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Children and the Founding of Manchukuo

The Young Girl Ambassadors as Promoters of Friendship

Koresawa Hiroaki

Translated and adapted by Emily B. Simpson

It took decades for the modern view of childhood to take root in Japan. The school system established in 1872 systematically conceived of children as the modern objects of education, but the populace did not internalize this view until around 1897 (Koresawa 2009)¹. From the early twentieth century through the 1920s, children as literary subjects, by contrast, served as the antithesis of modernization. Starting with Ogawa Mimei (1882–1961) and his notion of children “as the poetry, dream, and regressive fantasy of the adult writer,” a romantic view of children in which childhood is seen as a pure and unsullied existence appeared (Karatani 2004: 159; see also chapter 4), and children were almost excessively praised. Centered on the children’s magazine *Red Bird* (Akai Tori), published from 1918 onward, the children’s literature movement also created the concept that people who understood children (and childlike innocence) and adults whom children liked were themselves good people. Ultimately, both notions came to overlap with concepts such as peace and friendship in the 1920s and 1930s and were put to use in international relations.

After the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), a great number of “international friendship groups with the aim of maintaining worldwide peace and friendly relations with foreign countries at the popular level” were created in Japan (Matsamura 1996: 214). Only during the 1920s, however, did women and children enter the stage as the protagonists of international cultural exchange and foreign propaganda. In 1927, for example, there was a doll exchange between Japan and the United States (Koresawa 2010). Initiated by Sidney Gulick, a former missionary to Japan, through the Committee on World Friendship among Children, almost thirteen thousand blue-eyed dolls arrived in Japan in time for the Doll Festival

on March 3. The entrepreneur Eiichi Shibusawa then responded with fifty-eight dolls splendidly attired in kimono sent to museums and libraries across the United States.² In 1930, as an expression of gratitude for U.S. aid at the time of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, five young Japanese women were dispatched as “ambassadors returning thanks to America,” sponsored by news corporations of the day. In addition, there was the work of Japan’s Junior Red Cross, which touted international harmony and promoted the ideal of international understanding. After the Manchurian Incident of 1931, manufactured by the Japanese army as an excuse for taking over northeastern China and turning it into ostensibly independent state called Manchukuo, this organization changed its activities to showcasing Japan and providing foreign publicity (Iimori 2009). This incident caused a considerable change in the tenor of the newspapers and national consciousness while Japan plunged into the so-called Fifteen Years War (1931–45).

As the pillar of an image strategy aimed at purifying an adult society engaged in an international bloodbath, children (notably, preteen girls) and young, unmarried women began to be actively embraced as messengers of peace and appeared as protagonists in a continuously moving tale. Their principal stage was northeastern China, and their activities began with the planning of consolation visits by elementary school children to the Kwantung Army, the Japanese continental troops stationed there. In order to promote the establishment of Manchukuo, the state dispatched embassies of young girls from Manchukuo, plus Japanese schoolchildren and representatives with Manchukuo dolls to celebrate the first full year of the state’s existence. Through a so-called “child diplomacy” of children and young women, the state tried to advance mutual understanding between Japan and Manchuria. What follows is the first scholarly description of these child ambassadors and their activities between the Manchurian Incident that began on September 18, 1931, and the founding of Manchukuo on February 18, 1932 (Koresawa 2010).

In its initial response to the founding of Manchukuo, its recognition by Japan, and the report by the Lytton Commission appointed by the League of Nations that declared Japan the aggressor in Manchuria, Japan launched the Manchukuo Young Girls Embassy, a component of its external publicity regarding Manchukuo (Koresawa 2013). These girls were entrusted with an emotional message about the “harmony of peoples,” pairing specific images of children with the rhetoric of peace and friendship. This rhetoric, which featured “small citizens who will create the world of the next generation” with hands “clasped tightly” asking for “the path to peace not only in East Asia, but throughout the world,” was modeled on the 1927 Japan-U.S. doll exchange, which first gave rise to the idea of deliberately using children and young women to project images of Japan for both domestic and foreign consumption. This chapter aims to examine the process by which government officials and mass media came to use such tools and methods in an effort both to deliberately shape domestic public opinion on politics and war, and to expand newspaper circulation.

Let us examine the circumstances under which girls (together with young, unmarried women) were used to create a domestic Japanese image of the founding of the new nation Manchukuo. I explore this topic through newspaper accounts and the reception of two groups which came to Japan but, in line with the theme of this volume, I will focus on the Manchukuo Young Girls Embassy rather than the two young women ambassadors dispatched concurrently by the Manchukuo Concordia Society (hereafter, Concordia Society Women Ambassadors) in order to argue for the politico-emotional importance that both the state and the media ascribed to the role of the then-popular image of children as pure and innocent creatures.

THE MANCHURIAN INCIDENT AND THE MAJOR NEWSPAPERS

The growth of popular culture characterized the interwar period. Due to the full-blown development of the manufacturing industry following World War I, urbanization and population growth continued to expand, and the majority of the increased population was absorbed into manufacturing and service, the second- and third-tier industries of large cities. The attendance rate for compulsory education surpassed 99 percent, the size of the intellectual class drastically increased due to the expansion of secondary school facilities, and along with the spread of moveable type and a new print culture, journalism also expanded. Radio broadcasting began in 1925, and popular magazines sold hundreds of thousands of copies per month. The popular and mass-producing Kōdansha Publishing House's launch of *Boys' Club* (Shōnen kurabu) in 1914, *Girls' Club* (Shōjo kurabu) in 1923, and *Young Children's Club* (Yōnen kurabu) in 1924 helped popularize so-called "child and youth cultural property."

The growth of popular culture is also implicated in the modern wars waged by nation-states, which depend on popular support. Wildly enthusiastic citizens and their vocal support for war helped accomplish the Manchurian Incident, but the problem of how to shape public opinion—and who would shape it—remained. With mass production and mass consumption, the people's way of life became increasingly standardized while also becoming increasingly information-driven through the growth of mass media. A relatively small number of producers came to influence an overwhelming majority of consumers. Through coverage of the First World War, the great Kantō earthquake, and the Manchurian Incident, the five big newspapers—the *Osaka Daily Newspaper* (Osaka mainichi shinbun), hereafter *Osaka Daily*; the *Tokyo Daily Newspaper* (Tokyo hibi shinbun), hereafter *Tokyo Daily*; the *Osaka Asahi Newspaper* (Osaka asahi shinbun) hereafter *Osaka Asahi*; the *Yomiuri Newspaper* (Yomiuri shinbun); and the *Tokyo Asahi Newspaper* (Tokyo asahi shinbun), hereafter *Tokyo Asahi*—all rapidly expanded their circulation. Printing a combined total of around a million copies per day, they played a large role in shaping public opinion.

When the Kwangtung Army instigated the Manchurian Incident on September 18, 1931, it did not make the public aware of this fact. In Japan, the story was that China had “unlawfully and cruelly destroyed the South Manchurian Railway, the foundation of Japan’s lifeline,” thus twisting the legitimate defensive response of the Chinese forces to Japan’s attack into the fantasy of the Manchurian Incident. Furthermore, when the League of Nations’ board of directors adopted a resolution on October 24 recommending the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Manchuria by a November 16 deadline, the news media inflamed public opinion by suggesting that “the intentions of the victims were manipulated by the aggressors,” meaning that China had cleverly brought international opinion to its side. This misapprehension came to permeate domestic opinion, leading to “an eruption of wild sympathy and support for the army’s actions” (Eguchi 1975: 162).

The mass media built on and contributed to popular opinion. According to the Newspaper Commission of 1932, the *Osaka Asahi* sent “3,785 telegrams, 75 correspondents (not including permanent on-location staff), 20 liaison personnel, and 177 flights” to Manchuria and also filmed movies in 1,501 locations, held assemblies featuring reports from special correspondents in 77 locations, and published 130 extra editions for an audience of six hundred thousand people. At the same time, the *Osaka Asahi* and the *Tokyo Asahi* called for “letters of support from all elementary school students across the country” to “provide solace to the officers and soldiers of the occupation forces, and to boost their morale all the more” (*Tokyo Asahi*, October 28, 1931, morning ed.: 7; for more on how children were to provide solace to soldiers, see chapter 9).

While these attempts to shape public opinion were geared toward children, they also constituted one link in a campaign on the Manchurian Incident focusing on adults and aimed at expanding newspaper circulation. Popular opinion had already favorably received the image of children—the very young as well as older girls and boys who must be protected as innocents in order to shoulder the burdens of tomorrow—providing encouragement for the soldiers occupying Manchuria for Japan’s benefit. Arising from competition among mass media, one new effective strategy was the linking of children (notably preteen girls) to a war fought for peace and in defense of Japan’s interests (see Koresawa 2015). Thereafter, when Manchukuo next expected aid from its neighbor Japan and asked for cooperation, understanding, and recognition as a nation, two groups of girls and young, unmarried women entered the stage in the leading role of ambassadors.

THE TWO EMBASSIES AND THE MAJOR NEWSPAPERS

The Manchukuo Young Girls Embassy of June 17 to July 11, 1932 publicized the nation-founding spirit of Manchukuo to Japanese boys and girls. The embassy was sent to Japan in order to promote “Japanese-Manchurian friendship and harmony” and reinforce the idea that Manchukuo was a country that had rejected the

tyranny of Chinese nationality. It had become an independent, new country full of ideals, touting national concord, and asking for peace in East Asia and in the world. As if in concert with this ideal, the state recruited young Japanese, Korean, and Manchurian girls of twelve and older living in Manchuria—specifically in Mukden (now Shenyang), Changchun, and Andong—picking two each based on the recommendation of the Manchuria Railway School Affairs Division. In promoting peaceful exchange through the children who would one day bear the next generation, these young girl ambassadors mimicked the form of the earlier doll exchange.

Around the same time, from June 19 to July 7, 1932, as part of its activities on behalf of harmony between the many ethnic groups throughout Manchuria and in order to “publicize the recognition and progress of the new country and the founding spirit of Manchukuo,” the Manchurian Concordia Society sent fifteen ambassadors (six Japanese and eight Manchurians), two of whom were unmarried women around twenty years old, in three groups to Japan. Elsewhere I have written about the origin and goals of young female ambassadors (Koresawa 2013); here I would like to narrow my focus and discuss the Japanese news coverage of the young girl ambassadors.

The major newspapers extensively covered the daily movements of both the Young Girls Embassy, which visited Japan for twenty days, and the Concordia Society Embassy, which was in Japan for fifteen days. In addition to articles, often illustrated with inset photography, two papers published the message brought by the Young Girls Embassy: the *Tokyo Daily* (June 2, morning ed.: 11) and the *Osaka Asahi* (June 21, morning ed.: 11). Both the *Tokyo Asahi* and the *Osaka Asahi* held welcome receptions centered on children’s organizations, while the *Tokyo Daily* and *Osaka Asahi* primarily sponsored symposia and published articles on both groups of young female ambassadors. Yet the frequency of reporting on the Young Girls Embassy was greater, and the papers in Osaka more enthusiastic than those in Tokyo.

In Tokyo, government and newspapers worked together in promoting the embassies. Records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for June and July 1932 contain reports on the movements of both embassies and their activities, sent to the Home Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs from the local administrative chiefs of the various regions where the embassy groups stayed. Both embassies first went to Tokyo, paid ceremonial respects to the Imperial Palace, and visited both the Meiji Shrine, where the Meiji emperor is enshrined, and the Yasukuni Shrine, where the souls of the war dead are enshrined. Then the Young Girls Embassy visited various government ministries, including the Prime Minister’s Office, the Home Ministry, the Education Ministry, the Army and Navy Ministries, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, and the Railway Ministry, as well as the five major newspapers. It also attended a reception sponsored by the *Tokyo Asahi*, a symposium sponsored by the *Tokyo Daily*, and various other welcome receptions centered on children.

The Concordia Society Embassy similarly attended a welcome reception sponsored by the *Tokyo Asahi* and a symposium sponsored by the *Tokyo Daily*. Then the women in the group visited the wife of Kwantung Army commander Honjō Shigeru while the men visited government ministries. In this way, the men engaged with the practicalities of government, while the two women shouldered the role of poster-girls for mass communication. It is clear that the schedules of both embassies were founded on the close cooperation of the major newspapers and the administration of the Manchurian and Japanese governments.

Judging only by the number of items about these embassies in newspapers, children were the more likely subjects of articles than young, unmarried women. Moreover, the places where the Young Girls Embassy went, from observations at various elementary schools, interactions with educators, and trips to famous places to radio appearances, were out in public, and thus they were easier to cover. Yet, as is apparent from the amount of journalism on both embassies, this prolonged coverage, accompanied by sensationalist titles and fervent public enthusiasm, leaves the impression that it was also sustained by a craze of welcome throughout the nation following the Manchurian Incident.

For example, *People's Newspaper* (Kokumin shinbun) reported on the situation in the following manner. The people who gathered at Tokyo Station at night an order to greet the young girl ambassadors and their party were "in addition to the officials concerned, a crowd of three thousand average citizens, waving five-color Manchurian flags and Japanese flags." Furthermore:

A sudden, unexpected chorus of banzai! Into a throng so thick it was impossible to move, the six ambassadors looked out on this congested welcome from the rear of a second-class sleeper car, before they stepped onto the platform wearing charming smiles. In that instant, a whirlpool of excited people surrounded these adorable, rare guests, and Miss Ishida shouted, happily at first, "Please don't push the poor children!" as the cameraman's flashes rained down . . . today, with bouquets of flowers from the Japanese girls, a significant social interaction between Japanese and Manchurian girls occurred. Caught in the wave of a manic welcome, the adorable young girls were sent off with shouts of acclaim as they went through the exit and entered the Imperial Hotel." (*Citizen Newspaper*, June 24, 1932)

When asked about her impression of Tokyo during her stay, one young girl ambassador said "we were told that we would receive a big welcome, but we didn't expect it to be this wildly enthusiastic, almost like a storm. Yu [a young girl representing Korea] and the others were worn paper-thin" (*Tokyo Daily*, June 28, morning ed.: 8).

Why were both embassies sent to Japan at the same time? After the Manchurian Incident, military affairs and diplomacy as well as the real power behind domestic administration for territory in northeastern China occupied by the Japanese army lay in the hands of Japanese officials. On March 1, 1932, Manchukuo was established as a state, its independence achieved at the voluntary behest of those living in Manchuria, with the last Qing emperor, Puyi, as administrator. In the meantime, the

Chinese government appealed to the League of Nations that the Manchurian Incident constituted an invasion by the Japanese military. In April of that same year, the Lytton Commission entered Manchuria to investigate the situation on the ground. In order to make Japanese control over Manchuria a *fait accompli* before the Commission arrived, Manchukuo was born. The Lytton Commission officially announced its report in October; directly beforehand, on September 15, Japan gave a strong push to military and domestic public opinion by sealing the Japan-Manchuria Agreement, formally recognizing Manchukuo. The Young Girls Embassy and the Concordia Society Embassy were both sent from Manchuria between these events, at the end of June through the beginning of July, and served as an opportunity to build up the recognition of Manchukuo with the Japanese public.

The two embassies represented and received sponsorship from different sets of organizations then feuding over how to develop and administer Manchuria. The Concordia Society had a bigger role in the government of Manchuria than might appear at first glance. It spread the spirit of nation-formation and touted anticomunism, the anti-San Min Doctrine (the three principles of Sun Yat-sen), and pro-monarchy sentiments. Officially recognized by the Kwantung Army and the government of Manchukuo, it became an agency for distributing funds, allocating expenses, and dispensing military subsidiary aid. In contrast, the Young Girls Embassy bore a message from the Home Minister as an official embassy of Manchukuo, and they were supported by the Resource Management Bureau (soon to be abolished). The Southern Manchuria Railway and elements in the government of Manchukuo were also involved whereas the Manchurian Youth League sent the Concordia Society Embassy. As a result of the antagonism between the two groups during this period, the two embassies' schedules for visiting Japan were not coordinated and indeed overlapped.

Consequently, as far as we can tell from the records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both embassies were treated roughly equally in Japan. The same is true for their treatment by the Kwantung Army. According to the official diary kept by Honjō Shigeru, the army's commanding officer, the Concordia Society Embassy came on June 18, 1932 at 2:20 p.m. and the Young Girls Embassy at 2:30 p.m., both to give their farewell addresses (Honjō 2005). Once he realized that the two embassies were coming to Mukden on the same day, he staggered the times of their visits and provided each with encouragement. Although their parent organizations could not—or would not—coordinate the schedules for the two embassies' visits to Japan, the embassies essayed, in their individual ways, to achieve national unity, a goal which the Japanese government also honored.

THE YOUNG GIRL AMBASSADORS IN JAPAN

The Young Girls Ambassadors from Mukden (Shenyang), Changchun (Hsinking), and Andong (Dandong) consisted of two Japanese, two Koreans, and two Manchurians:

Tsuda Sumi, a sixth grader in the regular course at Mukden Kamo Elementary School; Izumi Miyuki, a sixth grader in the regular course at Changchun Nishi-Hiroba Elementary School; Kim Kunhi, a fifth grader in the regular course at Andong Normal School; Yu Fukujun, a fifth grader in the regular course at Mukden Normal School; Yang Yun, a first-year student at the Changchun Public School Higher Division, and Lei Jingshu, a first-year student at the Mukden Public School Higher Division. These girls were all twelve to thirteen years old. They were led by Ishida Toyoko, principal of the Dairen (Dalian) Manchurian Railways North Park Kindergarten.

The two girls recommended to represent Mukden were Tsuda Sumi, whose father worked at the Mukden branch of the Korean Bank, and Yu Fukujun, whose father had lived in Mukden for six years and was engaged in the business of buying and selling land. Along with Lei Jingshu, these three girls were all athletes with excellent grades and could be considered children who excelled in the samurai educational identity of “both the literary and military arts.” It is noteworthy that Lei’s father, a military man, enrolled her in Mukden Public School because he wanted her to receive a Japanese education (*Osaka Asahi*, June 15, morning ed.: 7). Lei’s mother was said to have graduated from Tokyo Higher Normal School for Women, now Ochanomizu Women’s University, so she must have been a teacher who had experienced studying abroad in Japan. Also, the father of Kim Kunhi from Andong was known “as a leader of the Koreans, willing to risk his life for his brethren, who made great efforts” on their behalf (Ibid.).

The *Tokyo Daily*, which published fewer articles on the assembly than did the other major newspapers, covered the assembly with headlines such as “Young Girl Ambassadors from Manchuria: With Childlike Innocence, without National Borders” (*Tokyo Daily*, May 28, morning ed.: 11); “The Cornerstone of Human Paradise: A Handshake of Childlike Innocence between Japan and Manchuria: “Little Angels” with a Mission to Bring about World Peace (*Tokyo Daily*, June 2, morning ed.: 11): and accounts of the initial decision to send the embassy, its arrival at Moji Bay (Fukuoka prefecture), the car ride up to Tokyo (*Tokyo Daily*, June 2, morning ed.: 8), and a detailed schedule of their time in Tokyo (*Tokyo Daily*, June 24, morning ed., p. 11). All of the major newspapers repeatedly reported the movements of the young girl ambassadors, revealing that the attention shown to them by the major newspapers was greater than that shown to the Concordia Society ambassadors. In particular, *Osaka Asahi* introduced the six girls in detail and with pictures on the seventh page of the morning edition on June 15, before the Young Girl Ambassadors came to Japan, “as a work offered to this newspaper by the Young Girl Ambassadors of Japanese-Manchurian Friendship, chosen by the bright ambassadors to convey their joy.”

“Childlike innocence transcends national boundaries! . . . six young girls depart from Dairen on the twentieth and come to Japan at last.” Before printing this, the *Osaka Asahi* had solicited compositions by the girls in which they highlighted the fluttering of their hearts at being chosen as ambassadors. These were published as

“Please Look at the Feelings of These Young Girls, Pure of Heart.” Consider, for instance, Manchurian Representative Yang Yun (Changshun Public School First Year): “It makes me very anxious that someone like me, who speaks no Japanese, has so easily earned this role. I’m especially nervous about speaking Japanese to everyone in Japan. (I’ve studied Japanese since the second year of elementary school, but in three years I haven’t used Japanese much, and most of my family doesn’t speak it either, so I have not become fluent). Almost every day, instructor Kawada asks me questions like ‘Why was Manchukuo created?’ and ‘How should Japan and Manchuria move forward?’”

Japanese representative Izumi Miyuki, a sixth grader at Changshun Nishi-Hiroba Elementary School, had this to say: “What should I talk about when I make friends in mainland Japan, in places like Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto? What does the mainland think about us Manchurians? They don’t imagine a scary Manchuria full of war and bandits, do they? This Manchukuo is born from the honest appeals of many people. And those of us who live within it are happy and get along well! If I can talk about this, I will succeed in my work [as an ambassador].”

Manchurian representative Yang Yun, the oldest daughter of a general store owner and the oldest ambassador at the age of fourteen, did not understand much Japanese, but says that her teachers talked about Manchukuo every day at school. Lei Jingshu, a first-year student at Mukden Public School Higher Division appeared keen on engaging in her mission: “I’d already learned that the scenery of Japan is extraordinarily beautiful, the transportation convenient, and men and women both work a lot; about Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto, and about the beauty of Mount Fuji and Nikko. But now, for the first time, I can go to the country I’ve been longing for; I’ve never been so happy.”

At the time of the Japanese-American Doll Exchange in 1927, the young girl selected for first prize at the welcome poetry competition sponsored by the *Osaka Asahi* was featured in similar headlines: “Miss Chou, Wide-Eyed as if in the Country of Her Dreams” and “Like a Young Girl Who Has Come to a Fairytale Land, Surprised and Full of Happiness.” By reporting her shock at Osaka’s illumination and the rushing back and forth of cars and trains that signified Japan’s modernity, the newspaper created the image of a bewildered young Korean girl (Koresawa 2010: 169–70). This was the same as in the case of Lei coming from Manchuria.

Yu Fukujun, who represented Korea, provided a different response. She said that after traveling for four weeks, she was “away from home for a long time. I wanted to see my mother, younger brother, and friends so badly I couldn’t stand it . . . I really wanted to go home, and in the evenings Ms. Kim and I cried together” (*Osaka Daily*, July 1, evening ed.: 2).

The young ambassadors departed from Changchun on June 18, and after paying homage to the Shinto shrine in Dairen, they attended a welcome reception at the South Manchurian Railway Club before setting out for Tokyo. They arrived in Moji Bay on June 22 and took the sea route to Kobe, where they transferred

to a train to go to the capital. The head official in each place they stopped sent detailed reports of their movements to the government. For example, although Nakayama Sanosuke, the prefectural governor of Fukuoka, surely already knew the daily schedule of the young girl ambassadors from having met with Morimoto and Saitō of the Resource Management Bureau, he reported the circumstances at Moji Bay in the following manner:³ “On the decks of the ship stood (in order of precedence) the mayor of Moji-Gotō City and his wife, Kubota, head of the School Affairs Division, the leading sixth-year student at Nishiki Elementary School, Senda Tsuchiko, and eleven others. In addition, nineteen representatives of the Kanmon Ladies Alliance visited the ship, carrying out the first exchange between Japanese and Manchurian girls. They set sail for Kobe without mishap” (34). As his account shows, from city mayors and down through those connected to the schools, the ambassadors received a big welcome wherever they went.

The welcome reception in Tokyo was even more clearly designed as a media event. The young girl ambassadors arrived at Tokyo Station at 8:25 p.m. on June 23, where they received a magnificent welcome. In order to cover the event, reporters from the *Tokyo Asahi* and *Tokyo Daily* had boarded the train at stations such as Kōzu and Namazu along the route. The *Tokyo Daily* featured a record of these midroute visits in the women’s column on June 24 (morning ed.: 8), and reported that as the group approached Tokyo Station, the girls changed into Manchurian and Korean traditional costumes at the instruction of their leader, Ishida Toyoko. Although Ishida herself wore a traditional Japanese outfit, the two Japanese girls wore Western clothing, blouses, and skirts, and held their caps in their hands, most likely in an effort to emphasize Japan’s modernity. Everything from the photographs taken at Tokyo Station and other official events to the ushering of news reporters through stations along the route was arranged with its media propaganda value in mind. Consider this article from the third page of the June 14 morning edition of the *Tokyo Asahi*, published beneath the editorial and accompanied by a photograph:

[As the reporter who met the young girl ambassadors at Kōzu entered the car,] the girls all charmingly called out together with delight and came to shake hands. While looking at him with friendly eyes, they conducted themselves with a brightness like the clear skies of Japan. When one thinks of how these dear young girls with their innocent, childlike hearts must have trembled at the oppression of the old army faction and the rampant bandits and local rebels, one can only feel fury . . . unable to bear forcing the great innocence of these young girls to remember the calamity of war again, the reporter firmly rejected talk of the Manchurian Incident. At Yokohama Station, an employee of this company’s Yokohama branch greeted them with the company flag in hand and shouted, “Banzai for the young ladies!” Then, all together the girls broke out singing the Manchukuo national anthem . . . a sight to make one overflow with tears. Their welcome at Tokyo Station was full of deep emotion from start to finish. Voices shouting “Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!” swirled up like a storm as a crowd of three thousand enveloped the ambassadors.

Images of innocent preteen girls helped adults avert their eyes from the truth of the invasion. Suggesting that children lived a pure and unsullied existence, disconnected from the schemes and crafty speculations of the adult world, the reporter quoted above conveniently abandoned the topic of the calamities of war. I wonder, however, whether the *Asahi* newspapers' reporters did not avert their eyes from that reality themselves, in that they continued to write articles in support of military actions. In so doing, they projected their irresponsible ideals onto the young girl ambassadors in the name of "peace," "innocence," and a "pure heart."

Given that these were elementary school students, the daily schedule for the young ambassadors in Tokyo was grueling, and this did not change in Osaka. As we know from the quantity of newspaper reports, the battle over news coverage unfolded even more fiercely there, where the major newspapers had their headquarters, than it had in Tokyo. For example, in order to convey that the girls of Osaka could not wait for the young girl ambassadors to arrive, the *Osaka Asahi* put together news features before they even came: "This Beautiful Childlike Innocence, the Adorable Ambassadors Entering Osaka Tomorrow, the Excitement of the Japanese Girls Who Come Near Them" (*Osaka Asahi*, June 25, morning ed.: 5).

The media frenzy increased as the girls neared Osaka. "Traveling across the long sea route from afar, visiting Japan from Manchuria, the first young girl ambassadors have finally taken their first step toward entering our Osaka on the 30th. On that day, sponsored by Osaka City, and on the 1st, sponsored by our headquarters, they will clasp hands with the young girls of Osaka." In addition, the major newspapers published several compositions by Japanese girls, filled with impatience to meet the ambassadors. In an essay titled "Older Sister," by a fourth grader at Ritsuhan'ai Elementary School in Osaka, the student wrote: "Ah, I think that Manchuria and Japan should always be friends and help each other. Also, I think it is important for us to get to know each other . . . whether looking at your pictures in the newspaper or reading your writing, you seem charming and kind . . . I feel exactly as if I've been waiting for an older sister to emerge like this from among my relations."

The selection of compositions included this poem, "Holding Hands," by a fourth grader at Aijitsu Elementary School in Osaka:

Friends from Manchukuo
 You have come; welcome!
 Please be our friends
 Let us join hands and play
 Good friends, side by side
 Matching step and holding hands
 Let us walk together happily
 Come soon, won't you, to Osaka?
 I am eagerly, eagerly waiting to meet you.

As far as we can tell from the overbooked schedule and news coverage, the young girl ambassadors' welcome in Osaka was far greater than they had expected. They had left Tokyo on the 9:25 p.m. overnight train and arrived in Osaka the next day. Still exhausted from their journey, they floated into the day's news coverage:

As the 8:56 a.m. train arrived at Osaka, Ms. Lei and Ms. Kim, shaken awake with the words "It's Osaka," sleepily rubbed their eyes and suddenly spoke with great joy: "Oh my, many friends in Osaka have kindly come to meet us!" When they stepped onto the platform holding beautiful bouquets, they were suddenly surrounded by greeting parties, starting with 150 female students of Nezaki Elementary School, and then the National Ladies Alliance, the National People's party, and employees of our headquarters. The young ambassadors were almost buried in the waving five-colored flags of Manchuria, and their faces looked as if they had had their feet trampled and were trying not to cry. Everything came to a standstill for a short while. (*Osaka Daily*, July 1, evening ed., p. 2)

On June 30, the Young Girls Embassy was supposed to attend a welcome reception with Osaka City schoolchildren at 3 p.m. then a symposium on the swift recognition of Manchukuo at 6 p.m. (overlapping with the Concordia Society Embassy). At the same time, the Manchukuo Special Envoy and Secretary-General of Communication—as well as Manchukuo's first ambassador representing its citizens and entrusted with promoting the recognition of Manchukuo—Ding Jianxiu, stopped in Osaka for one hour on his way to Tokyo.

When Ding and his staff arrived at Osaka Station at 8:48 p.m., the young girl ambassadors were there to greet him. Since the first day of the "welcome schedule for the Young Girls Embassy" in Osaka records only visits to newspaper companies, the military, and the government offices in the morning and a social meeting in the afternoon (38), this performance seems to have been prepared in a hurry. The *Osaka Asahi* prominently reported it on the center of the front page on July 1 (evening ed.) as "a beautiful spectacle at Osaka Station." The image of the young girl ambassadors exchanging words with Ding Jianxiu was of "a dramatic audience filled with emotion between an important person of the nation and charming young girls. . . . Again the great jubilations of excited people [shouting] 'Banzai!' echoed through Osaka Station. Then Ding Jianxiu said to the girls, 'Thank you, thank you for working so hard. We will also carry out our mission tirelessly so that we rival all of your efforts.' As he kindly stroked their faces, a scene dramatic beyond measure unfolded" (*Osaka Daily*, July 1, morning ed.: 11).

The July 2 evening edition of *Osaka Daily* reported the arrival of Ding Jianxiu's Manchukuo Special Envoy group at Tokyo Station on July 1 around 8 a.m. on the front page with photos. However, this event did not receive all that much treatment. Instead, on that day, the movements of the Lytton Commission in Manchuria took center stage. The next day, while Ding's meeting with Army Minister Araki Sadao was reported on the second page of the evening edition under the

society column, it was a far cry from the sensationalist treatment that the Young Girls Embassy received. Rather, Ding and his party's coming to Japan became a topical issue only because it overlapped with the embassy of young girls. To borrow a headline from *Osaka Asahi* (July 1, morning ed.: 1), the young girl ambassadors were "charming diplomats with whom adults cannot compare."

On July 1, over two thousand residents of Osaka gathered in spite of torrential rain for a national symposium on "welcoming the ambassadors from Manchukuo and on the swift recognition of Manchukuo," sponsored jointly by three organizations based in Osaka, namely the National People's Party, the Association for National Defense, and the National Women's Alliance. They held a welcome reception for both groups of ambassadors at the Osaka Central Public Meeting Hall (39) where the audience heard "a fervent speech by an adorable young girl ambassador's representative on the theme of 'Please Recognize Our Manchukuo Quickly'" (*Osaka Daily*, July 2, morning ed.: 11), greetings from a representative of the Concordia Society Embassy, and then the appearance on stage of five young girl ambassadors (one was sick and, thus absent). Speaking for all of them, Tsuda Sumi addressed the crowd: "Please recognize our Manchukuo as quickly as possible," while Ma Shijie, one of the Concordia Society female ambassadors, explained the current situation in Manchuria in flawless Japanese. She pleaded for the assistance and leadership of Japanese citizens, concluding with "Please love us as if we citizens of Manchukuo were your younger brothers and sisters."

To compete with *Osaka Daily*, which sponsored the symposium with both the Young Girls Embassy and the Concordia Society Embassy, advertised in the feature article quoted above, its rival *Osaka Asahi* sponsored a welcome reception, also advertised in an article. On July 1, the young girl ambassadors spent the morning visiting Sumiyoshi Shrine and the afternoon at a Children's Convention Welcoming the Young Girls Embassy sponsored by the Asahi Corporation. Of course, *Osaka Asahi* focused on this event rather than the citizens' symposium. After a preliminary announcement, "Tied to Children's Heaven: An Artless Spectacle of Friendship" (*Osaka Asahi*, July 2, evening ed.: 2), it reported on the great success of both meetings, which assembled roughly fifteen hundred people: "Everyone, we are now relatives who get along, suddenly united in childlike innocence through experiencing the deep emotion of General Muro's address," (*Osaka Morning*, July 2, morning ed.: 11). Along these lines, three hundred copies of a phonograph record entitled "Welcoming the Young Girls of Manchuria" were produced.

In the competition to stage events centered on the Young Girl Ambassadors' visit, the *Osaka Daily* was not about to lose the fight. It reported the movements of the girls practically every day, a total of twenty-five times, more than did *Osaka Asahi*. The newspaper companies promoted social gatherings centered on children, expecting that they would garner people's attention and expand circulation. In a later "Japan Children's Embassy," fifteen children were chosen from among the elementary students of every region in the whole country and sent to Manchukuo.

The *Osaka Daily* July 3 morning edition featured an article on the “Welcome Symposium for the Young Girls Embassy of Manchukuo” (7). At this symposium with Osaka elementary school student representatives, the two groups exchanged trifling pleasantries about Manchuria and about their lives at school. The paper published large photographs of all of the girls attending (the six from Manchuria and ten from Japan). At the beginning, in a conversation about their movements prior to arriving in Japan, Izumi Miyuki said, “On the 17th, we met Yu-san, Lei-san and Yang-san at Changchun, and that afternoon we went to pay our respects to Minister of State Affairs Ding and the Consulate. On the 18th we left Changchun for Mukden and arrived at Mukden at lunchtime.” To this, their leader Ishida promptly interjected, “We met the army commander at Mukden, didn’t we?” Izumi replied, “Oh, I forgot an important thing! Yes, yes, we met the army commander.” As this dialogue shows, even here the Kwantung Army constituted a weighty portion of the subject matter.

Following the meeting with Japanese elementary school students at Nara City Public Hall on July 3, the girls went on a field trip to the Takarazuka Revue. After the curtain fell at Takarazuka, the top actress in the Snow Troupe called the young girl ambassadors on stage before the audience, and a storm of clapping shook the venue. Then, “the young women of the troupe all took Manchukuo’s flag in hand and sang the national anthem of the newly established Manchukuo from the stage, and so unfolded an unexpected and dramatic scene” (*Osaka Daily*, July 4, morning ed.: 7). According to the report from Hyōgo Prefectural Governor Shirana Takesuke to Home Minister Yamamoto Tatsuo and Minister of Foreign Affairs Saitō Makoto, who was concurrently prime minister up to July 1932: “Those in the Takarazuka Revue at the time were the definition of welcoming. They introduced the young girl ambassadors from Manchuria in the audience and together with the Takarazuka school students, sang the founding anthem of Manchukuo. The group of young girl ambassadors, though sitting, joined them in song, and the scene left a deep impression.”

On July 4, the ambassadors went sightseeing at the mint, and at noon attended a luncheon party, to which they were invited by the Osaka Women’s Alliance. Then they visited city hall, the Asahi Newspaper Corporation and the Mainichi Newspaper Corporation. They headed to Kyoto the following day. The July 9 radio program *Children’s Hour* featured “Goodbye, Everyone: Farewell Party for the Manchukuo Young Girls Embassy.” The program included: “The Manchukuo Commemorative Song; Greetings from the Young Girl Ambassadors; reading aloud of a message from Prime Minister Zheng, translated; Manchurian Song (first in Manchurian, then in Japanese); Farewell Words; Parting Words; the founding anthem of Manchukuo; the Japanese national anthem” (*Osaka Asahi*, July 9, morning ed.: 14). Through the radio, this program appealed to all citizens. Then, “with distinguished service in the diplomacy of childlike innocence as a souvenir,” the young girl ambassadors moved from Kyoto to Kobe, paid their respects at Minatogawa

Shrine, an important shrine in prewar Japan that commemorates the death in battle of Kusunoki Masashige in 1336, and began their journey home.

In short, the government, the organs of mass communication, and educators throughout Japan gave the young girl ambassadors, who had come to express the nation-building spirit of Manchukuo, a huge welcome.

CONCLUSIONS

Girls and young, unmarried women first began to appear on the stage of international relations and foreign publicity in earnest in the late 1920s. In the five short months between the Manchurian Incident and the founding of Manchukuo, they started to be deliberately and assertively utilized. In other words, with the Manchurian Incident as a catalyst for the journalism battles of the major newspapers, delicate young girls as well as young women were mobilized in the name of peace and protection—the protection of national interests—as a subject that could easily earn the support of the public for the war.

In order to appeal to the Japanese public regarding the necessity of Japan's leadership of and support for Manchukuo in a visible manner, girls and young, unmarried women appeared as the protagonists of two embassies: the Manchukuo Young Girls Embassy and the Concordia Society Embassy. The younger children in particular had even more topical appeal and attracted more attention than the youthful and unmarried women. The enthusiasm directed towards these child ambassadors was enormous; along with sensational headlines, the persistent and prolonged coverage sustained the citizens' news craze.

Newspapers covering the Young Girls Embassy promoted an image of Manchurian and Korean girls surprised and bewildered by Japan's modernity. The Young Girls Embassy's trip to Japan also fulfilled the role of transmitting the image of Japan as modern nation-state, first to Japan and Manchukuo and later to the whole world. What's more, the image of young girls, under the aegis of "purity," "innocence," and "peace," masked the reality of the invasion. Having Manchukuo Special Envoy Ding Jianxiu, secretary of communications, meet the young girl ambassadors at Osaka Station also served to show the envoy to advantage, demonstrating the children's "charming diplomacy," impossible for adults (*Osaka Asahi*, July 1, morning ed.: 3).

At the same time, for the newspaper corporations holding events centered on children, this was an enterprise aimed at garnering societal attention and enlarging their circulation. Afterward, under the primary sponsorship of the *Osaka Daily* and *Tokyo Daily* newspaper corporations, the Japan Children's Embassy, comprised of elementary school students chosen from each region of the country to be sent to Manchuria, emerged in response to the Young Girls Embassy. It is significant that the overlapping Young Girls Embassy and the Concordia Society Embassy each in its own way created an image of foreign publicity for the founding

of Manchukuo that was centered on girls and young, unmarried women, no doubt confirming that preteen girls easily captured the people's interest and compassion.

The basis for this initiative was not only military might, but also contrasting lifestyles and societal systems; in every way, Japan had an overreaching consciousness of itself as an equal to the major powers of Europe and America. It is easy to see the correlation with the idea of Japan protecting the Manchurian people from the tyranny of Republican China and leading Manchukuo toward becoming a modern nation-state. What is significant is how successfully children were employed as a means to communicate this vision of Japan to the public. Their prominence in the news reports of the day provides evidence that the modern view of childhood had become fully popularized in the Japan of this time.

NOTES

1. For more on the transformation of the modern view of childhood in Japan, see Honda 2000, and Koresawa and Koresawa 2012. Translator's note: In English, see Jones 2001.
2. Translator's note: See Taylor 1985.
3. It is impossible to confirm the pronunciation of the characters in many of the Chinese, Japanese and Korean people's names mentioned here. The romanizations provided are based on the author's judgment.

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