



The Japanese Panopticon

How the Japanese intelligence services conquered Manchuria

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Abstract

Recent studies in post-war reconstruction neglect the significance of intelligence in statebuilding. Nevertheless, the intelligence network of the ruling party has significant impact on the success of statebuilding. Moreover, this paper shows the constraints of intelligence theory, since it is primarily based on western intelligence services. The Japanese demonstrated the possibilities of intelligence and, here, particularly of espionage. This paper proves this statement by researching the Japanese creation of the Manchurian state. The Japanese accomplished the build of a newly founded state – Manchukuo – by means of a complex and extensive network of spies. The intelligence network created a panopticon construction in which citizens were urged to self-discipline as punitive forces otherwise would and was thus used as a means to oppress and control the region. In short, this historical research demonstrates the Japanese implementation of the Foucauldian idea of ‘discipline society’ to build a state cunningly accomplished by espionage as its tool.

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1. Introduction

In recent years the study of statebuilding has been salient in the study of post-war reconstruction. Roland Paris and Timothy Sisk have devoted their book ‘The dilemmas of statebuilding’ to the show the importance of researching how legitimate governments can be reconstructed during peacebuilding.¹ Nonetheless, Paris and Sisk clearly state in the introduction how ‘poorly understood’ the process of statebuilding is.² Though this type of research is mostly empirical and based on recent conflicts, a historical perspective should not be overlooked. Researchers on the subject of statebuilding like Thomas Ertman have drawn inspiration from historical evidence. Ertman demonstrates how European states formed diverse state structures based on three factors, which led to the interstate competition and expansion. According to Ertman the organization of local government, the timing and continuation of geopolitical competition and a strong centralized power were crucial factors to European statebuilding.³ However as well as Paris and Sisk, and Ertman do not include the usage of intelligence in the theory of statebuilding.

As Ertman says, the way in which the European states developed, a factor of competition was included which later led to expansionism and empirebuilding.⁴ The usage of intelligence to gather information about the local environment of colonies was not uncommon. Based on these findings this paper focuses on two inadequacies within the research of statebuilding. The first is the negligence of intelligence in theories of statebuilding. Second, the emphasis is laid on western theories, as well in statebuilding as in intelligence theory. The first inadequacy can be demonstrated by Christopher Bayly who describes the importance of information and the help of the local community to gather information during the time of British empirebuilding in India. Yet, he recognizes that historians neglect intelligence during the forging of empire.⁵ Secondly, eastern theories and history are ignored which is explained below.

The aim of this paper is therefore to present a new approach to the theory of statebuilding based on the Japanese Empire. The concept of statebuilding is used in this context instead of empirebuilding because the Japanese Army successfully constructed the Manchurian state, later named Manchukuo. The Japanese objective was to convert the Manchurian region – located in the northeast of China – into a Japanese vassal state, however, with a centralized Manchurian

¹ Roland Paris en Timothy Sisk, ‘Introduction’, in: *The dilemmas of statebuilding. Confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations* (London and New York 2009) 1–15.

² Ibidem, 15.

³ Thomas Ertman, ‘Introduction’, in: *Birth of the Leviathan : Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, UK; New York 1997) 6.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, UK; New York; and Melbourne 1997) 3–4.

power system. Why the Japanese secret services are of value in statebuilding and intelligence research is best put in the words of Richard Deacon. He says: ‘Japan is unique in that she has a far broader, more imaginative conception of intelligence than any other power.’⁶ Thus, the Japanese secret services present the opportunity to think broader and more creatively about the concept of intelligence. Plus, it gives thereby a new perspective for intelligence theory and the role of intelligence in statebuilding. The main question to this paper is: How did Japan use espionage to infiltrate in Manchuria since the end of the Russo-Japanese War until 1939?

When the tensions between the colonial empires were being transferred to Europe, Japan on the other side of the world adopted the western empires’ ideology.⁷ The Russo-Japanese War was Japan’s most successful attempt at putting the ideology into practice.⁸ As a consequence Japan was put on the map as a competitor to be valued. It – after all – did defeat a superpower. Japan, however, had just started and was determined to become one of the world’s empires and spread their influence.⁹ Nevertheless, the Russo-Japanese War had its financial toll and Japan was drained from its resources.¹⁰

Not long before the war with Russia Japan had already fought a war with China as well. Winning the war from Russia gave Japan one foot in the door and was now able to invade Manchuria when the time was right. Since Manchuria was one of their first conquests, after which a series of other conquests follows in the setting of the Second World War, it makes the perfect case to figure out Japan’s trails and errors in constructing a vast intelligence network in order to fasten the creation of the Japanese Empire. Although more research has been done on Japanese intelligence during World War II, it is interesting to discover the beginning of the process – the moment Japan puts strategic and intelligence theory into action.¹¹

Coming back on the above mentioned inadequacy in intelligence theory, it is essential to locate this paper in the current intelligence debate. Peter Gill and Mark Phythian explain in the article ‘Developing intelligence theory’ why one of the remaining questions in intelligence studies is: What is intelligence? This reoccurring question has reclaimed its place since the fast technological developments, changing also the course of intelligence.¹² The recurring character of the debate shows that there is still a lot to discover about the different perceptions on

⁶ Richard Deacon, *Kempei Tai. A history of the Japanese secret service* (New York and Toronto 1983) 4.

⁷ William G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford, United Kingdom 1991) 27–40.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 6–9.

⁹ Frank Dhont, ‘Aspiring modernity. Japan’s role in World War I’, in: Jaroslaw Suchoples and Stephanie James ed., *Revisiting World War I. Interpretations and perspectives of the Great Conflict*. (Frankfurt 2016) 63–84.

¹⁰ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945*, 84.

¹¹ Ken Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II* (Oxford and New York 2009).

¹² Peter Gill and Mark Phythian, ‘Developing intelligence theory’, *Intelligence and National Security* 33 (2018) 467–471.

intelligence. In addition, Gill and Phythian point out the significance of process in the formation of an intelligence theory.¹³ They state:

Another reason for concentrating on process is the fact that many state and non-state organisations that are not characterised as ‘intelligence agencies’ actually conduct an intelligence process in order to further organizational objectives.¹⁴

Though this paper does not focus on the establishment of an intelligence theory, analyzing the process answers questions such as: what do the Japanese understand as ‘intelligence’; who are the participating actors in the process; and what is aimed by using espionage? The latter questions reflect on the objective in view. Espionage was used to avoid war and minimize the costs and yet obtain legitimate power.

Philip Davies describes the differences in interpreting the definition and function of intelligence between the US and the UK. The US understands intelligence as the finished product of gathered information. It has been filtered and analyzed and is ready to be used by decision makers. Contradictorily, the UK’s view on intelligence is the ‘raw’ information, unaltered, but still a specific type of information.¹⁵ As this debate proceeds the written material about the question does not seem to provide a satisfactory answer or even new information. It is therefore rather odd to notice the limitations to the studies of intelligence.

Noticeable in intelligence literature is the vast array of articles and books on “Western” intelligence services, methods and history. Loch Johnson’s intelligence manual called ‘Essentials of strategic intelligence’ offers a list of current academic debate topics on intelligence and the main researchers and literature.¹⁶ However, when browsing through the list, even the general works on intelligence history and theory are about US and British intelligence, mostly in the setting of the Cold War.¹⁷ In this sense, historical research about intelligence in general is limited in time and region. The literature on the history of intelligence therefore gives a misrepresentation. In addition, the question needs to be asked whether the idea of intelligence itself is not limited by a western definition of the subject.

The first chapter of the book ‘On intelligence’ written by John Hughes-Wilson gives a general overview of intelligence history in which the views of the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu have been incorporated. Here, Sun Tsu regards intelligence as ‘foreknowledge’, information to

¹³ Ibidem, 469.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Philip H. J. Davies, ‘Ideas of Intelligence’, *Harvard International Review* 24, nr. 3 (Fall 2002) 62-66.

¹⁶ Loch K. Johnson, *Essentials of strategic intelligence* (Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford 2015) 3–6.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 16–17; 56.

be known in peace time and in times of war.¹⁸ In spite of the demonstrated non-western views in the brief historical overview, Wilson also neglects these views in the following chapters and mentions merely western intelligence agencies and ideology. Over the past few years, intelligence research on non-western intelligence has increased. This paper focuses in that sense on Japanese intelligence and the strategic use of military troops for covert operations in Manchuria.

In order to accomplish this research, this paper is based upon primary and secondary sources. Two main primary sources are used in the analysis. First, there is the diary of Shigeru Honjō, the chief aide-de-camp of the emperor from 1933 – 1936, and former officer of the Kwantung Army. Complementary to the diary is used the memoirs of Prince Saionji and Baron Kumaō Harada. These primary sources are complemented by secondary literature as there is a lack of (translated) primary sources.

The outline of this paper is constructed as follows. The first chapter is dedicated to the context of the Russo-Japanese War and the internal struggles with an emphasis on the Japanese movements during that period in time. Apart from the factual reconstruction, the emphasis is laid on intelligence services and covert action strategies as a means to create the necessary knowledge for the analysis. The second chapter goes deeper into detail on the role of espionage and the use of intelligence methods. The concluding chapter reveals the cunning use of espionage as a means to control and surveil the Manchurian region. As a result, the region was claimed and renamed Manchukuo to stress the creation of a new independent state. Espionage made the construction possible as it served as a punitive method. In other words, the Japanese had created a ‘disciplinary society’ – as termed by Foucault – based on the idea of the Panopticon prison to secure Japanese interests and national security by means of the creation of a state.

¹⁸ John Hughes-Wilson, *On intelligence: The History of Espionage and the Secret World* (London, United Kingdom 2016) 6.

2. *The coup no one knew about*

Espionage was a part of Japanese society long before the modernization of the military apparatus founded an intelligence branch. The time of wars between Japanese clans and the following unification of the country by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the 16th century was partly successful due to the effective employment of spies.¹⁹ A spy was perceived the embodiment of honor and patriotism making it an honorable profession, one also the samurai warriors did not eschewed to gather information on their enemies.²⁰ The spy trade transferred after the samurai disbandment into the secret societies.

To discover the scope of espionage in the modern Japanese era – and how it was transmitted to Manchuria – is discussed in this chapter. The former samurai played a great part in the construction of the spy-network. The influence they once possessed as a high class in society had vanished with the disbandment of the class, but they were determined to have it back. Over the years the samurai pulled back power into their hands.²¹ It was a coup no knew had happened, but it determined Japan's course to militarism.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, Japan was still suffering from the aftermath of the forced opening of the country, ending the more than two centuries of isolation, and the following coerced modernization. Indeed, the modernization drastically changed Japanese society, however, as a consequence created a power struggle between the elites. The samurai class had a strong 'sense of self-determination', now omitted from society constituted a struggle to reclaim power.²²

During the feudal system, the military apparatus headed by samurai was responsible for maintaining order and security within the domain of their landlord. To accomplish this task and keep control over the domain, the samurai employed espionage. Apart from the samurai warriors, a type of samurai magistrates made use of secret police and spies to counter criminality and corruption, hence, acting as prosecutors and judges.²³ When the feudal system was disbanded, including the samurai class, the reaction of the former samurai was the foundation of secret societies to undermine the Establishment, even resorting to terrorist

¹⁹ Deacon, *Kempei Tai*, 11–19.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 34–35; 60.

²¹ Sven Saaler, 'The Kokuryukai (Black Dragon Society) and the rise of nationalism, pan-asianism, and militarism in Japan, 1901-1925', *International Journal of Asian Studies* 11 (2014) 125–160; Deacon, *Kempei Tai*, 44; Hillis Lory, *Japan's military masters. The army in Japanese life* (Westport, Connecticut 1943) 181.

²² Eiko Ikegami, *The taming of the Samuria. Honorific individualism and the making of modern Japan* (Cambridge, United States; and London, United Kingdom 1995) 4.

²³ Raymond Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai: Japan's dreaded military police* (Stroud 1998) 12–13.

actions.²⁴ Nevertheless, secret societies were deployed to gather intelligence in preparation for the Russo-Japanese War.²⁵ The infiltration of China by spies and secret societies was even traced back to the 1880's.²⁶

Over the years, as modernization of the Japanese state was inevitable society found its course. The progressive minds of the Japanese nation found little support as opposed to the conservative factions and secret societies obstructed them as much as possible.²⁷ Although the western society had created a tendency towards curiosity, this was soon accompanied by fear and resentment.²⁸ Nevertheless, Japan did not have much choice when it came to modernizing, as it did not want to end up torn apart like China.²⁹ As the effort became more successful, Japan was the first state in Asia to free itself from the “unequal treaties” with Western states. Making itself independent and equal to European powers, Japan moved forward by mimicking the imperialistic view of the Western powers.³⁰

It was the Russo-Japanese War that changed the balance of powers. As both the Russian and Japanese Empire came to a confrontation in Manchuria in 1904, Japan's victory changed the status of Japan. Already in 1905 Japan had defeated the Russian superpower and became an actor in world politics to be taken into account.³¹ From then on, Japan participated in the struggle between the European powers in search for outside markets and colonial territory when it decided to go after Manchuria.³² Korea and Manchuria provided Japan with opportunities to transport resource, of which Japan was scarce, and a transportation system itself – the South Manchurian Railway. The latter not only made the transportation of resources easier, but also installed Japanese power on the mainland.³³ As Frederik Dickinson said: ‘From the end of the Sino-Japanese War until the eve of the First World War, in other words, East Asia became an

²⁴ Frank Jacob, ‘Secret Societies in Japan and Preparation for the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)’, *Diacronie* 28 (2016) 3–4; Lory, *Japan's military masters*, 165.

²⁵ Saaler, ‘The Kokuryukai (Black Dragon Society) and the rise of nationalism, pan-asianism, and militarism in Japan, 1901-1925’, 145–146; Deacon, *Kempei Tai.*, 52–66; Jacob, ‘Secret societies in Japan’.

²⁶ Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie, ed., *The Japanese informal empire in China, 1895-1937* (Princeton 1989) 330–428; Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai*, 22.

²⁷ Saaler, ‘The Kokuryukai (Black Dragon Society) and the rise of nationalism, pan-asianism, and militarism in Japan, 1901-1925’, 130.

²⁸ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945*, 28.

²⁹ J.N. Westwood, *Russia against Japan, 1904-05. A new look at the Russo-Japanese War* (London 1986) 2.

³⁰ J.D. Thijs, *De invloed van de opkomst van Japan en van de Japanse overwinning op Rusland in Azië* (Kampen 1965) 5–7; ‘Japan's Black Dragon Society: Harvest time in Nippon’, *The China Weekly Review* (1923-1950) (Shanghai, China 22 oktober 1938) 256–257; Westwood, *Russia against Japan, 1904-05*, 1–23.

³¹Frederick R. Dickinson, ‘The Japanese Empire’, in: Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela ed., *Empires at war. 1911-1923* (Oxford 2014) 197-213.

³² Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945*, 27–40.

³³ Y. Tak Matsusaka, ‘Managing occupied Manchuria, 1931-1934’, in: Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie ed., *The Japanese wartime empire, 1931-1945* (Princeton 1996); James L. MacClain, *Japan: a modern history* (1st edition; New York 2002) 204–206.

area of opportunity for old and new empires alike.³⁴ The opportunities were in Japan's favor, as for example the First World War played into Japan's cards as Britain needed Japanese support in Asia against Germany and Russia.³⁵

Kazuo Ogura appointed Japan's turn towards militarism and conservatism to the ideology of 'the divine land' – the belief that Japan is a sacred land worth dying for. China and Korea discarded Japan's idea of shared (Confucian) values and Japanese supremacy, thus making Japanese invasion justifiable.³⁶ For example, Ryohei Uchida, the former of the Black Dragon Society sensed a great superiority over China which he expressed through the society's manifestos: '[...] to inform the Chinese (Shinajin 支那人) about the state of the [Japanese] Empire in the larger framework of East Asia and about the international situation', wherein Chinese intellectual inferiority was assumed in relation to international affairs.³⁷

Later, preceding and during the Second World War, this ideology was put to practice in the 'East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere' – the idea behind the spread of Japanese hegemony.³⁸ Hence, Japan was looking for an identity in the imperialist world order similar to the Western justification of colonization: the white man's burden.³⁹ Besides, the construction of an ideology to justify usurpation indicated hegemony as an objective, in which Japan would have the monopoly on power.

The opportunities laid on the continent, where Japan ambitioned to take over not only Manchuria, but also Korea and, eventually, China. Envisioning the Japanese supremacy over Asian states and the Japanese successful and thriving industrial evolution, expanding to Korea and Manchuria seemed to give the desired and best opportunities.⁴⁰

³⁴ Dickinson, 'The Japanese Empire', 198.

³⁵ Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe went to war in 1914* (London 2012) 137–140; Dickinson, 'The Japanese Empire', 205.

³⁶ Kazuo Ogura, *Japan's Asian diplomacy: a legacy of two millennia*. LTCB international library selection ; no. 36 (1st English edition; Tokyo 2015) 1-8.

³⁷ Ryohei Uchida as cited in Saaler, 'The Kokuryukai (Black Dragon Society) and the rise of nationalism, pan-asianism, and militarism in Japan, 1901-1925', 137-138.

³⁸ Ogura, *Japan's Asian diplomacy*, 1-18.

³⁹ James L. McClain, *Japan. A modern history*, (New York and London, 2002) 204-206.

William G. Beasley, *The Rise of modern Japan. Political, economic and social change since 1850* (London 1995) 176.

⁴⁰ Westwood, *Russia against Japan, 1904-05*, 2; Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945*, 29; Dickinson, 'The Japanese Empire', 173; 201.

Because at present, in order for these countries to be able to genuinely share with Japan the logic and ideology of modernism and economic growth, they must objectively reevaluate the role that Japan played in the modernization of China and Korea.⁴¹

Japan's success proved them of their superiority and entitlement to share modernity with other Asian countries, primarily China and Korea, to justify expansionism. Strikingly, Japan's motives were not merely self-interest. National defense was one of the primary motives to mimic the imperialists' way, also the reason for focusing on China.⁴²

The Japanese society remained internally conflicted as the progressive minds battled the conservative, rightist groups. The latter, however, was formed by former samurai as they paved their way in back to power. The Imperial Army outsourced intelligence operations to the secret societies, providing them with power and influence that reached into the Army itself. The next chapter goes deeper into the extent of the secret societies and how they shaped political/military policy.

3. The Japanese Panopticon

*Spies are a key element in warfare. On them depends an army's every move.*⁴³

It can be argued that espionage was not a herald for war but the preventer as it is to create 'self-disciplinary' citizens. War was no longer necessary. As cited before, Dickinson said the opportunity for empires to rise and fall was the time between the Sino-Japanese War and the First World War.⁴⁴ Japan exploited the advantages risen from the disputes between the overstretched and exhausted imperialists to take over Chinese and Korean territories. The next task, however, was to keep the territory, install a form of governance and thus implied a skilled form of effective statebuilding. This chapter argues how Japan successfully constructed the Manchurian state by means of a vast spy-network to control and suppress the region. The success of their preparatory work was demonstrated in the Manchurian or Mukden Incident.

The Mukden Incident of 1931 and the following establishment of military rule in Manchuria took an estimated period of six months' time.⁴⁵ Needless to say by which efficiency the army installed their rule. Moreover, the violent reaction from the Japanese to the Mukden

⁴¹ Kazuo Ogura, *Japan's Asian diplomacy: a legacy of two millennia*. LTCB international library selection ; no. 36 (1st English edition; Tokyo 2015) 13.

⁴² Deacon, *Kempei Tai*, 129.

⁴³ Sun-Tsu, *The art of war*. Pinguin Classics (London 2002) 114.

⁴⁴ Dickinson, 'The Japanese Empire', 198–201.

⁴⁵ Matsusaka, 'Managing occupied Manchuria', 103.

Incident was framed as an action of defense. The army was defending the Japanese interests, the Southern Manchurian Railway, and the Japanese people settled in the Manchurian region.⁴⁶ The incident had drastic consequences for the status of Manchuria, the region was placed under Japanese authority and control was henceforth even more tightened. Furthermore, in 1932 the region was renamed Manchukuo to claim and legitimate state power.⁴⁷ The eyes of the Japanese oppressor were everywhere, as described in George Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' under the motto 'Big Brother is watching you'.⁴⁸

Both the Honjō diary and the Saionji-Harada diary reflect the complexity and magnitude of the Japanese spy web as the higher positions of command are associated with rightist groups and ideologies. An extract of the Saionji-Harada diary describes the developments after the Prime Minister Hamaguchi had been shot at the Tokyo train station by a member of a rightist group called Aikokusha (Patriot's society).⁴⁹ Harada explained to the Prince the following relations to the assailant:

I pointed out to the Prince that Hamaguchi's assailant was a member of the Aikokusha, a right-wing organization, and that he was tied up with Iwata Ainosuke, the henchman of Ogawa the former Railway Minister.⁵⁰

Although there is no record of Ogawa's membership to a society, he did have a relationship with several rightist groups.⁵¹ Ogawa seems to have been solely a politician. Nevertheless, he used the secret societies to his advantage, though being against them often resulted in a form of extortion or assassination – as was the attack on Prime Minister Hamaguchi.⁵²

Another example can be derived from the Honjō diary. Emperor Hirohito addressed War Minister Itagaki about the behavior of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria. He called it 'outrageous' and said how the army ignored commands.⁵³ The emperor did, however, not know that it was Itagaki himself who was one of the instigators of the Manchurian Incident in the first place.⁵⁴ Although Itagaki was not linked directly to a secret society, based on the actions the War Minister had committed he can be associated to the right oriented groups. It was significant

⁴⁶ Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai*, 57; 65.

⁴⁷ Matsusaka, 'Managing occupied Manchuria', 112–120.

⁴⁸ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four. The annotated edition* (London and New York 2013) 3-4.

⁴⁹ Prince Saionji and Baron Harada Kumao, *Fragile Victory* (Detroit 1968) 275.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 275.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² Saaler, 'The Kokuryukai (Black Dragon Society) and the rise of nationalism, pan-asianism, and militarism in Japan, 1901-1925', 128.

⁵³ Emperor Hirohito as cited in Shigeru Honjo, *Emperor Hirohito and his chief aide-de-camp. The Honjo diary, 1933-36* (Tokyo 1982) 60.

⁵⁴ Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai*, 65.

to know who supported what and which ideas. Nevertheless, the members of secret society did not always use covert action to acquire knowledge, as illustrated by the following incident.

In 1930 a Naval Conference took place in Tokyo in the context of the London conference on disarmament. Though the conference can be seen in the context international pre-emptive measure to avoid another war, the internal political – or rather military – scene in Japan intensified. During that time a powerful American by the name of William R. Castle was sent to the US Embassy in Tokyo to fulfill the function of Ambassador.⁵⁵ A new westerner had arrived in Japan, one not belonging to the Japanese people or – for that matter – to the ‘race’ of the divine land.

Hence, a person the Japanese did not know anything about and thus had no control over. Consequentially, the following incident happened as described in the dairy of Prince Saionji: ‘After Ambassador Castle had assumed his new post, some followers of Ioki, a rōnin of the same stripe as Uchida Ryohei, head of the Kokuryūkai, pushed their way in to see and question the Ambassador.’⁵⁶ The kokuryūkai or Black Dragon Society had already been circumscribed as a rightist movement, thus defining Ioki’s entourage as rightist as well – all of which seemed to have the same tendency to spy. Moreover, the term rōnin refers to the samurai, more in control of actual government affairs as stated above. Ronin are samurai without a leader, a landlord. Even though they might not have been actual samurai they were labelled as such.

In addition, the most significant element in this citation is the attempt of Ioki’s followers to require not only knowledge, but also control over the person. Castle henceforth knew he was being watched. This type of aggression, or intimidation, is used as surveillance technique. One might call it *overt* espionage. Espionage to serve the maintenance of control over the Japanese state. It can be concluded that rightist secret societies, such as the Black Dragon Society, and people like Ioki with a group of followers converted to the usage of espionage as a means of control, a way to surveille. The question is, however, how far surveillance went and what was exactly meant by it.

As stated in the previous chapter, the Imperial Army outsourced intelligence work to secret societies. The army contained the largest group of soldiers present in Northeastern China. The Japanese army stationed in Manchuria, officially renamed Kwantung Army in 1919 as the forces stayed in the area to counter the Russian threat, consisted of man from different backgrounds found in Japan’s society.⁵⁷ The military did, nonetheless, have an intelligence

⁵⁵ Prince Saionji and Baron Harada Kumao, *Fragile Victory*, 90-91.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*. 91.

⁵⁷ Lory, *Japan’s military masters*, 15–31; Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai*, 32–33.

branch, the Central Special Intelligence Department (CSID).⁵⁸ Very little, however, is known about their actions. More information can be found on a more dreaded affiliation of the army, the kempeitai or military police which recruited spies from the Imperial Army.⁵⁹ Not every member of the army was granted a position in the secret service, though many officers of the Kwantung Army were member of a secret society. The reason can, however, be found in the ideology and support for the rightist policy.

The kempeitai was closely associated to intelligence practices as it was responsible for security and counterintelligence.⁶⁰ The Encyclopedia of Intelligence and Counterintelligence even defined the kempeitai as Japan's secret service – although some other sources call it the military police.⁶¹ The kempeitai was highly active in Japan's overseas territories as Manchuria and China. Officers and privates were recruited from all branches within the army and given a specialized training. Skills for espionage like disguise, code breaking, burglary and language were learned, but also training in explosives and horsemanship.⁶² Especially skills of understanding language can be associated with control and surveillance, since agents were often used as interpreters in high profile meetings.

The control the Japanese Army is trying to establish in the Manchurian area and in Northern China is based upon the idea of shaping the national security environment of Japan in Manchuria. When in 1930 heated discussion within the government took place on the content of the disarmament conference with the Imperialist states, the rightist military factions seized the opportunity to discuss the definition of 'supreme command', a position the emperor refused to have though recorded in the constitution.⁶³ Moreover, 'the power to determine national defense' was seen in opposition to the power of supreme command in order to grant the army more self-determination.⁶⁴

An interview with Governor-General Saito in which he expresses that the agreement reached during the disarmament conference does not stand in the way of 'the prerogative of supreme command'.⁶⁵ As he went on he spoke of national defense, suggesting that even the governance of Manchuria is considered a matter of national defense.⁶⁶ The military presence in

⁵⁸ Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai*.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ Ibidem. 14-17.

⁶¹ Rodney Carlisle, *Encyclopedia of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* (Armonk, United States 2004). 339-341.

⁶² Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai*. 32-33.

⁶³ Prince Saionji and Baron Harada Kumao, *Fragile Victory*, 121.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, 120-126.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, 125.

⁶⁶ Prince Saionji and Baron Harada Kumao, *Fragile Victory*.

Manchuria is thus framed as a matter of national security. The high degree of espionage is hence an extension of this view on security. Furthermore, the usage of espionage is a reflection of the Japanese sense of insecurity in a fragile international environment in which imperialism has driven the European powers in 1914 to war. Preceding the First World War, the interests of the Japanese state were threatened by the expansionist inclinations of European powers in China and for Japan especially Russia in Northern China.

After the Great War Japan kept the course to militarization and expanded the spy network.⁶⁷ The previous chapter mentioned how Japan experienced fear because of the European imperialist tendencies on which Japan based their own course of action.⁶⁸ The answer to Japan was found in militarization connecting militarization and security.⁶⁹

In 1924, the ‘Prospectus for the Expansion of the Kokuryūkai’ explicitly stated that ‘we anticipate receiving the imperial military mandate, strengthening our martial spirit, reaping the fruit of universal conscription, and fulfilling the duty of national defense’⁷⁰

Espionage was a given in military training as it had been part of the samurai way of life.⁷¹ Lieutenant-General Satō Kōjirō – a retired Army officer – wrote in the Black Dragon Society’s journal how conscription benefited society in a more general sense than purely for military strength: ‘The conscription system benefited the country in two ways: first, by making good citizens (ryomin 良民) realize their responsibilities for national defense. [...]’.⁷² Satō was an advocate of military schooling in the youth’s education. New research in security studies have called this phenomenon ‘the networked nature of war’.⁷³

Simply put, the argument goes that because the ‘enemies of the state’ are now operating through shadowy networks and cells, the state has to resort to similar tactics.⁷⁴

Though recent academic debate focused on warfare waged from a distance – remote warfare – targeted killings are preferred to create a secure environment. These new type of

⁶⁷ Deacon, *Kempei Tai.*, 29–51.

⁶⁸ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945*, 28.

⁶⁹ Saaler, ‘The Kokuryūkai (Black Dragon Society) and the rise of nationalism, pan-asianism, and militarism in Japan, 1901-1925’, 148–154.

⁷⁰ Uchida as cited in Saaler, ‘The Kokuryūkai (Black Dragon Society) and the rise of nationalism, pan-asianism, and militarism in Japan, 1901-1925’, 153.

⁷¹ Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai*; Deacon, *Kempei Tai.*; Lory, *Japan’s military masters*, 86–106.

⁷² Saaler, ‘The Kokuryūkai (Black Dragon Society) and the rise of nationalism, pan-asianism, and militarism in Japan, 1901-1925’, 149.

⁷³ Jolle Demmers and Lauren Gould, ‘An assemblage approach to liquid warfare: AFRICOM and the ‘hunt’ for Joseph Kony’, *Security Dialogue* 49 (2018) 365.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem.*

warfare has been salient in current times as war fatigue increased.⁷⁵ Notwithstanding the fact that the Japanese context here discussed does not possess the technological advancements, a similarity can be distinguished. The solution probed to counter war fatigue and still construct a secure environment by exerting control is produced by moving from a ‘geocentric concept of war’ into a ‘target-centered one’.⁷⁶

[...] the USA and its coalition partners (but also major powers such as Russia and Saudi Arabia) have combined a resort to ‘precision’ airstrikes with a shift to smaller, *clandestine, more focused interventions*.⁷⁷ [Emphasis added]

Although Japan was not officially in war with Manchuria, the local resistance and anti-Japanese sentiment can have provoked measures of suppression. Yet, China had become ‘the prime target for Japanese espionage’, not only to spread their influence in the unstable state, but to spy on the other European power, who were all represented in China.⁷⁸

Indeed, espionage was a resort for the Japanese troops stationed in Manchuria to control the environment and thus secure the environment in the interest of the Japanese state. National defense was put first. Consequentially, the Japanese government established an institution in the interest of national security. ‘The Japanese Council of State created the kempeitai in 1881 as part of a broad effort to establish Japan as a modern, stable society during the Meiji era.’⁷⁹ In short, espionage in order to control insurgency and revolts was used before to build a modern Japanese state. As it was then used in statebuilding, it was used again in Manchuria to accomplish the same goal: a stable society. In addition, as the Japanese state evolved and expansion became inherent, the act of statebuilding was outsourced to the Manchurian state.

To get a hold on the security environment in Manchuria a vast network of spies was implemented. In order to unravel the size of the network of spies it is, however, challenging to uncover who is a spy and who is not. As said above, the kempeitai functioned as spies in the form of ‘surveillance units’. Moreover, the Kwantung Army was full of soldiers related to secret associations, using the soldiers as assets in internal political wars and thus to spy on others within the army as well as within Manchuria.

In Addition, figures of high profile had private networks of spies. A talk between Prince Saionji and Prince Konoe reveals a conspiracy that has been planned. By whom, it is not said,

⁷⁵ Ibidem.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, 366.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, 365.

⁷⁸ Deacon, *Kempei Tai*, 129.

⁷⁹ Carlisle, *Encyclopedia of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 340.

only that Ioki had told Prince Konoe the following: “Things will go on from this point till something really big breaks next February or March.”⁸⁰ As this was said in 1930 the first event that comes in mind taking place in 1931 is the Mudken Incident. The problem, however, with this theory is the month, since the incident happened in September, half a year later. It remains unknown to which break Ioki here is referring.

Prince Saionji did not take this revelation lightly as Ioki had made a similar statement in the past after which a disaster happened. The incident Saionji recollects is the attack on Prime Minister Hara of whom Ioki had said, no more than a couple of days in advance, that the Prime Minister was going to be attacked.⁸¹ To clarify the significance of this description of events as portrayed by Saionji, the note accompanied by the section of text in the dairy clarifies. Ioki had a network in Northern China from which he derived intelligence. This however means that the network of spies in Northern China was intertwined in some way with the Army, as the intelligence originated from the Army stationed in that area.

Moreover, Prince Saionji expressed a deeper concern when Prince Konoe reported a line of communication between Ioki and the Genyōsha – another rightist society founded by former Samurai holding a network of spies on the mainland. Indeed, the network can be traced back to the North of China, including Manchuria.⁸² However, the question arises who was a spy and who was not. Furthermore, as was stated in the introduction by Gill and Phythian, the challenge in establishing an intelligence theory is discovering the state *and* non-state intelligence agencies.⁸³ Although most officers were actual army officers and thus related to the state, the army was divided in factions and power blocks. Soldiers and officers became part of one (or more) secret society or followed a General based on his ideas.

The Japanese did have an imaginative idea of espionage and they used various methods to obtain information, but evenly so, to acquire control over a situation and over place. An example of how the Japanese got control over a situation is found during the time of the Lytton investigation. The League of Nations wanted to examine the accusation brought forward by the Chinese on account of Japanese aggression in Northeastern China. The delegation of British researchers were – except from being tailed at all times – given altered documents as well as given out a false image of the actual situation in Manchuria.⁸⁴ Not a single person can be

⁸⁰ Prince Saionji and Baron Harada Kumao, *Fragile Victory*, 276.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 276.

⁸² Deacon, *Kempei Tai*, 29–42; 80–92; 100–110; 132–141; Jacob, ‘Secret societies in Japan’.

⁸³ Gill and Phythian, ‘Developing intelligence theory’, 469.

⁸⁴ Ian Nish, ‘Intelligence and the Lytton Commission, 1931-1933’, in: Dick Richardson en Glyn Stone ed., *Decisions and diplomacy. Essays in twentieth century international history*. (London and New York 1995) 42–59.

indicated as the culprit in this case since the entire administration was tasked to deceive the British. Moreover, activists and adversaries of the Japanese occupation were pre-emptively imprisoned.⁸⁵ In conclusion, espionage was used to control the situation and the citizens.

There are numerous ways and stories found on Japanese spies in China, double spies – activists from other countries who found refuge with the Japanese and were later tasked with espionage missions – and local spies. Women were also used in various ways as informants because of their residential duties. Moreover, the Japanese constructed what they called ‘pleasure houses’, a smoke screen for intelligence gathering from local officials. Prostitutes distracted information out of officials using these facilities, by which they functioned as spies. The government officials not only were elicited from information, but were also sometimes blackmailed, by which they could function as internal spies.⁸⁶

General Hideki Tōjō’s ‘advisers’ come to mind. Japanese citizens in Manchuria who could speak Chinese and Russian were used to control small areas. Their recruits ranged from people in companies to government officials and the local Japanese settlers. Roughly 10,000 were estimated to be present in Manchuria, all reporting to the *kempetai*.⁸⁷ In addition, it has to be noted that after the Russo-Japanese war the Japanese intelligence network was rapidly expanded by sending families into the newly founded state of Manchukou as a means to control the people and the territory, many of them formed a network of permanent resident spies, probably a similar network to that of General Tōjō’s ‘advisers’.⁸⁸

Hence, information was associated with power and control over the environment. It is, however, impossible to derive which information came from which spy. One can only establish who knew what based on the actions followed from certain information, nevertheless, thereby only indicating the person in power. Furthermore, it is arguable that spies were widely used to control, to surveil and hence to wield power. The title of this chapter refers to Foucault’s panopticon to issue the idea of constant surveillance to urge the people to ‘self-discipline’. Thus, the notion of constantly being watched constructed a panopticon – ‘a prison in which individual prisoners could be seen at all times by a centrally located guard who was invisible to them’.⁸⁹

Fields discussed Foucault’s idea of ‘disciplinary society’ in relation to spatial boundary-making. The ‘essence of modern power is the capacity to distribute bodies and partition

⁸⁵ Ibidem.

⁸⁶ Lory, *Japan’s military masters*, 141–155; Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai*, 43–44.

⁸⁷ Lamont-Brown, *Kempeitai*, 66–68; 74.

⁸⁸ Ibidem, 23.

⁸⁹ Dennis Broeders, ‘The new digital borders of Europe: EU databases and the surveillance of irregular migrants’, *International Sociology* 22 (2007) 74.

space'.⁹⁰ The Japanese thus approached statebuilding from the idea of security. Controlling the area was a pre-emptive strategy to guarantee security for the Japanese people. In addition, it has to be noted that an intrinsic power play was happening at the same time. This chapter started by stating that both dairies reflected the magnitude of the spy web due to the range, even into the government. Prime Minister Koki Hirota, a prominent supporter of the Black Dragon Society, illustrated the extent of the secret societies power. Yet, Hirota mentioned the power plays to the emperor.

Hirota spoke to the emperor about the fragmentation within the army, alarming the emperor in this matter. The Prime Minister, however, pictured the fragmentation in the Army as a problem.⁹¹ In a sense this was definitely the case since the government in Tokyo had difficulty managing the Army overseas. In the issue of increasing military personnel in North China, the emperor stated: 'Advise the authorities concerned not to enlarge the garrison in such a way as to create a situation similar to that of the Kwantung Army where control from the center is difficult to exercise.'⁹² Yet, all members of the rightist societies seemed to agree on a few salient goals: the racial superiority of the Japanese and their mission to install a Japanese Empire.

Therefore, Prime Minister Hirota did not necessarily have a reason to worry about his position, since he was a former army general himself. Just as Hillis Lory so accurately states in his book 'Japan's military masters' Japan's military 'holds unrivalled power within the government, ruthlessly cutting the pattern of Japan's foreign and domestic policies to meet its own specifications'.⁹³ In conclusion, the chaos and power struggles as portrayed to the emperor was staged. Jolle Demmers and Lauren Gould said: 'Wars are *produced*'.⁹⁴ They 'are made to happen by a diverse and complicated set of actors who may well be achieving their objectives in the midst of what looks like failure and breakdown.'⁹⁵ The Japanese nation seemed to be internally divided, however, a large group did pursue one salient goal, which was enough for the military to successfully enforce it.

The army enforced new laws to increase the army's power and make this power legitimate. Honjō's diary entry of September 14 1934 reports on the evolution of the Manchurian political structure. The cabinet had approved the reform proposal in which the

⁹⁰ Gary Fields, 'Excommunicated: Historical Reflections on Enclosure Landscapes in Palestine', *Radical History Review* 108 (2010) 140.

⁹¹ Honjo, *The Honjo diary*, 108–109.

⁹² Honjo, *The Honjo diary*. 170.

⁹³ Lory, *Japan's military masters*, 15.

⁹⁴ Demmers and Gould, 'An assemblage approach to liquid warfare', 366.

⁹⁵ Keen as cited in Demmers and Gould, 366.

Kwantung Army received the authority over military and political affairs, the economy, the railroad system and the officials in the Manchurian state.⁹⁶ Honjō pointed out to the emperor – who looked at the changes with skepticism – that a military authority was necessary.⁹⁷

[...] in order to facilitate the healthy development of Manchuria, curb the high-handed behavior of the Japanese bureaucrats and business entrepreneurs, and realize the goal of Japanese-Manchurian cooperation, it would be better to allow the military commander to retain his supervisory role, *for he has the force to back up his authority*.⁹⁸ [emphasis added]

The military had claimed sovereignty, ‘the ability to kill, punish, and discipline with impunity wherever it is found and practiced’, a power which is mostly associated to the state.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, recent research has associated sovereignty with the new development of authority received by violence.

The key move we propose is to abandon sovereignty as an ontological ground of power and order, expressed in law or in enduring ideas of legitimate rule, in favor of a view of sovereignty as a tentative and always emergent form of authority grounded in violence that is performed and designed to generate loyalty, fear, and legitimacy from the neighborhood to the summit of the state.¹⁰⁰

Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat stress the newness of this phenomenon as they connect it to the post-colonial world in which sovereignty is no longer a form of power solely legitimated to the state.

Contrarily, the approach Blom and Stepputat suggest can be found in the construction of the Manchurian state. The Kwantung Army had the monopoly on force, one claimed to be able ‘to generate loyalty, fear and legitimacy. Hence, sovereignty was the chosen approach to statebuilding by the military, though it has to be noted that the way in which it was achieved was not necessarily by physical violence, but by mental violence in the form of continuous surveillance. The panopticon the Japanese army installed urged the citizens of the territory into ‘self-discipline’, making war unnecessary.

Not only the military seemed to disagree with the emperor’s preference for diplomacy and peace. The private sector, who saw opportunities for a new market, supported the military

⁹⁶ Honjo, *The Honjo diary*. 120.

⁹⁷ Ibidem. 125.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, 125.

⁹⁹ Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, ‘Sovereignty Revisited’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2006) 296.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem, 297.

offensives. One of them was the South Manchurian Railway. The installation of the South Manchurian Railway was of strategic importance to the Japanese as it gave them freedom of movement on and access to resources from the continent. The railway company was a business initiative by the *zaibatsu* – Japanese business conglomerates – to establish an economic monopoly in Manchuria. Furthermore, as the political, economic and military sphere of Japanese society were intertwined, the army was able to use the company as a cover. Tak Matsusaka termed it a ‘covert army installation’.¹⁰¹

In 1935 the army wanted to extend the Railway Company into China, no longer keeping it confined to Manchuria. Prime Minister Okada reported the plan to Honjō:

The Kwantung Army is planning to have the South Manchurian Railway Company establish a major company in North China. The foreign ministry and the lower-ranking officials of the finance ministry support this plan.¹⁰²

The Japanese societal groups as the *zaibatsu* infiltrated Manchurian society prior to the military invasion by installing local companies of which the South Manchurian Railway company is the most important one. As a result, the invasion went swift because parts of the society were already invaded by Japanese business and settlers. The aim of the company and, hence, of the Army, was to infiltrate successfully by creating an economic monopoly. Thus, next to the military and political power the army possessed, also economic power was seized.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued how espionage had permeated Japanese society. This method of control and suppression was used in the construction of a military society internally as it was used to accomplish the same means in Manchuria. In Japan, the military enhanced its power through political intrigues, connecting like-minded individuals by means of secret societies. Moreover, by means of espionage, it was needless for Japan to wage war in Manchuria, but was simultaneously able to build the state they desired. The Japanese creative methods and various spies created a panopticon, subjecting the inhabitants to a constant notion of surveillance. In addition, next to an intelligence network, the Japanese installed a vast network of economic and political monopolies, one of which the South Manchurian Railway is an example. All in all, the Manchurian state was produced through the effective installation of a disciplinary society.

¹⁰¹ Matsusaka, ‘Managing occupied Manchuria’, 99.

¹⁰² Honjo, *The Honjo diary*, 150.

4. Conclusion

This paper researched the function of intelligence in statebuilding in order to instigate research on this gap in statebuilding theory. Intelligence as a means to create a basis for a state to legitimize and install a form of dominion has been widely neglected. However as only a small part of intelligence data has been analyzed, the answer to the question ‘What is intelligence?’ will remain inadequate. All layers of the population were involved in the process. So it is indeed as Gill and Phythian explained a process which involved state and non-state actors evenly so used in the purpose of statebuilding.¹⁰³ Japan imaginatively pulled out all they could to extract information. Information meant power. In the end, it was more than ‘knowing’, it was more than Sun Tsu’s definition of ‘foreknowledge’. It was power.

The perception of chaos by internal fragmentation was exploited to reproduce motives for espionage. After all, there was one salient policy of governance and expansion, a firm base was built to construct a Japanese ruled Manchurian state. Dominion in the name of self-defense. Having immense internal power, the military as well as other secret societies encouraged activities of espionage to infiltrate Manchurian society to establish rule. The ideology was widely supported by the Japanese as adventurer, criminals, and settlers all of which were involved in espionage activities. The former samurai who were so eager to reclaim power not only claimed the nation’s homeland, but expanded their rule and recreate a new state.

In conclusion, espionage was used to infiltrate the Manchurian region by means of military repression and the inspiration of fear among the indigenous people. This method of inspiring fear and suppression was effective as few acts of resistance were mentioned, yet, anti-Japanese sentiment was mentioned. Nonetheless, society was permeated by espionage, constructing what one might call a human network of eyes to control the environment and discipline those in it to conform to the accepted norms and values. The Japanese might have been the first non-western society to construct a ‘disciplinary society’ overseas in the pursuit of becoming modern, yet remain ‘Japanese’. The Japanese spies created a network which would now have been replaced by surveillance technology like CCTV and drones in order to control.

Recent academic debate has erupted within security and conflict studies to research a “new” development in war: remote warfare. Although remote warfare was technologically not a possibility, it can be argued that the Japanese solved the problem of remoteness by using espionage to target and remove threats efficiently, quickly and with at least effort as possible. These new methods of warfare in which on the ground troops are avoided to minimize the

¹⁰³ Gill and Phythian, ‘Developing intelligence theory’, 469.

casualties are framed in the context of national defense as the Japanese did when infiltrating Manchuria. Instead, small military bases are planted on different location in the premise of maintaining order and civilian safety.¹⁰⁴

The question remains whether this is indeed a new method of war. This paper has demonstrated the contrary. The Japanese infiltrated into China and Manchuria to install bases on the premise of national defense. Espionage had become a tool to guarantee national defense. The Japanese state had created in Manchuria the precursor of the Japanese panopticon. A place where the inhabitants of the Manchurian state were continuously observed and punished when they were acting out of order. One can thus argue that the objective of espionage was to create the panopticon, a method of supervision in which in the long term the Manchurian people would self-discipline.

In conclusion, this paper has highlighted the inadequacies in the current intelligence debate and statebuilding theory. As both fields of study are western oriented, a change of region can stimulate new ideas and views. In conducting this research, it has also revealed the need for historical research in the field of conflict and security studies on account of remote warfare. As the latter is still in the infancy phase, historical research on the account of perceived new developments may constitute a significant impact on the course of study. This research has aimed to encourage the use of a non-western approach for global tendencies to counter a tunnel vision perspective as to explain phenomena by means of concepts that are known to us.

¹⁰⁴ Demmers and Gould, 'An assemblage approach to liquid warfare'.

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