and Tôyama Shigeki in the best-selling *Shôwa shi* (1955 and 1959) and Ienaga Saburô in *Taihei'yô sensô* (1968 and 1986) devote a line to opium in passing.¹⁷ In 1977 Kuroha Kiyotaka drafted an essay, “Mô hitotsu no ahen sensô,” but he felt that his evidence was weak and withheld publication until in 1984.¹⁸ Then, in 1985-86, two volumes of Japanese primary source materials appeared.¹⁹ Eguchi Keiichi edited one of these and wrote a scholarly introduction to it. In 1988 Eguchi also published the best monograph on this subject, though of a semi-scholarly nature, in the Iwanami shinsho series.²⁰ Recently, a few other historians such as Kurahashi Masanao and Kobayashi Motohiro have begun work on this understudied topic, but their numbers remain small.²¹ It is true that reliable sources are less abundant than we might like, but I contend that leftwing political correctness is more of an impediment to Japanese scholarship on this issue.

I would submit that leftwing ideological constraints explain the neglected and even biased treatment accorded to the study of this topic in Japan. The bias takes two

15. Eguchi, *Nit-Chû ahen sensô*, pp. 73, 85, 208.

16. Individual memoirs on opium operations, with varying degrees of reliability, are: Yamamoto Tsuneo, *Ahen to taihō* (Tokyo: PMC shuppan, 1985); and Fujise Kazuya, *Shôwa rikugun “Ahen bōryaku” no taizai* (Tokyo: Yamate shobō shinsha, 1992). An example of oral history—again with dubious reliability despite the author’s reputation in leftist historical circles—is Senda Kakō, *Kōgun “Ahen” bōryaku* (Tokyo: Sekibunkan, 1980).

17. Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Chûgokujin no kōsen ishiki to Nihonjin no dōtoku ishiki,” in *Takeuchi Yoshimi hyōronshū 3: Gendai Chûgoku ron* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1966), pp. 35-60; Tôyama et al., *Shôwa shi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1955 and 1959), pp. 183-84, 218, respectively; Ienaga Saburô, *Taihei'yô sensô* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1968 and 1986), pp. 193, 206-07, respectively.

18. Kuroha Kiyotaka, *Jûgonen sensô shi josetsu: jô* (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1984), pp. 203-51, 265.

19. Eguchi Keiichi, ed., *Shiryô: Nit-Chû ahen sensô ki ahen seisaku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1985); Okada Yoshimasa et al., ed., *Ahen mondai*.

20. Eguchi, *Nit-Chû ahen sensô*.

21. Kurahashi, *Nihon no ahen senryaku: Kakusareta kokka hanzai* (Tokyo: Kyôei shobō, 1996); Kobayashi Motohiro, “Drug Operations by Resident Japanese in Tianjian,” in Brook and Wakabayashi, eds., *Opium Regimes*, pp. 152-66.

main forms. First, leftwing scholars ignore or play down the prewar and wartime drug trade plied by the GMD, CCP, and Chinese warlords and criminal elements. In 1949, Takeuchi Yoshimi broached the issue of Japanese moral turpitude for this trade which Lin Yutang had castigated in his 1939 novel, *Moment in Peking*. Takeuchi excoriated his countrymen for insensitivity to the suffering they inflicted on China through the drug trade, but unlike Lin or Kuroshima, he mentioned nothing of Chinese or other nationalities who trafficked in China.²² The same holds for the leftist historians Fujiwara Akira, Imai Seiichi, Tōyama Shigeki, and Ienaga Saburō from the 1950s through 1970s. Kuroha Kiyotaka and Eguchi Keichi condemned imperial Japan in the 1980s, arguing that Japan reintroduced opium to areas where the GMD had eradicated addiction. But Eguchi also shows that about fifty-five percent of Mengjiang opium exports went to Shanghai—precisely where the GMD Green Gang was strongest.

Thus Japanese opium operations relied on networks run by Chinese collaborator regimes or criminal elements. The drug trade was a Sino-Japanese joint venture, especially in central and south China. Yamada Gōichi has translated Chinese studies on opium, and a few Japanese historians of China work on the topic, but their focus still tends to be on China the victim.²³ It is difficult for Japanese leftists to paint a “balanced picture” on this topic by depicting wrongs on the other side. This is because such an attempt supports what their arch-enemy, the Ministry of Education, has always argued; namely, that Japan alone did not perpetrate evil and should not be portrayed as such.²⁴ I will return to examine this first form of bias later on in this article, when I take up Japanese scholarly views of the “Fifteen-Year War.”

A second form of bias is to ignore or explain away the involvement in opium operations by colonials—that is, by Koreans and Taiwanese.²⁵ In 1983 Liu Ming-hsiu, a Taiwanese who became naturalized under the Japanese name of Itō Kiyoshi, published a study of opium and Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan. Liu-Itō quotes an episode from the memoirs of Ishii Itarō that recalls how he judged an imperial subject on trial in Tianjin for smuggling opium in 1918. Ishii gave the man a six-month jail term, but the consular police chief pulled Ishii aside and said, “Look, we’d blow our budget if we had to feed that guy for six months. Consul Yoshida [Shigeru] would have said two months at the most.” As Ishii recalled: “After all, I was still a rank amateur; so my first experience was a real knee-slapper. After three or four tries, I got better.” Liu-Itō derides this farce as typical of Japanese imperialists in China, and Eguchi approvingly cites that appraisal in

22. Takeuchi, “Chūgokujin no kōsen ishiki.”

23. Yamada Gōichi, tr., *Ōrudo [Old] Shanhai ahen jijō* (Tokyo: Aki shobō, 1995); Imai Hayao, “Kindai Shisenshō ni okeru ahen saibai no shiteki tenkai o meguru ichi kōsatsu” *Jinbun ronshū* 41 (January 1991), pp. 65-91; Uchida Tomoyuki, “Sanshishō no Nihongun senryō chiku ni okeru ahen kanri seisaku” in *Tōyō kenkyū* 12 (September 1994), pp. 29-54 and “Chūgoku kō-Nichi konkyōchi ni okeru ahen kanri seisaku” in *Ajia kenkyū* 41 (August 1995), pp. 25-65; Kasahara Yūko, “Chūka kokumin kyodokukai ni tsuite no ichi kōsatsu” in *Chikaki ni arite* (29 (May 1995), pp. 2-16; Sadatoki Kazuo, “Nihon no ahen shinryaku to Chūgoku ahen no teikō ni tsuite” in *Rekishi kenkyū* 30 (1933), pp. 87-123.

24. For example, Yoshida Yutaka’s reaction to the Diet Resolution on the fiftieth anniversary of the war’s end delivered by Murayama Tomiichi, in *Asahi shinbun*, June 11, 1995.

25. John M. Jennings, “The Forgotten Plague: Opium and Narcotics in Korea under Japanese Rule, 1910-1945,” *Modern Asian Studies* 29.4 (1995), pp. 795-815; Barbara Brooks, “The Japanese Consul in China,” *Sino-Japanese Studies* 10.1 (October 1997), pp. 27-32.

his own work.²⁶ But Ishii's memoirs, readily available in paperback, clearly identify this defendant as a Korean.²⁷

This was no isolated incident. Koreans and Taiwanese capitalized on their legal status as "imperial subjects" to sell drugs in China under extraterritoriality.²⁸ Chinese and Western accounts, Tokyo Tribunal transcripts, and Lin Yu-tang's *Moment in Peking* cite both Japanese and Korean traffickers flying the Rising Sun to fend off Chinese authorities. In 1935 a British observer found 47 Korean and 116 Japanese opium dens in Changli district, Luandong, in East Hebei and conditions were even worse in other districts.²⁹ The GMD executed eight Koreans among 149 B- and C-class Japanese war criminals.³⁰ Eguchi Keiichi cites Japanese Consulate figures in Kalgan that show 21 Japanese and 40 Koreans arrested on drug charges in 1939-40.³¹ He also cites a source proving that the future foreign minister Aichi Kiichi covered up imperial opium operations conducted through a collaborator regime in occupied north China "because it would be an unwelcome thing for other nations to find out."³² Yet Eguchi does not mention that Korean traffickers appear in this very same document.

Such a need to gloss over Korean drug dealing is understandable only when we examine the sociopolitical milieu of postwar Japan. Leftist academics have had little impact outside their ivory tower because conservatives, some of whom are war crimes convicts or suspects, have controlled the Diet, bureaucracy, and judiciary until the mid-1990s. Thus the leftists' "scholarly consensus" did not make it into school textbooks until Asian countries began criticizing Japan on the textbook and other issues in the 1980s. Leftwing Japanese envy how postwar Germans have changed their society through denazification, war crimes trials, and compensation of foreign victims. In stark contrast, the Japanese people not only refuse to try war criminals, they have elected these men to high office and made them prime ministers or supreme court judges. Japan did pay \$2.5 billion to foreign governments, but Germans are paying 92 times more and are paying individual victims.³³ Firms such as Kashima Construction refuse to compensate Asians whom they enslaved, and Takeda Pharmaceuticals refuses to admit opium exports, during the war. This issue of *senjo sekinin*—war crimes neither atoned for nor

26. Liu Ming-hsiu (Itô Kiyoshi), *Taiwan tôchi to ahen mondai* (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1983), pp. 134-36; Eguchi, ed., *Shiryô: Ahen seisaku*, p. 27, note 31.

27. Ishii, *Gaikôkan no isshô* (Tokyo: Chûô kôronsha, 1986), pp. 38-40.

28. On Taiwanese traffickers, see Chung Shu-ming, "Nihon tôchi jidai ni okeru Taiwan no taigai hatten shi" (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Tokyo University, 1996). I thank Dr. Chung for this reference.

29. Hsu Shu-hsi, ed., *A Digest of Japanese War Conduct* (Shanghai: Kelley and Walsh, 1939), p. 97.

30. Utsumi Aiko, *Chôsenjin B- C-kyû senpan no kiroku* (Tokyo: Keisei shobô, 1982), p. 248; *Asahi shinbun*, January 3, 1995.

31. Cited in Eguchi Keiichi ed., *Shiryô: Ahen seisaku*, p. 78. The fact that Koreans outnumber Japanese here may result from discriminatory reporting and recording.

32. Okada et al., ed., *Ahen mondai*, pp. 264-65.

33. In 1995 US dollars, the Germans paid 160 billion, and the Japanese 2.5 billion, in reparations; that is, indemnities required by international laws and peace treaties. The Germans voluntarily paid 70 billion in compensation by 1992 to foreign individuals victimized in the war, and they are continuing to pay, so that the total will reach 90 billion by 2030. By contrast, the Japanese refuse to pay any compensation. In total, then, the Germans paid 230 billion, the Japanese 2.5 billion; that means the Germans paid 92 times more in total. See *Aera* 19 (May 5, 1992), pp. 31-43.

even acknowledged—is a clarion cry for conscientious postwar leftists. But, it has also spawned taboos that distort their treatment of recent Japanese history, one of which relates to opium.

Leftist historians point out the following facts about Korean victimization. Until the influx of foreign guest workers from Asia and Latin America in the 1980s, Korean resident aliens, who now number 690,000, always made up over eighty percent of the foreign population in Japan; and of that number, about 590,000 are former imperial subjects and their descendants.³⁴ In the 1940s, 1.6 million persons—an average of one per six households in Korea—were brought to Japan forcibly as slave labor.³⁵ Well over 120,000 Koreans served as guards in POW camps or paramilitary personnel in the imperial armed forces. Some 20,000 Koreans volunteered for, and 110,000 were drafted into, armed service; 16,511 of them died or went missing in action, and many others were wounded or maimed.³⁶ When the war ended, Japanese repatriation ships sent these Koreans not to Korea, but to Japan—a foreign land for them. Or, in extreme cases, the ships refused to take them anywhere because they were not ethnic Japanese. Thus, 36,000 displaced Korean civilians were stranded in former Soviet-occupied regions such as Sakhalin, and most remain there today.³⁷ Others remain in former battle zones such as Vietnam.

As part of its demilitarization and democratization policies, the Allied Occupation tried to establish a social welfare system based on the principle of equality for all war victims. Thus it banned the generous pensions, benefits, and other special privileges that military personnel alone had enjoyed. But on regaining sovereignty in April 1952, the Japanese government immediately reinstituted these special pensions and benefits for former military personnel and their families, and it stripped former colonial subjects of Japanese citizenship which it later made mandatory for obtaining most social welfare benefits.

Thus Korean slave laborers or veterans and their families became ineligible for veterans' pensions, survivor benefits, or medical treatment for disabilities incurred in battle. The logic here is that they ceased to be Japanese citizens in April 1952—though involuntarily—so they no longer were entitled to the rights and privileges that Japanese citizens enjoy. Yet on the other hand, the victorious Allies had convicted 148 Koreans of B- and C-class war crimes such as abusing Allied POWs—though often on orders from above. Of those 148 Korean B- and C-class war criminals, twenty-three suffered execution, which is fifteen more than the eight Japanese executed as A-class criminals.³⁸ The other 125 Korean B- and C-class war criminals served prison terms in Japan or abroad, and the last of those held in Japan remained incarcerated until 1957, when Class-A war crimes suspect Kishi Nobusuke was prime minister.³⁹ The logic here is that those

34. *Asahi shinbun*, February 18, 1994; Tanaka Hiroshi, *Zai-Nichi gaikokujin* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991), pp. 31-33.

35. Ōnuma Yasuaki, *Saharin kimin* (Tokyo: Chûô kôronsha, 1992), pp. 9-10.

36. Utsumi Aiko, *Chôsenjin "kôgun" heishitachi no sensô* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991), pp. 42-45.

37. Ōnuma, *Saharin kimin*, pp. 10-11.

38. However, 984 Japanese were executed in the B- and C-classes. *Asahi shinbun*, ed., *Sengo hoshô to wa nani ka* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1994) p. 117; *Asahi shinbun*, January 3, 1995.

39. Utsumi, *Chôsenjin B- C-kyû senpan no kiroku*, p. 247.

Koreans committed war crimes while they were Japanese citizens, so they must continue to be punished as Japanese even after their Japanese citizenship was revoked in 1952.

By contrast, all Japanese military and civil officials imprisoned as A-class war criminals won their release by 1952—five years before the last of the Koreans. The Japanese former military officers received, and their families continue to receive, government pensions—and their prison terms count as a period of service.⁴⁰ As of 1998, these men and their families accepted almost ¥40 trillion or \$400 billion in benefits.⁴¹ Korean alien residents pay the same taxes as Japanese, but the postwar government stripped them of citizenship and deprived them of over 200 social welfare measures, including medical treatment for disabilities suffered while fighting to defend Japan and the emperor.⁴² Today a disabled Korean veteran receives nothing in benefits, whereas a similarly disabled Japanese veteran has received roughly \$600,000.⁴³ The Liberal Democratic Party that passed these laws was elected to power with large majorities for nearly four decades—showing that the Japanese people as a whole tacitly endorsed those laws, which in some respects have become harsher. For example, in 1962 Koreans resident aliens were made eligible for social assistance programs if they became naturalized citizens, but that possibility disappeared in May 1993.⁴⁴ (Only in 2000 has the government relented and agreed to pay disabled Korean veterans a lump sum of condolence money, but no regular pensions.)

The postwar government, then, legalized and justified discrimination against Koreans on the grounds of lost Japanese citizenship. This is why leftwing academics have found it painful to divulge the historical truth that Koreans flaunted their Japanese citizenship up to 1945 in order to enjoy colonial privileges accruing from it—such as extraterritoriality. Leftists strive to right injustices rooted in ethnocentrism and lingering forms of emperor-state militarism. But their reformist zeal has fostered a form of political correctness that precludes a systematic and thoroughgoing exposé of Japanese war crimes related to opium for fear of tarring Koreans with the same brush. Scholars such as Eguchi and Kurahashi do not totally ignore Korean trafficking, but they insist that brutal Japanese colonial rule forced Koreans to commit those crimes.⁴⁵ In short, Japanese leftists must portray Koreans between 1911 and 1945 solely as victims. As Yamabe Kentarô sweepingly puts it, “All the misfortune and unhappiness that befell Koreans resulted from [our] colonization.”⁴⁶ To violate this taboo and depict Koreans as committing atrocities or profiting from Japanese imperialism would invite scathing criticism from abroad and brand one as a closet militarist.

40. Tanaka Hiroshi, “Kokka wa izoku ni dô hoshô shita ka” in Tanaka Nobumasa et al., ed., *Izoku to senso* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), p. 95.

41. Ibid., pp. 139–43; this is at the early-1998 exchange rate.

42. *Asahi shinbun*, September 17, 1994.

43. Tanaka, “Kokka wa izoku ni dô hoshô shita ka,” pp. 138–139. Calculated at an exchange rate of \$1 = ¥125.

44. *Asahi shinbun*, August 20, 1993.

45. Eguchi, *Nit-Chû ahen sensô*, pp. 181–182; Kurahashi, *Nihon no ahen senryaku*, pp. 186–88. A South Korean historian, Park Kang, has produced *Nihon no Chûgoku shinryaku to ahen* (Tokyo: Daiichi shobô, 1994), but the Japanese translation mentions nothing of Korean involvement.

46. Yamabe, *Nihon tôchika no Chôsen* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971), p. ii.

Historiography of the War

On a different front, leftwing biases make dating and naming the war a political litmus test of deference to Chinese sensibilities.⁴⁷ There are four major views: the Greater East Asia War thesis, Pacific War thesis, Fifteen-Year War thesis, and Two Wars in China thesis. The Greater East Asia War, it is held, was waged to liberate Asians from white imperialism. The Shôwa emperor affirmed this view up to August 1945, and rightwing figures espouse refinements of it today.⁴⁸

Leftwing academics favor of the terms “Fifteen-Year War” or “Asia-Pacific War,”⁴⁹ and consider it a single war of aggression mainly against China from September 1931, not December 1941. Tsurumi Shunsuke first espoused this thesis in 1956 and it is now orthodox among leftists.⁵⁰ In sum, this thesis aims to atone for Japanese war crimes through scholarship because the Tokyo Trials largely ignored war crimes against Asians and postwar Japan has refused to indict war criminals.⁵¹ The leftists also wish to refute the popular notion that “in eight years we fought fifty-five battles [with China], won fifty-one, lost one, and tied three”; i.e., that Japan lost to US material and scientific might, and not to the Chinese.⁵² Hence, leftists strive to “prove” not only that Japan fought mainly against China, but also *lost* mainly to China.⁵³

Some leftists admit Japanese aggression in China but oppose the Fifteen-Year War thesis. Thus, Takeuchi Yoshimi castigated his countrymen for barbarism in China, but did not single out Japan for moral reproach in the “Pacific war,” which he saw as a war between imperialist birds-of-a-feather.⁵⁴ Or, Yamada Akira reluctantly concedes that only the United States—not China—could pummel Japan into unconditional surrender; hence, emphasis must be placed on the post-Pearl Harbor era.⁵⁵ But opponents of this view insist that a Pacific-centered conception of the war fosters unwarranted Japanese

47. See Kisaka Jun'ichirô, “Ajia-Taiheiyô sensô no rekishiteki seikaku o megutte,” in Awaya Kentarô et al., ed., *Nenpô: Nihon gendaishi* 3 (1997), pp. 1-43.

48. Senda Kakô, ed., *Tennô to chokugo to Shôwa shi* (Tokyo: Sekibunsha, 1983), p. 392; for example, Nakasone Yasuhiro in *Asahi shinbun*, April 22, 1997.

49. For representative studies, see Fujiwara Akira and Imai Seiichi, ed., *Jûgonen sensô* (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1988-89), 4 vols.

50. Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Senjiki Nihon no seishinshi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1982), pp. 240-41. The original source was “Chishikijin no sensô sekinin,” in *Chûô kôron* (January 1956).

51. Three prominent proponents are Ienaga Saburô, *Sensô sekinin* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1985); Awaya Kentarô, *Tokyo saiban ron* (Tokyo: Ôtsuki shoten, 1989) and *Miketsu no sensô sekinin* (Tokyo: Kashiwa shobô, 1994); and Ônuma Yasuaki, *Tokyo saiban kara sengo sekinin no shisô e* (Tokyo: Tôshindô, 1987).

52. Quoted in Yoshida Yutaka, *Nihonjin no sensôkan* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), p. 101. Also see comments by Kuwajima Setsurô, *Kahoku senki* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1997), p. 362 and Fujita Shigeru, in Honda Katsuichi and Naganuma Setsuo, *Tennô no guntai* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1991), pp. 414-17.

53. See Ienaga, *Taiheiyô sensô: Dai ni han* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), pp. 126-28; Fujiwara Akira, *Taiheiyô sensô shi ron* (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1982), pp. 108-29; Furuya Tetsuo, *Nit-Chû sensô* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1985), pp. 206-07; Honda and Naganuma, *Tennô no guntai*, pp. 431-34.

54. Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Sensô sekinin ni tsuite” in Hashikawa Bunzô, ed., *Gendai no hakken 3: Sensô sekinin* (Tokyo: Shinjûsha, 1960), pp. 10-14.

55. Yamada, “Taiheiyô sensô wa ‘gûzen ni’ maketa ka” in Fujiwara Akira et al., ed., *Nihon kindaiishi no kyojô to jitsuzô 3: Manshû jihen~ haisen* (Tokyo: Ôtsuki shoten, 1989), p. 247.

feelings of self-pity, since the overwhelming majority of Japanese military and civilian casualties were suffered at American hands—not the least owing to atomic bombings. The view of a “Pacific War” that began at Pearl Harbor and ended at Nagasaki—with Americans paying the price in blood and treasure to defeat Japan—also conveniently suits postwar US strategic needs. These include shutting China and the USSR out of the Occupation of Japan since neither of those former allies, it is reputed, played a role in defeating that former enemy.

The “Pacific War” view also portrays the China and Pacific wars as largely unconnected, and implies that Japan could have chosen to pursue either apart from the other. From a purely logistical standpoint, that is absurd. In 1931, the imperial army numbered 200,000 men, and the imperial navy, 78,000. By December 1941, the army had grown to 2.1 million men, and the navy to 311,000.⁵⁶ In other words, the army had to grow ten times and the navy almost four times within ten years for Japan even to contemplate a “Pacific war.” This drastic rate of mobilization—with its punishing hardships on a still largely agrarian economy—could not be unjustified under normal peacetime conditions. Thus, a “real” China war—even if it was called an “incident” for other reasons—was needed to legitimize demands for military outlays that would reach ¥1.4 billion in 1937. This was over 50 percent of the national budget, and would grow thereafter.⁵⁷

Other Japanese leftists insist that there were “two wars in China.” Usui Katsumi maintains that both the GMD government and the Western imperial powers accepted an independent Manzhoukuo. The Tanggu Truce—which the GMD never repudiated—ended the Manchurian Incident in May 1933, and the League of Nations refused to sanction Japan for its actions in Manchuria. No major battles and few casualties occurred in China proper before 1937, but 5-6 million Chinese and 150,000 Japanese died from July 1937 to December 1941.⁵⁸ Pointing to the four-year lull between 1933 and 1937, Usui argues that the Marco Polo Bridge Incident launched a whole new war in July 1937. Furthermore, as both Usui and Ôsugi Kazuo hold, this second China war could have been averted on several occasions up to the end of 1937.⁵⁹ Although not a leftist, Hata Ikuhiko too ascribes to this “two wars in China” view. Hata asserts that China at least in part provoked this second war that began in 1937 whereas key Guandong Army leaders abhorred this new conflict because they were preparing for an all-out war with the Soviet Union.⁶⁰

Figures can be found to support this “Two Wars in China” thesis as well. In 1935 the Guandong Army stood at 164,100, and Japan’s China Garrison Army at 1,771 men—though this latter force rose to 5,771 in June 1936.⁶¹ Thus, Japan had less than 170,000 men in China and Manchuria—not nearly enough for an all-out invasion—and the number did not rise until after July 1937. The entire imperial army at home and abroad

56. Ôe Shinobu, *Shôwa to rekishi 3: Tennô no guntai* (Tokyo: Shôgakkan, 1988), p. 367.

57. Fujiwara Akira, *Shôwa no rekishi 5: Nit-Chû zenmen sensô* (Tokyo: Shôgakkan, 1988), p. 38.

58. Usui, *Chûgoku o meguru kindai Nihon no gaikô* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 1983), pp. 5-22; casualty figures cited in Honda and Naganuma, *Tennô no guntai*, pp. 404-05.

59. Ôsugi Kazuo, *Nit-Chû jûgonen sensô shi* (Tokyo: Chûô kôronsha, 1996), pp. iv-v.

60. Hata Ikuhiko, “The Marco Polo Bridge Incident, 1937,” in James W. Morley, ed., *The China Quagmire*, pp. 243-62.

61. Fujiwara Akira, *Nihon gunjishi jô: Senzen hen* (Tokyo: Nihon hyôron, 1987), pp. 206, 235; Eguchi Jûgonen sensô shôshi: *Shinpan* (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1991), p. 108.

stood at 459,000 even as late as December 1937.⁶² So the two key steps in mobilization took place in 1938—when the army reached 1.24 million men, four-fifths of whom were in China, and in 1941—when army ranks swelled to 2.1 million.⁶³ It is true that Japanese casualties in China were light before 1937; only 3,928 men died from September 1931 to July 1936. But on the other hand, 41,688 Chinese died in the same period,⁶⁴ and on a yearly average this is more than the US lost in Vietnam.

However, if one admits that a “first China war” ended in May 1933 with Jiang Jieshi recognizing an independent Manzhoukuo, one might go on to reason that “everything would have been fine if we had stood pat in 1933.” Leftists abhor that logic because it admits only Japanese tactical errors in the 1930s, not Japanese moral turpitude. But more importantly, the right wing in Japan still uses that logic to legitimize past expansion in Manzhoukuo as non-Chinese territory.⁶⁵ After all, rightists continue to claim, Manchuria was never part of China, and the Tanggu Truce in effect recognized Manzhoukuo’s independence. Above all, for a Japanese such as Hata to argue that a full-scale war broke partly due to Chinese provocation violates a cardinal element of leftwing political correctness—that the Chinese were 100 percent victims.

Opium in the War

Opium provides one cogent reason to favor the leftwing Fifteen-Year War view. True, there is no “smoking gun” document to prove conclusively that Japan began or escalated the war expressly because of opium. Nevertheless, opium seems to be a thread that runs throughout the whole fifteen-year period. And, what is more, opium links six areas—east Hebei, north Shanxi, Rehe, Chahar, Suiyuan, and Pearl Harbor—that were crucial in Japanese decisions to extend hostilities at five key points in time: May 1933, June 1935, November 1935, July 1937, and December 1941.

As noted, imperial Japan never contented itself with the three provinces of “Manchuria” proper; it affixed Rehe, a fourth province in Inner Mongolia. The 1931 expansionist jingle, “Our lifeline runs through Manchuria-Mongolia,” no doubt cloaked a desire to gain opium revenues that first accrued to the Rehe warlord Tang Yulin, and later to Zhang Zuolin and his son Xueliang.⁶⁶ The May 1933 Tanggu Truce forced the GMD to cede Rehe and to create a Japanese-controlled DMZ in east Hebei that later came under a collaborator regime headed by Yin Rugeng. Mitsui bussan and Mitsubishi shôji smuggled Iranian opium into China under Foreign Ministry direction by exploiting provisions in that Truce; and Yin’s regime, set up at Tongzhou in November 1935, granted Japanese and Korean traffickers license to deal south of the Wall.

62. Ôe, *Tennô no guntai*, p. 366. However, Yamada Akira cites a figure of 950,000 in *Gunbi kakuchô no kindaishi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kôbunkan, 1997), p. 9.

63. Ibid., there is no discrepancy here between the two authors.

64. Eguchi, *Jûgonen sensô shôshi: Shinpan*, pp. 95-96.

65. By contrast, leftists place “Manchuria” in quotation marks and insist that they use “the Manchurian Incident” not by preference, but merely as a historical term. See Yamamuro, *Kimera* (Tokyo: Chûô kôronsha, 1993), pp. 17-18. This sensitivity—perhaps comparable to the way American historians explain their use of “nigger” when quoting from Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*—is to compensate for the disparaging statements that some Japanese leaders publicly flaunt about Chinese or Koreans.

66. See Kurahashi Masanao, “Chô Sakuryô seiken no ahen kaikin seisaku (1927),” *Aichi kenritsu daigaku bungakubu ronshû* 44 (1995), pp. 1-25.

The Umezu-He and Doihara-Qin Accords, both signed in June 1935, were logical extensions of the Tanggu Truce that facilitated expansion of the drug trade north and south of the Wall. The Umezu-He Accords expelled GMD organs from Hebei and in effect brought that whole province into the DMZ. The Doihara-Qin Accords extended the DMZ northwest past Kalgan, almost to Changbei in Chahar, and also removed pro-GMD leaders from this Inner Mongolian province. The Guandong Army suborned Mongol collaborators Li Shouxin and Wang De to invade Chahar in December 1935 and likewise persuaded Li Shouxin to invade Suiyuan in November 1936. Thus, Japan instigated aggression in Chahar and Suiyuan long before gunfire echoed at Marco Polo Bridge—whoever fired the first shot. Thus, we may perhaps infer that, having seized opium-producing areas in Rehe, imperial Japan also craved those in Chahar and Suiyuan—especially Suiyuan which was a rich poppy-growing area.

The scholarly consensus on the Sino-Japanese War depicts Marco Polo Bridge in July 1937 as a great watershed. But that view should be reconsidered in light of imperial Japanese opium operations. Hostilities near the Bridge, after all, were soon settled locally. Instead, developments at Shanghai, Kalgan, and Tongzhou deserve more attention; and opium figures as a catalyst in the last two cities. Kalgan in Inner Mongolia would become the capital of the Mengjiang “Federal Regime for Mongol Autonomy” which stretched into north Shanxi. From Kalgan, as Eguchi shows, Kô-Ain officials manufactured and exported narcotics to the rest of China and to Southeast Asia. Inner Mongolia was one of three areas where decisive Japanese escalations took place in the summer of 1937—the others being central China at Shanghai and north China near Tongzhou. Japan launched these offensives, as Hata argues, in response to heightened Chinese resistance. A key problem, then, is to explain why resistance intensified and why Japan tried to quash it with troops from home.

Certainly Chinese nationalism and anti-Japanese feeling had been building since 1931, but the July 1937 Tongzhou Incident provides important insights. Tongzhou, on the DMZ border near Beijing (then Beiping), was the seat of Yin Rugeng’s collaborator regime under which imperial Japanese opium operations flourished. But Chinese collaborator forces near Tongzhou revolted on July 29, 1937; and, much as in the 1928 Jinan Incident, Chinese rioters killed 223 imperial subjects living in Tongzhou, many of whom had been opium dealers. China Garrison Commander Kazuki Kiyoshi reported 212 imperial subjects killed at Tongzhou and noted that 108, or a bit over half, were Koreans.⁶⁷ Hence, we can surmise that the Chinese in Tongzhou and east Hebei hated Japanese and Korean drug dealers alike, and that trafficking by those imperial subjects played some role in hardening China’s will to resist—though, of course, this was but one factor.

Meanwhile, the media in Japan churned out sensational stories about helpless Japanese women and children being butchered and mutilated in Tongzhou. The jingoism fomented by this yellow journalism did not cause, but certainly abetted, Konoe cabinet plans to dispatch more divisions to China—the act that kicked off a full-scale war. This “Tongzhou Massacre” permitted the Army and government to justify stepping up the war in China in order to protect Japanese lives and property. Even government critics such as Masaki Hiroshi or the former Communist Party member Yamakawa Hitoshi waxed indignant over Tongzhou at that time. What is more, rightwing Japanese today still cite

67. Shinobu Seizaburô, “Tsûshû jiken,” *Seiji keizai shigaku* 297 (1991), p. 9.

this “massacre” at Tongzhou to legitimize Japan’s escalation of the war against China, and also to downplay or deny the Nanjing Atrocity.⁶⁸

Such insights provided by imperial Japanese opium operations help bridge the four-year gap between the Tanggu Truce of May 1933 and the start of full-scale war in mid-1937. Opium, thus, divulges some key continuities between the two seemingly disparate China wars. Mengjiang opium, however, may link the China and Pacific wars as well. In November 1941, the Tōjō government issued a final reply to US demands for a total troop withdraw from China. Japan tacitly consented to a limited, gradual pull-out from China proper. In fact, the Imperial Army high command had already planned such a pull-out on its own initiative.⁶⁹ But Japan was nevertheless resolved to attack Pearl Harbor if Cordell Hull rejected its last compromise proposal, one stipulation of which held Japan would “occupy Mengjiang for another twenty-five years or so” even if a ceasefire were to be reached with China.⁷⁰

Tentative Conclusions

First, as early as 1868 the Japanese government clearly understood the evils caused by drug use and strictly prohibited this at home. But it did not extend the same consideration to Qing or Republican China. Whatever had been true before the 1870s and 1880s, dealing in opium—to say nothing of narcotics—became legally and morally indefensible from the 1910s onward. Thus, individuals such as Aichi Kiichi, firms such as Mitsubishi and Mitsui, and the imperial Japanese government itself felt the need to cover up their involvement in those activities. This need sets them apart from Charles Gutzlaff, Jardine-Matheson representatives, or British government officials in the nineteenth century. These men did not feel a need to hide their deeds—although they were increasingly hard-pressed to defend these—and did not yet deal directly in narcotics.

Second, moral turpitude for imperial Japanese prewar and wartime drug trafficking lies overwhelmingly with ethnic Japanese. But Koreans, Taiwanese, and Chinese must share in it to a degree. To deny that fact distorts historical truth on the altar of leftwing political correctness—even if inspired by humanitarian impulses. Paradoxically, however, imperial Japanese opium operations lend support to one of the leftists’ most cherished scholarly beliefs—that of a single, continuous fifteen-year war of aggression waged mainly against China from which the Pacific War emerged tangentially.

Third, Japanese aggression against China from Meiji times took place largely within the ever-expanding artificial construct of “Manchuria-Mongolia,” and that aggression mainly took the form of economic encroachment backed by just enough armed force to provide adequate protection. Thus, almost all of the imperial army’s build-up in Manchuria before 1937—and most of it after 1937—was aimed at Soviet, not Chinese, forces.⁷¹ Opium was an integral part of Japanese economic encroachment. That

68. Masaki Hiroshi, *Chikaki yori I: Nit-Chū sensō boppatsu* (Tokyo: Shakai shisōsha, 1991), p. 125. Shinobu, “Tsūshū jiken,” pp. 1-5; Honda and Naganuma, *Tennō no guntai*, pp. 422-23.

69. Fujiwara, *Shōwa no rekishi 5: Nit-Chū zenmen sensō*, p. 361.

70. Gaimushō, ed., *Nihon gaikō nenpyō narabi ni shuyō monjo: 1840-1945* (Tokyo: Hara shobō, 1965), vol. 2, p. 557.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-77.

encroachment began with private individuals, was followed by the *zaibatsu*, and culminated with the imperial government itself through the Army, the Foreign Ministry, the Kô-Ain, and the Greater East Asia Ministry. As the Manchurian-Mongolian amoeba dilated, however, Japanese economic encroachment provoked greater Han nationalism and fiercer resistance. So, more and more armed force was needed to afford adequate protection—until Japan reached the point of no return by the summer of 1937. Thereafter, Sino-Japanese conflict could not be limited in scale or geographic scope.

Fourth, a desire to retain opium-producing areas in Mengjiang—the final add-on to Manchuria-Mongolia—was one factor that led Japanese military leaders to open a Pacific front in December 1941. That decision marked the unintended start of Japanese decolonization—even though “liberation” would prove to be a mixed blessing for Koreans both in Japan and in their divided peninsular homeland.

Fifth and finally, twentieth-century Japan harbored unachievable expansionist aspirations. Besides entering the race for colonies late, imperial Japan groaned under acute debilities compared with its Western imperial rivals: poverty, small size, scarce resources, meager industrial capacity, and low levels of military mobilization despite a relatively large population. For example, in 1917 Russia was casting 110,000 artillery shells a day whereas Japan’s hoped-for output was 100,000 shells a month. And, the industrial gap between Japan and the other Great Powers powers was even larger.⁷² Such debilities precluded colonial conquest and control by conventional means. So, emulating British leaders before them, Japanese leaders pinned their hopes on opium. Unlike Chinese regimes, the Japanese government had never depended on opium as a source of state revenue, primarily because there was no market for the drug at home. If Japan had lacked colonial holdings and occupied territories to finance—that is to say, if Japan had not aspired to be a great imperial power—it would never have felt constrained to conduct state-run drug operations.

72. Yamada, *Gunbi kakuchô no kindaishi*, p. 52.

**Figure 1 Japanese Opium Operations
Estimated Aggregate Figures**

Point of Origin	Dates	Amount (tons)
Manchuria	1933-45	10,800 (3410)
Mengjiang	1939-42	785 1
Persia (Mitsui & Co.)	1938-40	352
Persia (Mitsubishi Trading)	1938-40	352?
Korea	1935-44	293
Total in tons		12,582.1 (5192.1)
Total in kilograms		11,323,890 (4,672,890)
per capita average year consumption		1.25 kg
average number of addicts supplied/year		9,059,112 (3,738,312)

**Figure 2 Mengjiang Opium Exports
Volume in 1000 *taels* (=36 kg)**

Destination	1939	1940	1941	1942	1939-42
Internal	141.4	252.3	144.1	166.3	704.1
Shanghai	100	2005	3848	5027	10,980
Beijing	300	1205	1200	1300	4005
Tianjin	100	520	--	--	620
Jinan	100	--	--	--	100
Tangshan	100	--	--	--	100
Manchuria	--	--	--	2000	2000
Guandong	--	--	300	--	300
Elsewhere	27	90	--	58.4	175.4
Japan	--	--	--	841.6	841.6
Totals	868.4	4072.3	5492.1	9393.3	19,826.1

**Figure 3 Mengjiang Opium Exports
Percentages**

Destination	1939	1940	1941	1942	1939-42
Internal	16.3	6.2	2.6	1.8	3.6
Shanghai	11.5	49.2	70.1	53.5	55.4
Beijing	34.6	29.6	21.9	13.8	20.2
Tianjin	11.5	12.8	--	--	--
Jinan	11.5	--	--	--	--
Tangshan	11.5	--	--	--	--
Manchuria	--	--	--	21.3	--
Guandong	--	--	5.5	--	--
Elsewhere	3.1	2.2	--	0.6	0.5
Japan	--	--	--	9.0	4.2
Totals	100	100	100.1	100	100