



# **Finland's Connections to Manchukuo: The World of Images and Political Games**

Finland's Recognition of Manchukuo 1941 and the Images of Manchukuo of Finland's Diplomats in  
Shanghai and Tokyo

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### **Abstract**

This thesis discusses the contexts surrounding Finland's recognition decision of the Empire of Manchukuo in July 1941. A non-recognition policy of Manchukuo was suggested by the League of Nations in 1932 after the results of the Lytton Report were accepted at the general assembly. At the beginning, Finland followed the non-recognition policy. However, Finland's new alliance with Nazi Germany after the peace treaty with the Soviet Union upon the Winter War (November 1939-March 1940) also shifted Finland's approach to Manchukuo's recognition decision. This thesis explores the different contexts that surround Finland's diplomatic recognition of Manchukuo, namely: the League of Nations condemnation of Manchukuo, Manchukuo's diplomatic history and historiographical understanding, Finland's alliance with Nazi Germany, and the process of Finland's recognition decision. This paper also uses historical image research to study the images of Manchuria and Manchukuo that the diplomatic representatives of Finland in Tokyo and Shanghai conveyed in their reports to the Foreign Ministry of Finland. The images were mostly influenced by whether the envoys were stationed in Tokyo or Shanghai. Also, other factors, like the envoys' personalities and Finland's official stances in its East Asian diplomacy affected the images. This thesis aims to suggest new perspectives to the research fields of Finnish diplomatic history, international Axis alignment studies, Manchukuo's history, and historical image research.

**Key words:** Finnish diplomatic history, Manchukuo, China, Japan, Sovereignty, World War II, Wartime diplomacy, Axis alignments, Historical image research

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# 1. Introduction and The Research Project

Many do not know that the Republic of Finland recognised the sovereignty of the Empire of Manchukuo *de jure* on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1941. The two countries even established formal, reciprocal diplomatic relations by the end of the year 1941. For the reader who knows anything about the contemporary history of the East Asian region and Finland, the formal connection between Finland and Manchukuo might surprise. Manchukuo is commonly characterised as the puppet-state that the Japanese Empire established in Manchuria following its sudden conquest by the Kwantung railway army in 1931. The League of Nations and its member states condemned Japan's conquest of the Northeastern Republic of China, after which Japan resigned from the League in March 1933. The League of Nations had failed in supporting the sovereignty of China, and the Japan embarked on a journey of militarism that would reach even greater proportions and produce ever greater devastation.

Why, then, did Finland recognise an Empire that even contemporaries knew was a puppet state? Finland was a League of Nations member state that had voted to condemn Japan's conquest in 1933. Finland hoped that the League could safeguard the sovereignty of even the smallest states. But only eight years later, Finland and Manchukuo exchanged diplomatic relations. The Second World War in Europe proceeded in such a way that Finland was found placing itself on the side of Hitler's Nazi Germany and the Axis Powers. Complex contexts intertwine the issue of Finland's recognition of Manchukuo. The histories and historical interpretations of Manchukuo, Finland's relationship with the Axis, the Sino-Japanese relations, and many more are extremely interesting and worthy of more and more research. This thesis delves into the background of Finland's recognition decision of Manchukuo and offers a study of the images of Manchukuo that Finnish diplomats in Tokyo and Shanghai produced in their reports.

## 1.1. Research Plan

This thesis will do three things. Firstly, the contexts surrounding Finland's recognition of Manchukuo are explored in an extensive background section. Secondly, the images of Manchukuo that the envoys in Tokyo and Shanghai share in their reports are studied in the analysis section. Thirdly, a conclusion and further research avenues are suggested.

The research questions that guide this paper are: 'What factors lead to Finland's decision to recognise the Empire of Manchukuo in 1941?', and 'What image of Manchukuo was imagined and shared in the reports of Finnish diplomats in Tokyo and Shanghai?'. During the course of this research project, the focus of study shifted from doing a comparative study of Finnish diplomacy in Japan and China in the 1940s to its current state. My thesis supervisor suggested doing a case study of Finland's recognition of Manchukuo, and it turned out to be a great suggestion. This topic is understudied in Finnish research, and even more so in other languages. Therefore, this thesis also creates value for international research by presenting this case study of Finnish diplomacy in East Asia in English.

However, choosing the angle from which to study Finland's recognition of Manchukuo produced some trouble. Initially, I thought of studying in more detail the effects of Finland's recognition of Manchukuo on Finnish diplomacy in Japan and China, but it would have required extensive archival research that proved difficult in the given time frame. My bachelor's dissertation makes a comparative study of Finnish diplomacy in Japan and China in the 1920s and 1930s, with the recently digitised report archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as its source.<sup>1</sup> I wanted to continue using the digitised report archive as the primary source for this research paper, but choosing the method of analysis devised a complication. Towards the end of the research project, I decided to write an extensive background section that relies on creating a historical narrative that frames Finland's recognition of Manchukuo by bringing together secondary source research that covering various angles of Manchukuo's recognition and Finnish wartime history. As for the primary sources, I wanted to choose a method of analysis that gives allowance to study the richness of the language that the

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<sup>1</sup> Soini, Malviina. 'Out of the Shadow of Russia: Comparing the Successes and Failures of Finnish Diplomacy in Japan and China' (unpublished thesis, University of Glasgow, 2020); 'Suomen ulkomaanedustustojen historiallinen raporttiarkisto laajenee', *Ulkoministeriö*, [updated 23.11.2019], [https://um.fi/ajankohtaista/artikkeli/-/asset\\_publisher/iYk2EknllmNL/content/suomen-ulkomaanedustustojen-historiallinen-raporttiarkisto-laajenee](https://um.fi/ajankohtaista/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/iYk2EknllmNL/content/suomen-ulkomaanedustustojen-historiallinen-raporttiarkisto-laajenee), [accessed 04.05.2022].

diplomats use, as it is a striking factor of the reports. For the analysis section, therefore, I use the historical image research method.

Working on a historical research project in a political science department lead to interesting readings on the debates between international relations theorists and historians about the methods of studying diplomatic history. Roughly, the difference between the two is divided into ‘narrative-based explanations versus theory-based explanations.’<sup>2</sup> Sometimes political scientists view that historians are reluctant to engage in what they perceive as viable theories, and that is often certainly the case.<sup>3</sup> Historians defend their view of not over-engaging in theories by noting that, in George Lawson’s words, ‘they do not seek to bend reality in order to conform to pre-existing theoretical scripts’, as the historian’s job is rather to organise messy history in some kind of rational, educated guess.<sup>4</sup> Colin and Miriam Fendius Elman argue that diplomatic historians and international relations theorists would benefit from acquainting themselves with the works of one another.<sup>5</sup> They note, also, that there is value in both cross examination between the methods as well as respecting the differences.<sup>6</sup> For this research project, I read about international relations theories in an attempt to see if I should use them for my work, but decided to stick to the narrative reconstruction style employed traditionally in historical research.

On closer inspection, the historians’ narrative-based explanations make use of theories. Marc Trachtenberg writes that a valid way to approach international history is coming up with an argument of why events unfolded as they did. and then discovering through your research in what ways your initial idea was valid or not.<sup>7</sup> Trachtenberg argues that the key point in studying international history is to understand that different countries want different things, and understanding the results of this clash in desires is crucial.<sup>8</sup> The narrative-based explanation is thus ‘a story with some sort of causal structure’, that tries to understand the reasons for the course of events.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, one of the most important considerations when thinking about the study of history is that, in John Lewis Gaddis’ words, ‘there is no such thing as a definitive account of any historical episode. Revision in history is

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<sup>2</sup> Elman, Colin; Elman, Miriam Fendius. ‘Diplomatic History and International Relations Theory: Respecting Difference and Crossing Boundaries’, *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Summer, 1997), p.7.

<sup>3</sup> Lawson, George. ‘The Eternal Divide? History and International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2010), p.211.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Elman & Elman, ‘Diplomatic History’, p.17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>7</sup> Trachtenberg, Marc. *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), p.69.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.112-113.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.112-113.

like restaging in theatre: it is what the business is all about.’<sup>10</sup> The background section of this paper brings together a new set of secondary and primary sources to produce a unique restaging of the case study of Finland’s relationship with Manchukuo, China, and Japan in the 1930s and 1940s.

For the analysis section of the paper, I chose to study the primary sources using historical image research. This research field was suggested to me by my upper secondary school English literature teacher and friend, Doctor Jylhä. In particular, I use the book *Looking at the Other- Historical Study of the Images in Theory and Practice* as my guidance.<sup>11</sup> Edited by Kari Alenius, Olavi Fält, and Seija Jalagin, the book introduces historical image research and provides practical examples of its uses. The editors of the book have conducted historical research at the Department of History of Oulu University, where historical image research has been conducted since the 1970s.<sup>12</sup> Olavi Fält authors the introduction that explains the theory. His research has focused on the images of Japan conceived in Europe and Finland. The primary sources used in this thesis are the digitised archives of the reports of the diplomatic corps of Finland, available in the Foreign Ministry’s online archive from the years 1918-1945.<sup>13</sup> I used these sources for my bachelor’s dissertation and know them well. For this paper, I have translated the excerpts I use from Finnish to English myself.

Historical sources, especially written ones, can be studied in a versatile way with historical image research, because they contain reflections of the past.<sup>14</sup> Images are depictions of reality that an individual creates based on their persona, circumstances, and knowledge.<sup>15</sup> The role of the knower, or the possessor of the image, is highlighted in this approach, as images are always subjective: their subjectivity is their richness.<sup>16</sup> Fält summarises the method thusly:

‘Historical image research draws attention to what an image is like, how we have formed a particular image of a certain thing, why we have this image, what purpose it

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<sup>10</sup> Thies, Cameron G. ‘A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations’, *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (November 2002), p. 354.

<sup>11</sup> *Looking at the Other- Historical Study of Images In Theory and Practise*. ed. Alenius, Kari; Fält, Olavi K.; Jalagin, Seija (Oulu: Oulu University Press, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Suomen ulkomaanedustustojen historiallinen raporttiarkisto laajenee’, *Ulkoministeriö*, [updated 23.11.2019], [https://um.fi/ajankohtaista/artikkeli/-/asset\\_publisher/iYk2EknIImNL/content/suomen-ulkomaanedustustojen-historiallinen-raporttiarkisto-laajenee](https://um.fi/ajankohtaista/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/iYk2EknIImNL/content/suomen-ulkomaanedustustojen-historiallinen-raporttiarkisto-laajenee), [accessed 04.05.2022].

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Fält, Olavi K., ‘Introduction’ in *Looking at the Other- Historical Study of Images In Theory and Practise*. ed. Alenius, Kari; Fält, Olavi K.; Jalagin, Seija (Oulu: Oulu University Press, 2002), p.8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.8-9.

serves, what changes have taken place in it, and what all this tells us of the creators of the image.’<sup>17</sup>

Especially the study of foreign peoples and cultures is compelling as the distance, both physical and cultural, tends to create simplifications, ‘bold outlines and metaphorical content’ in the images created.<sup>18</sup> This method of analysis suits the primary sources used in this paper, because the diplomats in Tokyo and Shanghai wrote richly descriptive reports about their perceptions of Manchuria and Manchukuo. A theoretical framework of more rigid parameters would strip away the quality of descriptions, and simplifications would risk misanalysing the primary sources. As the analysis section will show, the diplomats in Tokyo and Shanghai all imagined the Northern-Chinese territory of Manchuria and Manchukuo in different ways based on their individual views and circumstances.

This thesis, with its extensive background chapter and a separate primary source analysis chapter, attempts to provide a new historical narration of Finland’s recognition of Manchukuo as well as study interesting images of Manchukuo that the diplomats in Japan and China had formed. The background section first discusses Finland’s decision at the League of Nations assembly that condemned Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1933. The next chapter offers a description of Manchukuo that relies on new scholarship, and an overview of Manchukuo’s diplomatic connections follows. Then, Finland’s positioning towards Nazi Germany and the Axis powers is discussed, as it provides an important context for the chapter that follows, which offers a summary of how and why Finland recognised Manchukuo. Lastly, the analysis section uses the historical image research method to study the images of Manchuria and Manchukuo that the diplomats stationed at Tokyo and Shanghai created in their reports. Their portrait photographs of the diplomats are provided in Appendix 1 for any reader that is interested in seeing what they looked like.

## 1.2. Literature Review

Based on the knowledge gathered for my previous bachelor’s dissertation research paper, I gained insight into the comparative view to Finland’s diplomatic fortunes in Japan and China in the 1920s and 1930s. Finland’s motives for expanding its diplomatic network abroad since 1917 was to solidify its position as a newly independent country by gaining international recognition for independence.<sup>19</sup> Finnish politicians looked eastward to Japan as an ideal diplomatic partner, as Japan was not only a

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Soini, ‘Out of the Shadow of Russia’, pp.43-44.

world power in Asia after the First World War, but also because Japan was an actor which could halt the expansionism of the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> To Finland, the policies toward the Soviet Union were of prime importance ever since its independence from the Russian Empire in 1917.<sup>21</sup> Overall, Finland's diplomatic endeavours in China fell short of their successes in Japan for various reasons, one being that the Soviet Union was an ally, albeit a fickle one, to both the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Chinese territories had been suffering from imperialism, the Chinese Civil War, and Japanese aggression for decades before 1941, which made diplomatic developments between Finland and China difficult.<sup>23</sup> As Chinese nationalistic sentiment grew ever stronger in the 1930s, the successes of Finnish diplomacy in Japan turned into obstacles for the development of Finland-China relations.<sup>24</sup>

In this context, Finland's recognition of the Empire of Manchukuo as an independent state can be framed from the point of view of the diplomatic relations of Finland in East Asia. Firstly, the previous good relations between Finland and Japan did not hinder Finland's decision, but, on the contrary, could have made this controversial decision less unpleasant. In 1941, when Finland, too, had been drawn into war, Finnish politicians and diplomats could not afford to care to a great extent of the complaints of Chinese officials on the matter of recognition of Manchukuo.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the frustration of the Chinese over Finland's decision had little impact on the bilateral relations between Finland and China, which, by 1941 had dwindled to a great degree.<sup>26</sup> In 1941, pleasing Finland's Axis-power allies was much more important than China considerations.<sup>27</sup> Mikko Uola argues that Finnish politicians decided to recognise the Empire of Manchukuo as a favour to its military ally, Nazi Germany, who had developed diplomatic relations with Manchukuo since recognising the independence of the state in 1938.<sup>28</sup> However, the fact that Finland withheld its decision to recognise Manchukuo until 1941 suggests that Finnish politicians and diplomats felt a certain reluctance to recognise Manchukuo, which represented the fruits of colonialism.<sup>29</sup> In 1937, Finnish and other Nordic diplomats stationed in Japan had made the decision not to interact with the Manchukuoan

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Uola, Mikko. *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta: Suomen suhteet Kiinan tasavaltaan 1919-1949*[Finland and the Central Kingdom: Finland's relations with the Chinese Republic 1919-1949], (Kangasala: Kangasalan Kirjapaino Oy, 1995), p.290.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.288-289.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

diplomats stationed in Tokyo.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, Finland was still keen to maintain its diplomatic ties with the Chinese even when the country was unstable and suffering from factionalism.<sup>31</sup> However, the context of war in Finland had changed the priorities of Finnish politics and diplomacy drastically since 1939, and in the new circumstances, Finland's decision to recognise the Empire of Manchukuo was not altogether surprising.

The book titled *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta: Suomen suhteet Kiinan tasavaltaan 1919-1949* [Finland and the Central Kingdom: Finland's relations with the Chinese Republic 1919-1949], by Mikko Uola, is the pivotal secondary source for this work.<sup>32</sup> Uola's book surveys Finland's diplomatic relations with the Republic of China over the period of Finland's independence from the Russian Empire in 1917 until the inauguration of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Based on extensive archival research of the Foreign Ministry's archives, his work is still the best on this topic, despite having been published in 1995. Uola's work includes an explanation of how, in practice, Finland recognised Manchukuo in July 1941 at the Foreign Ministry. He also offers some analysis on the reasons Finland may have had in making this decision, and what consequences it had on Finland's relations with Republican China. He also discusses possible reasons why Finland did not recognise the Reorganized National Government of the Republic of China (Wang Jingwei puppet regime) at the same time. However, overall, Finland's recognition of Manchukuo has received little scholarly attention.<sup>33</sup>

Unlike Finland's diplomatic relations with China pre-1945, Finland's relations with Japan have received much more attention from Finnish scholars. Perhaps the reasons for this connection lies in the historical success of Finnish diplomacy in Japan, or in the attractiveness of the world power Japan over China in Finnish foreign policy endeavours pre-war.<sup>34</sup> Some researchers have even framed their works to produce an understanding of the reasons for the mystically close relations between Japan and Finland.<sup>35</sup> Studies of the history of this bilateral connection has included research on trade relations by Juha Sahi (2016), intelligence operations by Masunaga Shingo (2021) and Juha Sahi

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<sup>30</sup>Soini, 'Out of the Shadow of Russia', pp.34-35.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.40-42.

<sup>32</sup> Uola, Mikko. *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta: Suomen suhteet Kiinan tasavaltaan 1919-1949* [Finland and the Central Kingdom: Finland's relations with the Chinese Republic 1919-1949], (Kangasala: Kangasalan Kirjapaino Oy, 1995).

<sup>33</sup> Laura Mursu wrote a bachelor's thesis on the topic of Finland's recognition of Manchukuo thirteen years ago, but it is not public. Mursu, Laura. 'Suomen suhteet Manchukuohon'. (unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, University of Helsinki, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Soini, 'Out of the Shadow of Russia', pp.43-44.

<sup>35</sup> *Suomi ja Japani: Kaukaiset mutta läheiset* (Helsinki: Edita Publishing Oy, 2019), edit. Ipatti, Laura: Saunavaara, Juha.

(2008), and the role of Professor Ramstedt, the first Finnish Asian diplomat stationed in Tokyo, by Eeva Herranen (1998) and Johanna Koponen (2020), to name a few research directions.<sup>36</sup> The Japanese researcher Momose Hiroshi (1973) has studied Finland-Japan relations from the Japanese perspective.<sup>37</sup> Even though the bilateral relations between Finland and Japan have been studied from multiple perspectives, the case study of the recognition of Manchukuo has not been one of them. Furthermore, a comparative approach to studying Finnish diplomacy in both Japan and China is still lacking in depth research, as I found previously when working on my bachelor's dissertation on this topic.<sup>38</sup>

Besides Finnish diplomacy in East Asia, the background section of this thesis includes discussions of many other important contexts surrounding Finland's relations with Manchukuo. Those are the League of Nations non-recognition policy of Manchukuo, Manchukuo's construction and its diplomatic ties, and Finland's relations with Nazi Germany and the Axis powers. The Manchurian incident is largely considered the ultimate 'failure' of the League of Nations, and it has received much scholarly attention.<sup>39</sup> What Manchukuo was is a compelling question that has, in recent decades, undergone diversification of the monotonous 'puppet state' -view. Authors like Louise Young (1998), Prasenjit Duara (2003), and Thomas David Dubois (2010) have written about the levels of Japanese control over Manchukuo and what features characterised the Empire of Manchukuo.<sup>40</sup> The diplomatic relations of Manchukuo has received scholarly interest as well, from early survey work by Ailisha O'Sullivan (1982) to case studies of diplomacy between different countries and Manchukuo.<sup>41</sup> Lastly, the Axis alliance and Finland's relations with Axis powers is an important context for understanding Finland's recognition of Manchukuo. Finnish scholarship is hyper-interested in Finland's Second World War context, and intense debates rage on the nature of Finland's connection with its ally, Nazi

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<sup>36</sup> Sahi, Juha. 'Verkostot kaukaiseen itään: Suomen kauppasuhteet Japaniin 1919-1974' (published thesis, Oulun yliopisto, 2016); Masunaga, Shingo. 'In Search of New Facts: Interwar Japanese Military Intelligence Activities in the Baltic States and Finland, 1918-1940', (published thesis, Turun Yliopisto, 2021); Herranen, Eeva. 'G.J.Ramstedt Suomen asiainhoitajana ja Suomen Japanin suhteiden kehittäjänä 1920-luvulla', (published thesis, Joensuun yliopisto 1998); Koponen, Johanna Kristiina. 'Asianhoitaja Gustaf J.Ramstedt ja Suomi-kuvan rakentuminen Japanissa 1920-1929', (unpublished thesis, Helsingin yliopisto, 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Momose, Hiroshi. 'Japan's Relations with Finland, 1919-1944, as Reflected by Japanese Source Materials', *スラヴ研究*, vol.17 (1973), pp.1-39.

<sup>38</sup> Soini, 'Out of the Shadow of Russia', pp.43-44.

<sup>39</sup> For instance: Henig, Ruth. *The League of Nations*, (London: Haus Publishing Ltd, 2010).

<sup>40</sup> Young, Louise. *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); Duara, Prasenjit. *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2003); Dubois, Thomas David. 'Inauthentic Sovereignty: Law and Legal Institutions in Manchukuo', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.69, No.3, (2010), pp.749-770.

<sup>41</sup> O'Sullivan, Ailisha M. 'Manchukuo's Relations With Other Nations', (published Master's thesis, University College Cork, 1982).

Germany.<sup>42</sup> These contexts and their scholarship will be explored in the background section of this thesis.

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<sup>42</sup> Jokisipilä, Markku. *Aseveljiä vai liittolaisia? Suomi, Hitlerin Saksan liittosopimusvaatimukset ja Rytin-Ribbentropin sopimus* (Helsinki: Suomen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2004); Seppinen, Jukka. *Hitler, Stalin ja Suomi: Isänmaa totalitarismin puristuksessa 1935-1944*, (Helsinki: Minerva, 2009).

## 2. Background Chapter: Disputed Manchukuo and Finland's Recognition

This extensive background chapter introduces the contexts and relevant historical debates related to this research. The first section will study the condemnation of Japan's conquest of Manchuria at the League of Nations General Assembly in February 1932 as well as Finland's reaction to it. The second section introduces the newly diversified historical understanding of Manchukuo's history. Following is the review of Manchukuo's diplomatic relations. The fourth section introduces the difficulties in characterising Finland's wartime alliance with Nazi Germany and, by extension, the Axis aligned powers. Lastly Finland's recognition decision of Manchukuo is discussed before the historical image research chapter.

### 2.1. Japan's Invasion of Manchuria and Finland's Decision at the League of Nations

Many historians argue that the successful invasion of Manchuria in the northeastern Chinese territory by Japan in 1931 proved the inability of the League of Nations to act as a peace-keeping body in the world.<sup>43</sup> Following the outbreak of war after the so called 'Mukden Incident' on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, 1931, Japan's Kwantung Army swiftly captured railway terminals in Manchuria, bombed Chinese railway lines, and captured all of North-Eastern Manchuria in just three weeks. The Japanese had invested heavily in the area for decades, and so Japanese politicians did not protest decisively even though the military initiated the conflict largely on its own terms.<sup>44</sup> Despite the pleas of help that the Chinese Republic (the Kuomintang at its head) directed at the League of Nations, the outcome of the conflict was the loss of the Manchurian territory to the Japanese Empire. Historian Arthur Young argues already in 1938 that the whole affair was 'regarded rather academically in the West as [a] test of the efficacy of the League of Nations'.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the League reacted firstly by sending out the investigative 'Lytton Commission' (led by the British statesman, Earl of Lytton), to write a report of the conflict. Thus, in 1932, the commission toured Northern China and Shanghai (where Chinese areas were heavily bombarded by the Japanese army in January-March 1932). The results of this report, which condemned Japan's invasion of Manchuria as unlawful, was presented in the League

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<sup>43</sup> Henig, *The League of Nations*, p.153.

<sup>44</sup> Murakami, Hiromi. 'Emergence of the Japanese Developmental State: Japanese Management of 'Manchukuo' through Special Corporations', *Asian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.20, No.2 (2012), p.132.

<sup>45</sup> Young, Arthur Morgan. *Imperial Japan 1926-1938* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1938), (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974), p.92.

of Nations Assembly in January 1933, where the member states of the League voted to agree on the findings of the report.<sup>46</sup>

Before Finland gave its recognition to the Empire of Manchukuo in 1941, Finland's official positioning towards Japan's puppet state had been such that any acceptance was carefully avoided. In the 1920s and 1930s, the political alignments of Finnish foreign policy were rooted in the safety network that the international community provided in the form of the League of Nations, for instance. Finnish decision makers followed the example of the greater states in its dealings with Manchukuo. However, simultaneously, Finland struggled to condemn Japan after the invasion of Manchuria in 1931-1932 at the League of Nations Assembly in January 1933. The primary reason for this was, that Finland saw Japan as its potential ally against the threat of Soviet Union and feared that the League of Nations might undermine its power. The conflict between whether to place faith in the League or Japan in creating a safety network against the Soviet Union shaped Finland's diplomatic activity in East Asia and, overall, demonstrates how much safeguarding against the Soviet Union was emphasised in Finnish Foreign Policy.

When Japan started its invasion in Manchuria in 1931, Finland's consul in Tokyo reported about the event. Tokyo's Consul George Winckelmann produced a full-length report of the invasion of Manchuria for the Finnish Foreign Ministry in October 1931. In his report, he recounted a conversation he had with a Japanese officer about the situation in Manchuria, and wrote that the officer stressed that there is 'no entity in China that could take responsibility of the violations of the rights of Japanese on Chinese territory', and that the 'National Government at Nanjing is merely the mirage of a non-existent sovereignty'.<sup>47</sup> The officer continued to explain that should the aggressive trend against Japanese expatriates in the mainland continue, Japan would be capable and willing to take positive action against China.<sup>48</sup> In the report, Winckelmann also describes how the public opinion in Japan had recently been directed towards a stricter China-policy. 'In this manipulation of the public opinion, nationalistic points have, rather wittily, been emphasised', remarks Winckelmann somewhat pessimistically.<sup>49</sup> Winckelmann notes, too, how proud the Japanese are of the investments

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<sup>46</sup> Hudson, Manley. 'The Report of the Assembly of the League of Nations on the Sino-Japanese Dispute', *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (1933), pp. 300–05.

<sup>47</sup> Tokyo, 'Nykytilanne Etelä Mantshuriassa II', 10.10.1931 (55).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* (56).

and work that they have put into the industries of Southern Manchuria in the past thirty years.<sup>50</sup>

Winckelmann summarises the Manchurian invasion thusly:

So when the reports of the shots fired on the night preceding the 19<sup>th</sup> of September in South Manchuria reached here, the news did not cause greater astonishment in any circles. The mood had been thoroughly prepared for what was to come and many wondered why engagement in armed conflict had taken so long.<sup>51</sup>

In his October report, even though Winckelmann condemned the invasion, his report reveals an interesting quality of Finland's Asian diplomacy concerns: Finland hoped that Japan had the strength to contain the Soviet Union. Even though Winckelmann understood the severity of the situation for the Chinese, he argues from a purely Finnish perspective:

Yesterday I also had a conversation with the envoys of Poland and Romania, and we were in agreement of the fact that for our countries it was of less interest to discover which party was guilty of initiating the conflict, but, at least for all the western neighbours of Russia, the continued strength of Japan is a most values and realistic support.<sup>52</sup>

This statement not only reflects various characteristics of Finnish diplomacy in East Asia, but also sheds light on the reasons why the Finnish Foreign Ministry would struggle to vote in the League of Nations Assembly against Japan in 1933. Finnish diplomacy in East Asia in the 1920s and early 1930s relied heavily on maintaining an Eastern European connection.<sup>53</sup> Finland's Foreign Policy goals, especially the scrupulous management of the Soviet connection, aligned with the goals of other former states of the Russian Empire.<sup>54</sup> In East Asia, this connection was manifested by the cooperation of the Finnish diplomats with Eastern European representatives in both practical issues, like managing passports, and political behaviour, like observing the Soviet diplomats closely.<sup>55</sup> However, simultaneously, Finnish envoys maintained friendly relations with the Russian representatives in Tokyo since 1921, and the exchanges between the Finnish and Soviet delegations were cordial and, at times, very friendly.<sup>56</sup> Overall, though, the security threat which the Soviet Union posed to Finland since its independence continued to be of primary concern to the Finnish Foreign Ministry and to Finland's diplomatic activity in Japan.

At the same time as the Tokyo delegation produced lengthy reports of the invasion of Manchuria from the point of view of envoys working in Japan, the Shanghai delegation was temporarily

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* (56).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* (57).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* (60-61).

<sup>53</sup> Soini, 'Out of the Shadow of Russia', pp. 32-25.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

suspended. In March 1931, both consul Karl Gustaf Wähämäki and vice-consul Eino Kari had been dismissed from their duties as they were suspected of mismanaging the Shanghai consulate. In fact, ever since Finland opened diplomatic relations with Japan and China, Finland's representation in Japan had always been more constant.<sup>57</sup> This was, for the most part, due to the difference in internal conditions and stability between the world power Japan and the internally divided China, but it also had much to do with the early efforts of Gustaf Ramstedt (the first Finnish consul posted to Asia) who, stationed at Tokyo, managed the consulate well and created a good name for himself amongst other diplomats and Japanese politicians.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the reputation of Finns living in Shanghai had hardly ever been favourable. Shanghai, according to Consul Ramstedt's view, was a city of vice where those random Finnish sailors or wondering individuals who happen to visit there often ended up in prisons due most often to excessive drinking, and thus had a bad reputation.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately the Finnish diplomatic representation in Shanghai was neither up to par.

In 1924, Wähämäki was appointed to take charge of the Finnish consulate of Shanghai, but, over the years, he was accused of providing Finnish passports to Russian citizens in Shanghai, mismanaging the Shanghai consulate, and writing inappropriate reports back to Finland.<sup>60</sup> Although it was proved that Wähämäki had not administered Finnish passports to Russians, he had indeed managed the consulate questionably. Wähämäki had, for instance; frequently paid the consulate's rent late; forged the signature of Hannes Keijola (the pioneer of missionary activity in Hunan who later became a businessman) to steal the grant that Finland paid to run Keijola's 'Finland Shop'; stole funds that were meant to be paid to the chauffeur of the consulate, and misbehaved with his acquaintances in a drunken state.<sup>61</sup> After constantly hearing rumours of the inappropriate professionalism of Wähämäki, the Foreign Ministry tasked Tokyo's consul Winckelmann to travel to Shanghai to investigate Shanghai's consulate.<sup>62</sup> The report that followed this trip is, in historian Mikko Uola's words, 'quite the pearl of diplomatic reports' due to its descriptive and novella-like character.<sup>63</sup>

During his tenure from 1924 to 1931, consul Wähämäki's reports from Shanghai were written from a pro-Chinese perspective. However, this is no surprise: the consuls in Tokyo tended to write from a

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Tokyo, 'Ramstedtin raportti no. 7', 31.03.1921 (151).

<sup>60</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta*, pp.157–164.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

pro-Japanese perspective and the consuls in Shanghai from a pro-Chinese perspective.<sup>64</sup> In one of Wähämäki's last reports dated the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1931, he praises the progression of Sun Yat-sen's ideology and paints a picture of a paternalistic and meritocratic Kuomintang:

The biggest merit of the party must be said to be its aim to raise its people from deep ignorance, as well as the aim to awaken nationalistic sentiment even in those parts of the country where the mental capacity of its residents is at its lowest.<sup>65</sup>

Wähämäki's report is overly enthusiastic of the vitality of Kuomintang, considering the overall difficult internal situation in China. His style of reporting was, indeed, severely questioned by Winckelmann already in December 1930.<sup>66</sup> After the dismissal of Consul Wähämäki in March 1931, the Shanghai consulate was run temporarily by Helge von Knorring, who was an attaché at the Tokyo consulate.<sup>67</sup> However, by the end of 1932 the position of a Shanghai consul was ended due to budget cuts of the Foreign Ministry, and Shanghai's consulate lost its diplomatic position.<sup>68</sup> Aksel Salminen thus became the Honorary-Consul of Shanghai in February 1933.<sup>69</sup> It was not until March 1936 that Finland re-instated its diplomatic authority over China – in the meanwhile, Denmark was charged with representing Finnish diplomacy in China officially.<sup>70</sup> However, almost simultaneously, Tokyo's consul's status was upgraded.<sup>71</sup> Historian Mikko Uola argues that after the invasion of Manchuria, China's political significance in the eyes of the Finnish Foreign Ministry had decreased and Japan's importance increased.<sup>72</sup>

In Tokyo, consul Winckelmann actively observed the direction that the Manchuria-issue took in Japan. He reported of Japan's altered position towards the League of Nations in May 1932 and explained that many factions in Japan have actively taken up the question of staying or leaving the League in public debate.<sup>73</sup> The report explains how the military-minded National Socialist circles had presented pleas to resign the League of Nations in order to achieve the 'goals which's fulfilments are a vital matter to Japan'.<sup>74</sup> Winckelmann especially mentions the negative comments that these circles had presented of small states, which implied that small states can call for sanctions against Japan at the League of Nations, but leave the practicalities of implementing them to the world powers.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta*, pp.245–248.

<sup>65</sup> Shanghai, 'Sunjatsenimisi Kiinassa', 14.01.1931 (17).

<sup>66</sup> Tokyo, 'Asiainhoitaja Wähämäen raportti Japanin oloista', 13.12.1930.

<sup>67</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta*, p.201.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.213-214.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.203–204.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Tokyo, 'Japanin jatkuva mukanaolo kansainliitossa', 06.05.1932 (36).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* (37).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* (37).

Winckelmann tried to downplay the influence of these views, but voiced realism, stating that it would be unwise to underestimate the power of the military-minded faction on the development of Japan's politics.<sup>76</sup>

The League of Nations General Assembly was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1933. Over a year after Japan had invaded Manchuria in late 1931, the Lytton Commission's Report, that condemned Japan's invasion unlawful, was adopted at the assembly by a 42-1 vote.<sup>77</sup> Only Japan voted against the motion and Siam abstained from voting.<sup>78</sup> Finland was among those countries of the League that condemned Japan as an aggressor; however, this decision was reached with some difficulty. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the foreign political efforts of Finland were directed to a great extent in seeking security against the threat to independence that the Soviet Union posed.<sup>79</sup> One of the primary reasons for the unusually warm relation between Finland and Japan was that both believed that either party would offer security against the expansion of the Soviet Union on their prospective sides of that neighbour.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, Finnish decision makers struggled greatly to condemn Japan as openly and as directly as was required at the League of Nations Assembly in January 1933. However, simultaneously, Finnish decision makers sought security in the international enforcement of the peace-keeping that the League of Nations was tasked to supervise.<sup>81</sup> As a young, independent country that constantly feared the possibility of a Soviet invasion, Finland made efforts to maintain healthy relations with the international community. Mikko Uola argues that the Manchurian Crisis was indeed a political crisis in Finland, where the good relations between Finland and Japan were challenged by the desire to reinforce the internationally recognised rules regarding sovereignty and non-aggression.<sup>82</sup> The crisis presented itself as a clash between realism and idealism.

Mikko Uola's research traces the difficulties of the decision-making process for the League of Nations Assembly meeting. Rudolf Holsti (the Prime Minister of Finland in 1919-1922 and 1937-1938) represented Finland at the assembly. His personal views on Japan breaking international rules were strict.<sup>83</sup> However, he acted as the Finnish Foreign Ministry instructed him at the assembly: he was to wait and observe how other countries would vote, and to abstain from voicing opinions at the

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* (37).

<sup>77</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta*, p.230–231.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*; Soini, 'Out of the Shadow of Russia', pp.16-21.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja Keskuksen Valtakunta*, p. 227–231.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

meeting.<sup>84</sup> In the end, only Japan voted against the decision and only Siam abstained from voting. Holsti criticised the Finnish Foreign Ministry after the end of the assembly, stating that if Finland had abstained from voting (as had been suggested before the final decision was made), the consequences for Finnish foreign policy would have been both humiliating and unfortunate.<sup>85</sup> Historian Mikko Uola argues that overall, the affair demonstrated how important Japan was for Finland.<sup>86</sup> Whether or not it demonstrates that China was unimportant, is debatable.

Right after the Lytton Report was adopted by vote at the League of Nations Assembly, Japan announced its withdrawal from the League. The reasons for Japan's decision were rather simple: it could not accept the verdict of the assembly and wanted to protect its conquest of Manchuria.<sup>87</sup> Despite Finland's wishes that the League of Nations would be successful in maintaining peace, Japan's resignation from the League of Nations due to the Manchurian incident did not greatly affect Finland's diplomatic priorities in East Asia, as consul Hugo Valvanne's report two years after the resignation in 1935 demonstrates:

From the Finnish point of view, it is regrettable that a great power could successfully defy the League of Nations. [...] On the other hand, Finland can be pleased that Japan still stands as a great military power on the other side of Russia.<sup>88</sup>

Finland's decision at the League of Nations Assembly did not ruin Finland's diplomatic relations with Japan. However, the League adopted a non-recognition policy towards Manchukuo: the League urged its member states to not recognise Manchukuo. The purpose of this policy was to isolate Manchukuo and to act as a sanction towards Japan, but the League had no ways to discipline the violators of this policy.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, over the course of its existence, Manchukuo was recognised as a sovereign state by many countries for varying reasons. The following section will explore Manchukuo: what it was like, and how has it been understood by historians.

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Henig, *The League of Nations*, pp.149-151.

<sup>88</sup> Tokyo, 'Japanin eroaminen Kansainliitosta', 01.04.1935 (76).

<sup>89</sup> Middlebush, Frederik A. 'International Affairs: The Effect of the Non-Recognition of Manchukuo', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol:28, no.4 (August 1934), pp.677-678.

## 2.2. Manchukuo- Descriptions

Understanding Manchukuo is a compelling task for historians. The well-known characterisations of Manchukuo in historiography include ‘puppet-state’, the Chinese 伪满国 ‘fake Manchu land’, and historian Prasenjit Duara’s ‘abomi-nation’.<sup>90</sup> However, many historians have argued that the simplification of Manchukuo to a mere puppet has limited the study of Manchukuo itself. Louise Young summarises that since ‘it clearly took more than ministers and generals to make an empire’, there is a need to revise the historical record of Manchukuo.<sup>91</sup> Important questions of people and cultures, like ‘who lived there?’ and ‘what was life there like?’ have attracted academic attention only in recent decades.<sup>92</sup> These approaches complement the continuing studies of Manchukuo’s formal relationship to the Empire of Japan, that have been carried out since the 1980s.<sup>93</sup> This chapter will briefly introduce how Manchukuo has been understood within recent history research. The views of historians on the issue can then be compared and contrasted against the images of Manchukuo that the Finnish diplomats had in the 1930s and 1940s; covered in the analysis section.

To the Japanese, Manchukuo was a fantastical land of opportunity. Louise Young’s book *Japan’s total empire: Manchuria and the culture of wartime imperialism* studies Manchuria from a holistic perspective as a ‘total empire’ project, in which both the Japanese authorities and population built their empire even when they may never have left Japanese soil. The focus of her research is thus on how Manchuria was built through ideas and symbols in Japan and by the Japanese. In the minds of the Japanese, Manchuria was first a battlefield, then an economic utopia, and lastly, an empty frontier fit for brave pioneers. Young writes: ‘To a large extent, Manchurian empire building took place in the realm of the imagination [...] For those at home, this succession of imagined empires was as real as their physical embodiments across the sea.’<sup>94</sup> Young notes that Manchukuo’s imagined landscape in Japan was largely empty of people, thus the voices of the different peoples and ethnicities that really lived in Manchukuo were silent to the empire builders.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Duara, Prasenjit. *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2003), p.59.

<sup>91</sup> Young, Louise. *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), p.8; Han, Suk-Jung. ‘The Problem of Sovereignty: Manchukuo, 1932-1937’, *Positions: East Asia cultures critique*, Vol.12, No.2, (2004), p.457.

<sup>92</sup> Mursu, Laura. ‘Suomen suhteet Manchukuohon’. (unpublished bachelor’s Thesis, University of Helsinki, 2011), p.6.

<sup>93</sup> Young, *Japan’s Total Empire*, p.9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

The subjects of Manchukuo often experienced abuse from the authorities. As Young argues, to most Japanese, Manchukuo was an imagined space. However, there were many ways in which Japanese control over Manchuria produced practical and often horrifying results. The primary practical benefit of Manchuria to Japan's empire were firstly its supply output, that helped Japan's wartime efforts, and secondly its role as the territory where around a million Japanese tenant farmers were transported to ease the pressures of an overflowing population.<sup>96</sup> The way in which imperial subjects residing there were treated was often void of sensitivity. One of the most extreme examples of this is the human experimentation and biological warfare facility, Unit 731, that was set up at Harbin.<sup>97</sup> In the mid-1930s, an unethical human experimentation network called the 'Ishii network' was set up by Lt. General Ishii Shiro. The network conducted experiments around Japan's lines during the war, but the activity was based in Manchukuo.<sup>98</sup> Chinese civilians and even Japanese military personnel in Manchuria became victims of the results of the experimentations in the years 1936-1945.<sup>99</sup> Both the Kwantung Army and Emperor Hirohito sanctioned the activities of the unit. It is important to note that the persons responsible for the atrocities of Unit 731 were not tried sufficiently due to American interest to procure the results of the experimentations to their own use post-war.<sup>100</sup>

Even though Manchukuo was branded early on as a 'puppet-state', it had a level of autonomy and created certain characteristics of independence. Thomas Dubois writes that Manchukuo was 'never fully sovereign in the modern sense, and yet more complex than a simple puppet state'.<sup>101</sup> His work focuses on the legal structures of Manchukuo. Even though the legal system of Manchukuo was imported from Japan, many officials were Chinese, and an effort to incorporate local customs into law was made.<sup>102</sup> Although the rights of the Japanese remained higher than for the rest of the population in Manchukuo, the multi-ethnic reality of Manchukuo was promoted with pride.<sup>103</sup> The Han made up the majority, whilst the Japanese had special legal rights and the Manchus held symbolic importance, but also many Koreans, Mongols, Hui, and 'white' (non-Soviet) Russians lived in the

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<sup>96</sup> Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, p.67.

<sup>97</sup> Tsuneishi, 'Unit 731 and the Japanese Imperial Army's biological warfare program', in *Japan's Wartime Medical Atrocities: Comparative Inquiries in Science, History, and Ethics*, edited by Jing Bao Nie, et al., Taylor & Francis Group, 2010., pp.23.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.24-28. Units similar to Unit 731 were established by Japanese military in 1937-1942 on the Japanese front in Beijing, Nanjing, Guangzhou, and Singapore.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30

<sup>101</sup> Dubois, Thomas David. 'Inauthentic Sovereignty: Law and Legal Institutions in Manchukuo', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.69, No.3, (2010), p.750.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.754-755.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

area.<sup>104</sup> There are many ways in which the Empire of Manchukuo distinguished itself from the Japanese Empire, but in the end Manchukuo was ultimately, in Young's words, the 'jewel in Japan's imperial crown'.<sup>105</sup> Manchukuo was even so important that Emperor Pu Yi became the younger half-brother of Emperor Hirohito after he was ritually rebirthed as the son of Amaterasu in 1940.<sup>106</sup> Laura Mursu's research suggests that even the Manchu leadership of Manchukuo was limited to the realm of ideologies.<sup>107</sup>

Manchu and Japanese officials made great effort to present Manchukuo as a sovereign state. Prasenjit Duara's book *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo in the East Asian Modern* studies how Manchukuo's creators sought to provide it sovereignty and legitimacy by building on concepts of nationalism and culture over imperialism – a term that had lost its shine after World War I.<sup>108</sup> Before the establishment of Manchukuo in 1932, the Northeastern Chinese territory of Manchuria had been idealised by the Manchu rulers of the Qing Empire as the homeland of the Manchus.<sup>109</sup> The historical narrative which emphasised the distinction of Manchuria from the rest of the Han-Chinese territory was one of the strategies that the Japanese used to counter the Lytton Commission's report, that described Manchuria as 'unalterably Chinese', and to convince the world that Manchukuo was a sovereign nation-state.<sup>110</sup> Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang indeed put great effort into lobbying for China's rights to its lost territories, whilst taking a realistic 'policy of non-resistance' towards Manchukuo.<sup>111</sup> Thus the Republic of China and Empire of Japan also thought over Manchuria in the realm of ideas.

The image of Manchukuo that was displayed to Western audiences highlighted its sovereignty. The leaders of the Empire of Manchukuo, as well as the leaders in Japan, tried their utmost to gain official recognition for the independence of Manchukuo. Simon Preker writes: 'In trying to establish its unique national identity it also directly competed with the Republic of China with respect to territory,

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.761-764.

<sup>105</sup> Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, p.22.

<sup>106</sup> Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, pp.66-67.

<sup>107</sup> Mursu, 'Suomen suhteet Manchukuohon', p.5.

<sup>108</sup> Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, p.1.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.41-42. In particular, the Changbai mountains was nominated as the ancestral birthplace of the Manchus. The mountain range (Baekdu-daegan) was also considered the ancestral birthplace of the Korean nation by Korean nationalists.

<sup>110</sup> Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, pp.41-56.

<sup>111</sup> Huang, Tzu-chin. 'Embracing mainstream international society: Chiang Kai-shek's diplomatic strategy against Japan', *Chinese Studies in History*, Vol.49:4(2016), pp.212-213.

culture, and diplomacy.<sup>112</sup> Preker's research demonstrates that the nature of Manchukuo's sovereignty has interested researchers. The following section will discuss the international relations of Manchukuo during its existence.

### 2.3. Manchukuo's Diplomatic Relations

Even though Manchukuo was branded as a puppet state early on, it still managed to gain international recognition and thus take part in the international diplomatic community, albeit in a limited fashion. Although Chiang Kai-shek's Republican Government tried to prevent any international *de facto* (implied) or *de jure* (formal) recognition of Manchukuo, officials from Manchukuo and Japan were able to gain recognition for Manchukuo from fifteen to nineteen countries or so.<sup>113</sup> The records of which countries granted recognition, *de jure* or otherwise, of Manchukuo are hard to verify in some cases, and would in its own terms make a wonderful topic for further research. Ailisha O'Sullivan's list of countries that recognised Manchukuo is included as Appendix 2, and it provides an overview of Manchukuo's diplomatic ties. Most countries chose to adhere to the League of Nations non-recognition policy of Manchukuo, and its effect was strengthened by the non-recognition of Manchukuo of great powers like Great Britain and the United States.<sup>114</sup> As for the states that chose to recognise Manchukuo, the reasons vary from wishing to strengthen trade to alliance to the Axis Powers. The following chapter will briefly discuss the varying reasons that some states had for recognising Manchukuo, as well as the nature of Manchukuo's diplomatic activities. Finland's recognition of Manchukuo is discussed in more detail in the coming sections.

Diplomatic recognition was important for the legitimisation of Manchukuo abroad.<sup>115</sup> The Japanese government sought international recognition for Manchukuo desperately. Prasenjit Duara argues that Manchukuo, albeit an imperialistic venture of the Japanese government, 'was not developed as a colony, but as a nation-state.'<sup>116</sup> It was a puppet state, but Manchukuo was presented to the world as a sovereign state with a distinct nationality and a history that devised to separate it from China and even Japan.<sup>117</sup> In practice, Manchukuo partook in the international community. There were some

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<sup>112</sup> Preker, Simon. 'Illegitimate Representatives: Manchukuo-German Relations and Diplomatic Struggles in Nazi Germany' in *Sino-German Encounters and Entanglements*, edit. Cho, Joanne Miyang, (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021), p.289.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p.291; O'Sullivan, Ailisha M. 'Manchukuo's Relations with Other Nations', (published Master's thesis, University College Cork, 1982), p.43.

<sup>114</sup> O'Sullivan, 'Manchukuo's Relations', pp.70-71.

<sup>115</sup> Preker, 'Illegitimate Representatives', p.292.

<sup>116</sup> Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, p.1.

<sup>117</sup> Han, 'The Problem of Sovereignty', p.457.

countries that recognised Manchukuo and established bilateral diplomatic relations with it; others recognised it but did not have diplomatic representation, and some countries did not recognise Manchukuo but had government-supported observers and advisers there. Frederik Middlebush wrote in 1934 about the non-recognition policy that the League of Nations decided to apply to Manchukuo:

‘In order to give genuine authority to non-recognition as a sanction, it is necessary that the effect of withholding recognition be made as oppressive as possible.’

The purpose of the policy was to isolate Manchukuo from the global arena, but even in 1934 Middlebush questioned whether such a policy would produce the desired results.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, in practice, Manchukuo entered the international arena, with and without recognition.

The League of Nations’ policy was effective to a certain degree: Manchukuo was not universally recognised. There are various reasons for this, one of the most notable being that the League of Nations’ condemnation of Japan in 1933 and the adoption of the non-recognition policy.<sup>119</sup> Great Britain and France opted for a policy of non-recognition which was also motivated by cultivating good relations in both China and Japan, or at least maintaining a status quo.<sup>120</sup> To many countries, Japan’s promise of trade prospects to the vast country of Manchukuo was a kind of temptation that made Great Britain pursue economic ties with Manchukuo: even recognition was brought up as a possibility.<sup>121</sup> The United States was not a member of the League of Nations, but based its non-recognition policy decision on reasons to uphold the Nine Powers Treaty of 1922 and the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928.<sup>122</sup> The aforementioned Great Powers could more freely define their relations with Japan, China, and Manchukuo. Small powers often wished to support the non-recognition policy due to their hopes that the League of Nations could maintain order and thus safeguard the territories of small powers. Ailisha O’Sullivan notes that the policies of non-recognition were always motivated by self-interest more so than a feeling of moral obligation to the League or Chinese territorial integrity.<sup>123</sup> The extensive list of countries that had a presence in Manchukuo without having formed diplomatic relations suggests that Manchukuo was much more international than previously understood and would require further research.

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<sup>118</sup> Middlebush, ‘International Affairs’, pp.677.

<sup>119</sup> O’Sullivan, ‘Manchukuo’s Relations’, p.71.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.71-88.

<sup>121</sup> Nish, Ian. *The History of Manchuria, 1840-1948: A Sino-Russo-Japanese Triangle*, (Kent: Renaissance Books, 2016), pp.169-170.

<sup>122</sup> O’Sullivan, ‘Manchukuo’s Relations’, p.71.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

Japan eagerly latched onto all signs of good will towards Manchukuo. Even the smallest relation to Manchukuo that foreign country representatives showed was spun by the government and Japanese press as a sign of recognition. There are multiple examples of this, such as the disputed recognition by the Dominican Republic. O'Sullivan's research reveals that the Dominican Republic, upon Pu Yi's ascension to the throne of the Empire of Manchukuo, had sent a note of congratulation in August 1934.<sup>124</sup> This note was interpreted as an initiation of diplomatic relations with Manchukuo in the Japan Year Book of 1937, but the Dominican Republic's *chargé d'affairs* in London publicly refuted there having been a formal issuance of recognition.<sup>125</sup> The Finnish consul Hugo Valvanne reports of a similar incident involving Estonia in 1934.<sup>126</sup> The Estonian representative, Mr. Oinas, was travelling in Moscow and Vladivostok on official government business, when he was invited by the Japanese to return to Estonia via Manchukuo. This trip was reported in the news agency Rengo as a prelude to Estonia's establishment of diplomatic relations with Manchukuo. Although Oinas refuted such information, Valvanne notes that it is not impossible that Japanese authorities would make an effort to try and persuade Estonia to grant recognition to Manchukuo.

When states decided to recognise Manchukuo, they were motivated by different reasons. Ailisha O'Sullivan groups the countries that allegedly recognised Manchukuo into five categories based on the conditions by which they gave their recognition [see Appendix 2 for O'Sullivan's list of countries that recognised Manchukuo].<sup>127</sup> The term "allegedly" is important here, since there are multiple cases where Japanese and Manchukuoan officials interpreted certain actions of other countries to be a sign of recognition, when the states themselves never gave purposeful diplomatic recognition.<sup>128</sup> The first group is Japan with its ally Thailand, and The Reformed Nationalist Government in China (aka the Wang Jingwei regime) that it created; the second is Germany and its allies or satellites (including Finland); the third is pre-occupation Poland and the Vatican; the fourth is USSR and its puppet state Outer Mongolia; and the fifth is El Salvador and the Dominican Republic.<sup>129</sup> The first and second groups are defined by a political reason: alliance with either Japan or Germany. The Vatican's diplomatic courtship with Manchukuo was motivated by anti-Communism, whilst Poland's was

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<sup>124</sup> O'Sullivan, 'Manchukuo's Relations', p.60.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Tokyo, 'Mantsukuo ja Viro', 01.12.1934.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>128</sup> Oono, Taikan. 'Manchukuo's International Relations: Manchukuo-Recognition Problem and Foreign Missions', JACAR Newsletter Number 29, June 28, 2019.

<[https://www.jacar.go.jp/english/newsletter/newsletter\\_029e/newsletter\\_029e.html#article02-01](https://www.jacar.go.jp/english/newsletter/newsletter_029e/newsletter_029e.html#article02-01)> [accessed 16.01.2024]; O'Sullivan, 'Manchukuo's Relations', p.58.

<sup>129</sup> O'Sullivan, 'Manchukuo's Relations', p.44.

interested in increasing trade.<sup>130</sup> The USSR recognised Manchukuo for practical reasons which included signing a non-aggression pact with Japan in April 1941.<sup>131</sup> The fifth group is categorised with cordial relations with Manchukuo which were interpreted as recognition of Manchukuo.<sup>132</sup> Whilst the categories that O'Sullivan has created give a good outline for the reasons for recognising Manchukuo, on closer inspection every situation for recognising Manchukuo was different.

For instance, Germany's long-standing support and exchange with China severely hindered Germany's interest to antagonise China by recognising Manchukuo, whilst in Italy such woes were much less pronounced, even though the to-be Axis partners had similar reasons for giving recognition.<sup>133</sup> Thailand (formerly Siam) had abstained from voting in the League of Nations General Assembly case on Manchukuo in 1933 and adhered to a neutral approach.<sup>134</sup> However, during the tenure of Plaek Phibunsongkhram starting in December 1938, a pro-Japanese trend grew and led to Manchukuo's recognition on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1941.<sup>135</sup> Manchukuo and Thailand exchanged Embassies, yet their relations were strained due to the Pacific War.<sup>136</sup> As for Poland, which never recognised Manchukuo *de jure*, the exchange of consuls and trade agreements with Manchukuo in 1938 can be considered as *de facto* recognition, at least until Poland withdrew its diplomatic staff from Japan and Manchukuo in 1941.<sup>137</sup>

El Salvador was the second country after Japan to recognise Manchukuo in March 1934. Harvey Gardiner writes that the reason why the new dictator of El Salvador, General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, made a formal recognition of Manchukuo was to seek, *quid pro quo*, legitimisation for his own regime.<sup>138</sup> Subsequently, Japan rewarded El Salvador for this action by showing it special attention out of the other Central American countries: Japan even named a *chargé d'affaires* for Central American issues, and the newly appointed Yashishi Otani opened the legation in San Salvador in January 1936.<sup>139</sup> Beyond the diplomatic courtesies, El Salvador was of little interest to Japan's foreign policy, as Japan's trade to Central America was virtually non-existent, even though El

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.42-63.

<sup>133</sup> Preker, 'Illegitimate Representatives', p.298.

<sup>134</sup> Oono, 'Manchukuo's International Relations'.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Gardiner, C. Harvey. 'The Japanese and Central America', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol.14, No.1, (1972), p.19.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

Salvador wished to increase its export of coffee beans to Japan.<sup>140</sup> El Salvador withdrew its recognition of Manchukuo in January 1943: more than a year after it declared war on Japan.<sup>141</sup>

Mussolini's Italy set the example of recognising Manchukuo in Europe. Daniel Hedinger's research shows that Mussolini had changed his Italy-centred definition of fascism by the end of 1932 and thence Italy pioneered the globalisation of fascism.<sup>142</sup> Italy also took the leading role of re-defining its East Asian diplomacy, when it decided to favour Japan over China.<sup>143</sup> Immediately after Italy had joined the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1937, it recognised Manchukuo.<sup>144</sup> In 1938, Mussolini sent an Italian Blackshirt delegation on a friendship mission to Japan, which included the delegation visiting Japan's colonies.<sup>145</sup> Hedinger argues, in fact, that the diplomatic theatre and propaganda of the Axis alliance 'was a way of handling tensions and contradictions within the alliance'.<sup>146</sup> The diplomatic recognition of Manchukuo was part of such an act. However, even within the relationships of Axis aligned powers with Manchukuo, there are distinct differences. For example, when Italy recognised Manchukuo, China recalled its ambassador in Italy; the delegation in Germany was not recalled after Germany's recognition.<sup>147</sup>

Indeed, Germany's historically close ties with China delayed German recognition of Manchukuo, but the new political alignments of the late 1930s favoured the Japanese connection. Simon Preker's research shows that despite signing a trade agreement with Manchukuo in April 1936, German-Chinese relations remained relatively good until 1938, when Germany started to tighten its relations with Japan in earnest.<sup>148</sup> Germany's formal recognition of Manchukuo was proclaimed by Adolf Hitler in his speech at the Reichstag on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1938, where he proclaimed a new Japan lead order in Asia; the speech and Germany's new direction in Asia made Sino-German relations bitter.<sup>149</sup> By the end of 1938, Germany had welcomed Manchukuo's diplomatic staff that comprised of Lü Yiwen (who famously issued visas to Manchukuo for Jews in Germany) and Ehara Kōichi in Berlin,

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*; O'Sullivan, 'Manchukuo's Relations', p.59.

<sup>141</sup> Iijima, Midori. 'José Gustavo Guerero y la diplomacia salvadoreña del martinato', *Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, No. 93, (2003), p.446.

<sup>142</sup> Hedinger, Daniel. 'Universal Fascism and its Global Legacy. Italy's and Japan's Entangled History in the Early 1930s', *Fascism*, volume 2.2 (2013), p.144.

<sup>143</sup> Hedinger, Daniel. 'The Spectacle of Global Fascism: The Italian Blackshirt mission to Japan's Asian empire', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 6, (2015), p.2023.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2033.

<sup>147</sup> Preker, 'Illegitimate Representatives', p.298.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.294-295.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

and An Jiyun in Hamburg.<sup>150</sup> Preker's research shows that none of the members of Manchukuo's diplomatic corps in Germany were neither experienced diplomats nor had extensive knowledge of Germany.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, their activities were monitored by their Japanese deputy counterparts.<sup>152</sup> Lü Yiwen was also appointed as Manchukuo's minister to Hungary in August 1939, to Romania in May 1940, and to Finland in December 1941: the fortunes of the delegation in Europe were tied to the Axis power dynamics.<sup>153</sup> Preker writes: 'with China's diminishing influence in Germany and Germany's increasingly pro-Japanese foreign policy, Manchukuo managed to increase its visibility in Europe.'<sup>154</sup> By the end of 1941, Sino-German relations had broken down completely following Germany's recognition of the Wang Jingwei regime in July 1941 and China's declaration of war on the Axis Powers Japan, Germany, and Italy after the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941.<sup>155</sup> Preker concludes that, despite the context of war, the Manchukuo diplomatic delegation was relatively successful in their activities in Germany, and even Manchukuo's tenth anniversary was celebrated there with a concert conducted by the Korean composer Ahn Eak-tai.<sup>156</sup>

One important factor which led to some countries recognising Manchukuo was alliance to the Anti-Comintern pact, which was first signed between Japan and Germany on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1936. In Japan, the study of the ideologies of fascism gained popularity after the occupation of Manchuria, and fascism was seen increasingly as an alternate world order which found affinity in the increasingly nationalistic political environment in Japan.<sup>157</sup> In 1932, a Japanese translation of *Mein Kampf* was published and the assassination of prime minister Inukai Tsuyoshi on May 15<sup>th</sup> took place; thus 1932 is considered largely by historians to be the 'fascist turning point' in Japan's wartime history.<sup>158</sup> Hedinger argues that Japan created its own version of fascism, which included the ideals of Japanese nationalism and Pan-Asianism, but welcomed the political support of like-minded regimes in Europe.<sup>159</sup> There was even an establishment of a fascist-styled diplomatic theatre, as Hedinger discusses.<sup>160</sup> Research on the history of a global diplomatic culture of the Axis-aligned powers would make an interesting and extensive research topic. The case study of Finland's recognition of

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.299-300.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*; Uola, 'Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta', p.291.

<sup>154</sup> Preker, 'Illegitimate Representatives', p.300.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.302.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p.305. Ahn Eak-tai later composed the music for the South Korean anthem. He was a friend of the Manchurian diplomat Ehara Kōichi.

<sup>157</sup> Hedinger, 'Universal', p.159.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.149-151. Meanwhile in Finland, the first translation of *Mein Kampf* was published in 1941.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p.159.

<sup>160</sup> Hedinger, 'The Spectacle of Global Fascism', p.2034.

Manchukuo forms a part of that puzzle, as the primary reason for Finland's recognition of Manchukuo was its alliance with Nazi Germany since spring-summer 1941. The following section will discuss the nature of Finland's Axis alignment.

### 2.3. The Nature of Finland's Axis Alignment

As discussed in the previous chapter, states had varying and often complex reasons affecting the decision to recognise Manchukuo. The League of Nations implemented a framework of non-recognition policy towards Manchukuo. As the League had no means to sanction states that did recognise Manchukuo, the threat fell flat. For small powers the League of Nations still represented a promise of an international order that would protect their sovereignty against larger powers with territorial claims.<sup>161</sup> As discussed in a previous chapter, Finland also initially voted against Japan's conquest at the League of Nations Assembly of 1933. Thereafter Finnish envoys in Japan and China adhered to Finland's policy of non-recognition of Manchukuo in their activities in their post countries. Finland's turn to the recognition policy is closely tied with Finland's domestic events: the Winter War and Continuation War, which changed Finland's circumstances and political alignments considerably.

This chapter will shortly examine the nature of Finland's alliance to the Axis Powers, and Nazi-Germany especially, for this alliance is the primary reason for Finland's recognition of Manchukuo. The nature of the alliance between Finland and Nazi-Germany during the Second World War is a sensitive and painfully debated topic amongst Finnish historians. Especially after the war crimes and crimes against humanity of Nazi-Germany were thoroughly examined at the Nuremberg trials (November 1945-October 1946), Finland's guilt by association and occasional compliance to criminal activity ensured that muted discussions about alliance continued for a long time after the end of the war.<sup>162</sup> Even though much has been researched and argued about Finnish war history in Finnish historiography, this paper also adds a quality to the narrative of Finland's war history in respect to wartime diplomacy and the nature of the alliance with the Axis bloc, which included Manchukuo.

In Finnish historiography, the alliance with Nazi-Germany is a sensitive topic. For a long time, Finland characterised its alliance with Nazi Germany to be one born out of necessity, and the terms such as *kanssasotija* (co-belligerent) were used instead of 'ally' to signify the relationship with

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<sup>161</sup> O'Sullivan, 'Manchukuo's Relations', pp.84–85.

<sup>162</sup> Holmila, Antero; Silvennoinen, Oula. 'The Holocaust Historiography in Finland', *Scandinavian Journal of History* volume: 36 (2011), pp.614-615.

Germany.<sup>163</sup> *Talvisodan henki* (Winter War spirit), that the war united a divided Finland; *ajopuuteoria* (driftwood theory), that Finland had no choice but to form an alliance with Germany; and *erillissotateesi* (separate war argument), that Finland's war with the USSR was not connected to Germany's wars, are the most influential myths of Finnish war history.<sup>164</sup> Historians disagree on determining the extent to which Finland was forced to form an alliance with Nazi Germany versus Finland seeking out that alliance independently. Furthermore, historians ongoingly discuss the nature of the alliance: how strong the link between Nazi Germany and Finland was, and what kind of power dynamics it contained. Some modern historians, like Jukka Seppinen, maintain the view that Finland was forced to form an alliance with Nazi Germany.<sup>165</sup> Others aim to deconstruct the old views of Finnish war history, like Markku Jokisipilä and Oula Silvennoinen, who claim that Finland's ties to Nazi Germany were tighter than claimed.<sup>166</sup> New Finnish historiography is ridding itself of 'the mental habit of clinging to the separate war thesis or the myth of Finland as the "clean" Axis country'.<sup>167</sup> Incidentally Finland's East Asian policies during the war can offer an insight into the nature of Finland's alliance with Nazi Germany and the Axis alignment.

Finland's entry into an alliance with Nazi Germany was not straightforward, even though Finland had historically good ties with Germany. Finland entered into the stage of World War II on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1939, when the Soviet Union (then an ally of Nazi Germany) launched an attack on Finland. This first epoch of fighting is called the Winter War. Due to the attack, Finland filed a claim against the Soviet Union at the League of Nations that led to its expulsion, albeit debated at the time, from the League.<sup>168</sup> Despite evoking sympathy worldwide, Finland did not receive enough aid to defend against the Soviet attack. During the Winter War, Great Britain, France, and Sweden made plans to launch a military aid campaign to Finland, but those plans never materialised.<sup>169</sup> Indeed, without adequate aid, Finnish wartime leaders sought to sign a peace treaty with the Soviet Union after 105 days of fighting. The Treaty of Moscow was signed on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1940, and the treaty stipulated the cessation of around eight percent of Finnish territories on the Eastern border, causing a refugee crisis of Finns from those areas and a vast social trauma.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Jokisipilä, Markku. *Aseveljiä vai liittolaisia? Suomi, Hitlerin Saksan liittosopimusvaatimukset ja Rytin-Ribbentropin sopimus* (Helsinki: Suomen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2004), p.10.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.12–14.

<sup>165</sup> Seppinen, Jukka. *Hitler, Stalin ja Suomi: Isänmaa totalitarismin puristuksessa 1935–1944*, (Helsinki: Minerva, 2009), pp.126–127.

<sup>166</sup> Jokisipilä, *Aseveljiä*; Holmila & Silvennoinen, 'The Holocaust Historiography', pp.605–606.

<sup>167</sup> Holmila & Silvennoinen, 'The Holocaust Historiography', p.615.

<sup>168</sup> Gross, Leo. 'Was the Soviet Union Expelled from the League of Nations?' *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (1945), p.43.

<sup>169</sup> Ruotsila, Markku. *Churchill ja Suomi* (Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Otava, 2002), pp.143–146.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p.151.

The post-war situation was difficult in many ways, but Finnish decision makers had accepted the Treaty of Moscow with a view of regrouping and gathering strength for a possibly long term conflict.<sup>171</sup> In March 1940, Stalin had proposed a peace treaty with Finland because the war had taxed Soviet troops and stability more than anticipated, yet Finland's question remained unresolved for Stalin.<sup>172</sup> Meanwhile the year of 1940 was a year of military success for Hitler: by the end of Spring, Germany had invaded Denmark and Norway, and by the end of Summer, the westward assault had swept over France.<sup>173</sup> Jukka Seppinen notes that by the end of 1940, Finland and Sweden were surrounded by Nazi Germany everywhere but the East.<sup>174</sup> Due to this situation, Finland's trade was increasingly governed by Germany; furthermore, under the circumstances, Germany seemed to be able to offer the best aid to strengthen the Finnish military.<sup>175</sup> Markku Ruotsila notes that even though Churchill had promoted British military to aid to Finland during the Winter War due to geostrategic considerations, by summer 1940 British interests were elsewhere.<sup>176</sup> The United States, which maintained amicable relations with Finland throughout World War II, had not yet joined the war.<sup>177</sup> Seppinen argues that in these circumstances, Finland had little other choice than to turn for aid from Nazi Germany, and the alliance was consolidated over the spring of 1941.<sup>178</sup>

Even though Finland was fighting alongside Nazi Germany, it received special treatment from Great Britain and the United States. After operation Barbarossa broke the previous non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union joined the Allied Powers in June 1941. At the time, Finland had also formalised its alignment with Nazi Germany, and when the USSR attacked Finland again on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1941, German troops fought alongside the Finnish military in the Continuation War. Thus, the Allied powers and Finland were now definitively on opposing sides of the war. Stalin adamantly required Great Britain to declare war on Finland; however, it would take six months before the declaration of war was made in December 1941.<sup>179</sup> During the Continuation War, U.S. diplomats tried to persuade Finland to cease fire, and Churchill attempted to have Finland pursue for separate peace with Soviet Union, accepting, even, that Finland might not be able to untie its alliance with Nazi Germany officially.<sup>180</sup> Markku Ruotsila argues that especially Churchill, who was a fervent anti-communist, wished to treat Finland leniently despite its alliance with Nazi

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<sup>171</sup> Seppinen, *Hitler, Stalin ja Suomi*, p.111.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.105-108.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* p.110.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* pp.122.

<sup>176</sup> Ruotsila, *Churchill ja Suomi*, p.159–160.

<sup>177</sup> Seppinen, *Hitler, Stalin ja Suomi*, p.144.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117.

<sup>179</sup> Ruotsila, *Churchill ja Suomi*, pp.168–179.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

Germany, for Churchill believed that a democratic and independent Finland would aid in containing the Soviet Union in the future.<sup>181</sup> However, despite Churchill's efforts the British government sent out the declaration of war to Finland, Romania and Hungary in 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1941.<sup>182</sup> Throughout the war, however, the only offensive military activity that Great Britain took against Finland was the bombing of Petsamo in the summer of 1941.<sup>183</sup> After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour, the United States joined the war on the Allied side, but Finland and the United States never declared war on each other.<sup>184</sup> For Finland, the Continuation war ended with defeat and the signing of a separate peace treaty with the Soviet Union on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September, 1944, without the consent of its military partner. Until spring 1945 Finland waged war on the remaining German troops in Lapland, known as the Lapland War.

Finland was an ally of Nazi Germany in the Continuation War, but there are many examples of ways in which Finnish decision makers sought to "keep the door open" towards the Allied Powers, excepting the Soviet Union. For instance, Finland signed the Anti-Comintern Pact on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1945, but refused to sign the Axis alliance agreement. It could be argued, like Mikko Uola has done, that Finland's recognition of Manchukuo was part of the package of favours that Finland was required to show the Axis aligned Powers, and the non-recognition of the Japanese installed government in China, the Wang Jingwei regime, was opted as a strategy to maintain an element of independence and distance from the Axis.<sup>185</sup> The separate-war argument, that Finland's war with the Soviet Union was separate from Nazi Germany's, is supported by such considerations. On the other hand, Markku Jokisipilä's doctoral research argues that the *erillissotateesi* (separate-war argument), which the wartime decision makers of Finland fostered, was undeniably disrupted following the Ryti-Ribbentrop agreement made in June, 1944.<sup>186</sup> The agreement stipulated that in exchange for Germany's continuing aid, Finland would not pursue separate peace with the Soviet Union, that had gained an upper hand in the Continuation War.<sup>187</sup> Jokisipilä argues that this agreement made Finland a fully-fledged ally of Nazi Germany: the separate war -argument was effectively nullified, and any independence as a political actor was lost.<sup>188</sup> The United States cut diplomatic ties with Finland on

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> Seppinen, *Hitler, Stalin ja Suomi*, p.190.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* p.114.

<sup>185</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta*, pp.293–295.

<sup>186</sup> Jokisipilä, *Aseveljiä*, pp.9–10.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 1944, following this agreement.<sup>189</sup> Previously Finland had been USA's pet favourite, but now the 'goodwill' had run out.<sup>190</sup>

For some historians, deciding the nature of Finland's war-time alliance with Nazi-Germany is the core of their work. There is endless room for further studies, for Finland's relationship with Nazi Germany and other Axis aligned powers was multifaceted. New research argues that Finland was much more closely linked with Nazi Germany, both on ideological and practical levels.<sup>191</sup> Markku Jokisipilä and Oula Silvennoinen, for instance, have argued in this vein. On the other hand, previous research shows that Finnish decision makers consciously attempted, where possible, to maintain a sense of independence from Germany.<sup>192</sup> Finland's diplomatic decisions in East Asia can thus be added as a case study to this line of research.<sup>193</sup> Finland both showed a certain enthusiasm to recognise Manchukuo and exchange diplomatic ties with it, but at the same time, Finland refused to recognise the Wang Jingwei Regime. The next chapter will discuss these issues more based on Mikko Uola's findings.

#### 2.4. Finland Recognises Manchukuo

Historian Mikko Uola has reconstructed the process of Finland's recognition decision of Manchukuo by July 1941. His work is based on extensive archival research of the Finnish Foreign Ministry's archives. Uola confirms that in the 1930s, Finnish diplomats in Tokyo had avoided any actions that could have been interpreted by the Japanese as a sign of interest towards Manchukuo.<sup>194</sup> Finland's foreign policy had, at the time, been committed to the jurisdiction of the League of Nations, as well as the alliance of Nordic countries.<sup>195</sup> Uola writes, in the traditional view of Finnish war history, that after the Winter War, Finland had drifted closer to Nazi Germany due to unavoidable circumstances.<sup>196</sup> He argues that the recognition decision of Manchukuo had most to do with Finland's alliance with Nazi Germany, which had made Finland's relations with the other Axis Powers closer, at least in principle.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> 'Natsi-Saksa ja Suomi' (2022), YLE, YLE Areena, < <https://areena.yle.fi/1-62238073> > [date accessed 06.09.2023].

<sup>192</sup> Seppinen, *Hitler, Stalin ja Suomi*, pp.114–117.

<sup>193</sup> See also Masunaga, Shingo. 'In Search of New Facts: Interwar Japanese Military Intelligence Activities in the Baltic States and Finland, 1918-1940', (published thesis, Turun Yliopisto, 2021).

<sup>194</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja Keskuksen Valtakunta*, p.285.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p.283.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p.284.

Uola's research shows that before the recognition decision was made, Finland's envoy to Tokyo, Karl Gustaf Idman, promoted Finland's recognition of Manchukuo even before the official recognition decision was made. Idman's letters to the Foreign Ministry demonstrate that Japanese politicians somewhat actively courted Finland's recognition for Manchukuo in the spring of 1941.<sup>198</sup> Incidentally, this timing coincides with the courtship of Finland with Nazi Germany. Idman seems to have supported recognition personally, stating that perhaps Finland had been a bit too stern with its approach to Manchukuo in a letter to Foreign Minister Rolf Witting in February 1941.<sup>199</sup> Finally the recognition decision was made in July 1941, after Japan's envoy to Helsinki, Tadashi Sakaya, recommended to the Foreign Ministry that Finland should recognise Manchukuo. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, 1941, Finland officially recognised Manchukuo *de jure*, and by the end of the year Finland and Manchukuo had exchanged political representatives.<sup>200</sup> Idman was accredited as a minister to Hsinking, Manchukuo's capital, and Manchukuo's envoy to Berlin, Lü I-wen, was accredited to Helsinki.<sup>201</sup> Soon after the recognition, China's minister in Stockholm visited Finland to present China's complaint on the decision, but China's outburst elicited no satisfactory response from Finland.<sup>202</sup> Uola argues that by summer 1941, Finland was siding firmly with the Axis powers and no longer put weight on the old reasonings for maintaining the non-recognition policy.<sup>203</sup>

Nonetheless, Finland did have formal diplomatic relations with the Empire of Manchukuo. Idman was the acting consul accredited to Manchukuo, and he visited there in late 1941 to present his credentials.<sup>204</sup> He also made another trip there to represent Finland at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary party of the founding of Manchukuo, in 1942.<sup>205</sup> Due to Idman's insistence that the Finns living in Manchukuo needed more assistance, Finland also accredited the Estonian businessman Harry Kusik as Finland's honorary consul to Manchukuo.<sup>206</sup> Finland already had an honorary consul, the German Paul Pansing, accredited in the Japanese concession of Dairen since 1928.<sup>207</sup> Other than Idman's report of his first trip to Manchukuo, there has yet to be discovered more descriptive evidence of what Finland's relations with Manchukuo were like in practice. To what extent did Finland engage with

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p.287.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p.248.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p.288.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.290-291.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p.289.

<sup>204</sup> Tokyo, 'Käyntini Mantšukuossa', 10.12.1941.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p.298-299.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

Manchukuoans in their dealings with Manchukuo? This would provide an interesting research topic for someone that could investigate the archives of Manchukuo for evidence of Finnish engagement.

Whether Finland made any effort to consider China's point of view on the Manchukuo recognition case is not fully investigated by Uola. However, it is noteworthy that Finland did not recognise the Reorganized National Government of the Republic of China (also known as Wang Jingwei Regime or Nanjing government) despite both the Japanese and the Germans urging Finland to do so in conjuncture with recognising Manchukuo.<sup>208</sup> Uola writes:

‘The documents at the Foreign Ministry do not provide a clear answer as to why Finland consciously chose to disagree with Germany and its allies on the issue of recognising the Nanjing regime.’<sup>209</sup>

He speculates that Finland's relations with China were not so close as to be the primary reason for this decision, but that non-compliance was part of the Finnish strategy of maintaining a degree of autonomy in the alliance with the Axis powers, as well as maintaining an open door to the United States and Great Britain.<sup>210</sup> Indeed, Finland signed the Anti-Comintern Pact at the same time as the Nanjing government on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, 1944, but was the only German ally that maintained diplomatic relations with the Republican government of China during the war.<sup>211</sup> That neither the Allied United States nor Republic of China declared war on Finland may support the hypothesis of some Finnish historians that Finland was able to maintain a level of autonomy from Nazi Germany and the other Axis powers.<sup>212</sup> However, it is possible that sympathy for China's situation or the well-written pro-Chinese reports of envoy Ville Niskanen in the 1930s also deterred Finnish decision makers from recognising the Nanjing regime, but such a claim would warrant extensive archival research.

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p.292.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.293-295.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p.298.

### 3. Images of Manchuria and Manchukuo

The background section explored the different contexts surrounding Manchukuo's sovereignty and Finland's recognition decision. The analysis section will study the images of Manchukuo present in the reports of the Finnish diplomats in Shanghai and Tokyo with historical image research. Images are constructions of reality that an individual creates based on their personality, past experiences, and belief systems.<sup>213</sup> Thus, images contain subjective knowledge. They not only shape our understanding of the world, but our actions as well.<sup>214</sup> The envoys in Tokyo and Shanghai each created an image of the land of Manchuria based on the information they received and chose to procure. Their individual personalities shaped the ways in which they understood Manchukuo, as well as the language they used to convey their images. This in turn would have shaped the way in which the decisionmakers in Finland imagined Manchuria, not to mention East Asia in general. Studying the images of Manchuria and the Empire of Manchukuo that the envoys created in their reports offers an important point of view to the study of Manchukuo's history as well as the history of Finnish diplomacy. This chapter looks at Manchuria's images that each envoy created, starting from the first envoy to East Asia, Ramstedt, and ending with the last envoys of the Second World War, Idman and Tanner.

#### 3.1. Gustaf John Ramstedt- Manchurian Land of Warlords and Japanese Aspirations

Finland's first envoy to East Asia, Gustaf John Ramstedt, wrote an enormous quantity of reports on East Asian, mainly Japanese and Chinese, affairs since arriving to his post in Tokyo in 1920 until he left Japan in 1929. Ramstedt was hired as the first diplomat to Asia, as he was considered the foremost 'Asia expert' in newly independent Finland due to his travels in Siberia, Central-Asia, and Mongolia to study Altaic languages in the 1900-1910s.<sup>215</sup> Professor Ramstedt was indeed a suave intellectual: his reports are well written and extensive, and he gathered information from many sources. He even made it his personal mission to learn Japanese and use it in his work, which made him quite popular among the Japanese. He also took an interest in the Korean language and wrote an influential Korean grammar book in 1939.<sup>216</sup> His reports also reveal something of his personality: he was gentlemanly and enjoyed proper decorum, whilst some of his sarcastic remarks point to his cynicism and dislike of ignorant people and decisions. He imparts his evaluation of events much more freely than his successors, and, in many ways, demonstrates that he belongs to an older generation of diplomats.

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<sup>213</sup> Fält, 'Introduction', pp.8-9 .

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> Paloposki, Jyrki. 'Suomen ja Japanin diplomaattisuhteiden alkuvaiheet', *Ulkoministeriö* (3.5.2020), pp.5-6.

<sup>216</sup> Ramstedt, G.J. *A Korean Grammar* (Helsinki: The Finno-Ugrian Society, 1939), (Helsinki: The Finno-Ugrian Society, 1997).

During his nine years as envoy in the 1920s, Ramstedt reported on Manchuria especially from the following angles: railways, warlords, economy and trade, and Japan's interests in the area. Many reports of Ramstedt cover the warlord conflicts across China, and feature detailed descriptions of the belligerents, their forces, and their alliances. During Ramstedt's tenure, the northern warlord, Zhang Zuolin, controlled Manchuria. The construction and ownership of railways was an important political topic, as it revolved around the powers struggles of the area between the Chinese, Japanese, and Russians. Ramstedt wrote on the dispute of Zhang's commission of building a new railroad track across Manchuria in May 1925:

‘[the Russian representatives say that] Northern-Manchuria is Russia's and Southern-Manchuria is Japan's sphere of interest, and therefore in the name of friendship Japan must forbid the South-Manchurian Railways' government building this track. Zhang has replied firmly [...] that the construction of the railway track on its own territory is China's own business, and that China can commission it to anyone she sees fit, therefore presenting an objection is a violation on Chinese independence.’<sup>217</sup>

This passage conveys well the powers struggles related to railway imperialism in Manchuria. The image that is conveyed in this report is that Zhang holds power over the decisions in Manchukuo. Ramstedt's own view is expressed later in the report, as he says that due to Russian pressure, Zhang has turned more towards Japan for aid.<sup>218</sup>

Ramstedt's focus on North-Eastern China, or Manchuria, before the Manchurian incident starts with describing it as the kingdom of the northern warlords, but towards the end of his tenure he writes increasingly about Manchuria as the land of Japan's economic and even imperialistic dreams. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 1926, he wrote an explicit paragraph in his report where he singled out Japan's imperialistic aspirations in Manchuria. Interestingly, this report compliments and scrutinises Japanese activity in Manchuria:

‘With no sign of change does Japan's China politics continue with the spreading of the influence of Japanese businessmen in Manchuria. Compared to the Russians, they have much greater experience and, first and foremost, far better funding and greater drive, organisation and fitness, and much freer an opportunity to act in Manchuria and little by little make Manchuria into the continuation of Korea.’<sup>219</sup>

Here, Ramstedt expresses his realistic point of view on the situation in Manchuria as one dominated by the Japanese. The Soviet influence is disregarded either due to his observations and perhaps partly due to his anti-Communist stance, which he takes in many of his reports.

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<sup>217</sup> Tokyo, 'Marsalkka Tshang TsoLin', 29.05.1925 (181).

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, (182).

<sup>219</sup> Tokyo, 'Tilanne Mantshuriassa', 18.03.1926 (38).

During the 1920s, Chinese nationalist sentiment grew considerably, and the Republican Government led by Kuomintang made efforts to unify China. Warlord Zhang's warmer relations with Kuomintang posed a threat to his previous ally, Japan, and the Kwantung Army assassinated Zhang in June 1928. His son, Zhang Xueliang ("the Young Marshal"), took charge over Manchuria and formed an alliance with Kuomintang, which led to inner power struggles over the Northern territory. Ramstedt wrote of the tense situation in August 1929:

'No one can yet predict how far this sensitive tension between Mukden [Zhang] and Nanjing [Kuomintang], (about the question of domination of Manchuria, disputed ownership of the railway, and the rights to negotiate) will develop, but in Japan it has caused worry and led to hopes of regaining normalised relations between China and Russia as soon as possible, and that no large transitions of power would take place in Manchuria.'<sup>220</sup>

Ramstedt's descriptions portray an image of Manchuria as a land of rising tension. The Japanese point of view is evident: here he does not discuss the ambitions of Japan in Manchuria in other ways than wishes to keep peace and order. At the same time, the Chinese point of views on the issue are not covered, as the Honorary Consul in Shanghai, Karl Gustaf Wähämäki, was neglecting the management of the consulate, which is discussed briefly in the first chapter of this thesis. Thusly, Wähämäki's images of Manchuria cannot be discussed here due to the absence of reports at the online archive of the Foreign Ministry.

Overall, the image of Manchuria that Ramstedt created in his reports is that of a land of conflicts. He wrote a substantial number of reports that discussed the changing situations of northeastern China during the warlord era. In Ramstedt's reports, Manchuria is a Chinese territory, but not one of unified China but one of the Zhang family warlords. Even though to Ramstedt, Manchuria was still a Chinese controlled area, it appears that he did not mind the Japanese gaining a dominant position of influence there over the Soviet Union. Already in Ramstedt's reports the image of as a land of great interest to Japan is formed. Ramstedt's view in 1926 was indeed that the Japanese intended to make Manchuria 'into the continuation of Korea'.<sup>221</sup>

### 3.2. George Winckelmann: the Lawyer's Point of View to the Manchurian Question

After Ramstedt retired from his post, George Winckelmann took over as the envoy in Tokyo, where he served in his post between 1930 and 1933. Winckelmann had worked as a section chief at the Foreign Ministry when independent Finland had formed its first friendship and trade agreement with

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<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, (43).

<sup>221</sup> Tokyo, 'Tilanne Mantshuriassa', 18.03.1926 (38).

China in 1923 that was, to meet China's demands and to Chinese delight, based on equality and reciprocity.<sup>222</sup> Winckelmann had experience with working at the Foreign Ministry and he had a degree in law from the University of Helsinki.<sup>223</sup> His lawyer's point of view is represented in his reports, as he often writes extensively on contract texts. Many important developments of Manchuria occurred during Winckelmann's tenure: the Mukden Incident, Lytton Report, League of Nations condemnation of Japan, as well as the founding of the Republic of Manchukuo (later a constitutional monarchy after 1934). Such important events took Winckelmann's attention: at one instance, he wrote 32 pages in a row about the 'Manchurian Incident' in four different reports between September-October 1931. Winckelmann wanted, in his own words, to formulate his reports based on personal observations that were 'carefully sifted and weighed, and healthily and objectively evaluated'.<sup>224</sup>

Winckelmann's tenure coincided with Japan's invasion of Manchuria and resignation from the League of Nations. Winckelmann's lawyer's perspective is shown in the way he discusses Japan's activities regarding the Manchurian affair. In a report written in September 1931 soon after the 'Mukden Incident', Winckelmann wrote about the origins of the tensions in South Manchuria between the Chinese and Japanese.<sup>225</sup> His report provides an explanation on how Japan came to acquire economic power in South Manchuria through different treaties. Especially the treaties of Portsmouth and Beijing of 1905, in which Russia and China recognised Japan's ownership of the South Manchurian Railway and lease of Porth Arthur and Dairen, and the Twenty-one Demands of 1915, by which Japan further strengthened its hold over Manchuria and gained economic advantages in the mainland, are mentioned as significant treaties in the report. Winckelmann wrote that the Washington Conference of 1922, with its agreements to limit tensions between great powers, decreased Japan's rights in China, but did not end Japan's activities in South Manchuria. Overall, Winckelmann often gave extensive explanations to the current phenomena and explained historical contexts for issues in a concise manner. Compared to Ramstedt's reports on the same issues, Winckelmann's approach was more analytical and meticulous, although he, like Ramstedt, expressed sarcastic comments about the phenomena he found displeasure in.

Winckelmann described Manchukuo as a place where Russian and Japanese interests are too strong to allow for the Nationalist Government of China to advance its claims of ownership.

'Since ascending to power, the Nationalist government of China has undertaken the project of expanding its influence in Southern Manchuria with great zest but has felt the

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<sup>222</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta*, pp.84–85.

<sup>223</sup> 'Kuka kukin on (Aikalaiskirja): Who's who in Finland/ 1954/ 977', *Projekt Runeberg*, [accessed 24.05.2024] <<https://runeberg.org/kuka/1954/0977.html>>.

<sup>224</sup> Tokyo, 'Asiainhoitaja Wähämäen raportti Japanin oloista', 13.12.1930 (66).

<sup>225</sup> Tokyo, 'Nykytilanne Etelä Mantshuriassa', 20.09.1931 (40).

resistance of Japan on every step. Here [in Japan] people are convinced that if China is to succeed in its ventures, Japan's economic interests there would be severely endangered. China's activity on this stage, where Japan has for already for thirty years almost singlehandedly and uninterrupted (Russia's interests are mainly concerned with Northern Manchuria) exploited its great natural resources, has led to the development that the Southern Manchurian question is becoming the most potent quarrels of the Far East that must, due to the circumstances, soon be reaching a conclusion.'<sup>226</sup>

In this passage, Winckelmann stressed that Japan has had dominance over the region for many decades. His argument that follows is that Manchuria has become too extensive for the issue of Manchurian dominance to remain unsettled.

The Soviet Union was of great interest in all the reports of the envoys sent, especially so from Japan. One of Winckelmann's reports recounts a conversation he had with Russia's envoy of Harbin after the fighting in Manchuria had started. In the report he wrote that he received confirmation to his guesses that Japan and Russia had *tacite* come to an agreement of the spheres of influences in Northern China and Mongolia. Russia's Harbin's envoy had stated that Russia would not interfere in the current dispute between China and Japan, as long as Japan's interests were limited only to Southern Manchuria, 'Japan's undisputable line of interest'.<sup>227</sup> Winckelmann's pro-Finnish views surface in the same report as he wrote that he and his colleagues of the Polish and Romanian consulates all agreed, that 'at least for all the Western neighbours of Russia, a Japan that is strong and maintains its strength is the most valuable and realistic support'.<sup>228</sup> Winckelmann thus voiced his opinion that China's interests in Manchuria are less valuable to Finland than a continued success of a strong Japan that can counterbalance Russia. Interestingly, throughout the interwar years, the Finnish envoys in Tokyo were simultaneously friendly with the Soviet diplomats stationed in Tokyo, yet simultaneously observed and reported about the benefits of Russian weaknesses in Asia.<sup>229</sup> This is partly explained by the great threat to its sovereignty that Finland saw in the Soviet Union.<sup>230</sup> Thus, with regard to the upcoming Geneva convention on the question of Manchuria, Winckelmann cautioned the Foreign Ministry in his report. He guessed that if Japan felt misunderstood at the convention, it may become stranded from the international community and turn its gaze to

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<sup>226</sup> Tokyo, 'Nykytilanne Etelä Mantshuriassa', 20.09.1931 (40).

<sup>227</sup> Tokyo, 'Nykytilanne Etelä Mantshuriassa II', 10.10.1931 (59).

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, (60-61).

<sup>229</sup> Soini, 'Out of the Shadow of Russia', pp.16-25.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

strengthening its friendship with Russia.<sup>231</sup> Indeed, the relations between Japan and the Soviet Union fluctuated greatly but remained relatively stable until the end of World War II.<sup>232</sup>

After Japan founded the Republic of Manchukuo on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1932, Winckelmann's reports no longer described the area as northeastern Chinese Manchuria but as Manchukuo. This description and image reflected the changed circumstances at least from the point of view of Tokyo, where Winckelmann was stationed at. In his report from April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1932, titled 'The Founding of Manchuria's new state (Manchukuo)', Winckelmann describes how the Japanese embarked on the mission of founding Manchukuo despite its questionable legality.

'The objective was to invent some beautiful shield to mask the continuing occupation procedures in Manchuria, and the statesmen soon found it with their famous skills. This shield was fulfilling the long-yearned sovereignty of the Manchurian population from the heavy yoke of oppressive Chinese generals.'<sup>233</sup>

Winckelmann's mocking tone in the passage, and indeed throughout the report, reveals that he wanted to stress that the act of founding of Manchukuo was created by Japanese agency and for the benefit of Japan. At the time of writing the report, Japan had yet to recognise Manchukuo and it was also predicted that most countries were unlikely to do so. Winckelmann mentioned that the proposal for granting recognition to Manchukuo were sent to those countries that had a diplomatic representative stationed at Manchuria's capital city, Changchun (later Hsinking), which were the United States, Belgium, England, Italy, Austria, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, France, Germany, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Estonia.<sup>234</sup>

In the same report, Winckelmann described his image of the persona of the first appointed head of state of Manchukuo, Henry Pu Yi. As per his usual style, he first gave a quick background history of his person, starting from his emperorship of the Qing dynasty to house arrest, persecution from Nanking and settlement in the Japanese concession of Tientsin. His detailed description of Henry Pu Yi's persona is interesting:

'The people whom I have met that have had something to do with him in Beijing and Tientsin claim him to be a kind youth of good upbringing; his disposition being somewhat mediocre and likening to a kind of l'Aiglon's character. Nonetheless, he is said to be completely lacking the ability to guide the new state with the power of his personality in the difficult storms that it will undoubtedly face.'<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Tokyo, 'Etelä Mantshurian selkkauksen selvittely', 19.10.1931 (70–72).

<sup>232</sup> Slavinsky, Boris. *The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact: A Diplomatic History 1941-1945*, trans. Jukes, Geoffrey, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p.xviii.

<sup>233</sup> Tokyo, 'Mantshurian uuden valtion (Manchukuo) perustaminen', 06.04.1932 (30).

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, (31).

<sup>235</sup> Tokyo, 'Mantshurian uuden valtion (Manchukuo) perustaminen', 06.04.1932 (33).

Here, Winckelmann makes a very specific reference to L'Aiglon, which is the nickname given posthumously to the son of Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoléon François Joseph Charles Bonaparte (1811-1832), after the popular play L'Aiglon written by Edmond Rostand in 1900.<sup>236</sup> Napoléon François ruled for a few weeks as the titular ruler of France after his father's abdication and died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-one. This intertextual reference, whether made by Winckelmann's informants or Winckelmann himself, is still included consciously in the report as the description of Pu Yi. Overall, the description of Henry Pu Yi that Winckelmann chose to share through his report is not very flattering. In a report from January 1933, Winckelmann wrote more on Henry Pu Yi, who was reported to be dissatisfied with his position as an icon of non-alignment in Manchukuo, where Japanese military officials wielded real power, and likened his situation to 'some sort of house arrest'.<sup>237</sup> The image that Winckelmann conveyed of the titular head of state does not promote the view of Manchukuo as a legitimate sovereign state.

Winckelmann's education and profession as a lawyer shines through in all of his reports, and he had a special interest in understanding and analysing contract texts. His insight of the contract text of Japan's *de jure* recognition of Manchukuo, published a few weeks before the Lytton Report in September 1932, highlighted that the contract text is interesting as it differs from usual *de jure* recognition texts. The signatories of the contract were the foreign minister of Manchukuo and General Muto, the governor general of the Kwantung Peninsula. Two articles were presented in the contract. The first, that Manchukuo should promise to protect all Japanese rights in Manchuria, was, in Winckelmann's view, of interest, as it 'points to the core question of Manchuria' from Japan's point of view.<sup>238</sup> The second article was, in Winckelmann's view more intriguing, as it in practice stipulated a defensive-offensive union between Manchukuo and Japan (also giving the right for Japan to keep its military stationed in Manchuria to the extent that it sees necessary).<sup>239</sup> Winckelmann also highlighted how Japan's public statements on Manchukuo tried to emphasise that Japan's activity in Manchuria is based on protecting its rights and assets. With regards to Manchukuo's recognition *de jure*, Winckelmann thought that League of Nations countries and the United States would not grant it, and the Soviet Union would only do so if it has a possibility of gaining from doing so.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Chartran, Théobald. 'Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt in the Role of the "Aiglon"', *Foundation Napoléon*, [accessed 24.05.2024], < <https://www.napoleon.org/en/history-of-the-two-empires/paintings/portrait-of-sarah-bernhardt-in-the-role-of-the-aiglon/>>.

<sup>237</sup> Tokyo, 'kosk. Mantshurian selkkauksen ratkaisumahdollisuuksia', 06.01.1933 (5).

<sup>238</sup> Tokyo, 'Manchukuon syntymis- ja tähänastiset kehitysvaiheet', 29.11.1932 (53).

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, (51).

Winckelmann's interest to both inform and keep himself informed come across in his reports. In his reports he recounted many instances where he visited Japan's Foreign Ministry to talk about current issues.<sup>241</sup> Winckelmann reported that in February 1933 he had a two-hour lively conversation with Vice Foreign Minister Arita about Japan's relations with the League of Nations, and the non-recognition policy towards Manchukuo that powerful League members had proposed. Winckelmann wrote about his observations of the conversation in his report, stating that Arita represented a stricter approach to Manchukuo and was chosen for his current position when the active approach to the Manchurian problem gained popularity a year ago.<sup>242</sup> Apparently the conversation topics of the conversation between Arita and Winckelmann were somewhat controversial, including Japan's possible resignation from the League of Nations and the decrease of Japan's prestige, that Winckelmann sarcastically observed that: 'it looked as if Mr. Arita tried to calm himself by stating that the concept of prestige is more or less relative.'<sup>243</sup>

In his last report, 'The Current Political Situation', from July 1933, Winckelmann ended with another sarcastic note. Japan, thinking that reaching an agreement of the sale of the East-China railway between Manchukuo and Soviet Russia, would lead to Russian recognition of Manchukuo, became sorely disappointed when Russian officials later iterated that the current negotiations had nothing to do with recognising Manchukuo. He wrote: '[...] did the Japanese once more experience, that ingratitude is the wage of the world'.<sup>244</sup> During the course of his tenure, Winckelmann's image of Manchukuo was one of a puppet country condemned by the League of Nations. This image was formed by both Winckelmann's interpretations of contract texts, Japan's relationship with the League of Nations, and even his image of Henry Pu Yi. His reports suggest that he viewed that Manchukuo had no sovereignty. Nonetheless, as Ramstedt had done before him, he prized Japan's strength even after its resignation from the League.

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<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, (55), & Tokyo, 'Havaintoja Mantshurian kysymyksessä', 04.02.1933 (19).

<sup>242</sup> Tokyo, 'Havaintoja Mantshurian kysymyksessä', 04.02.1933 (19).

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, (25).

<sup>244</sup> Tokyo, 'Nykyoliittinen tilanne', 04.07.1933 (48–49).

### 3.3. Hugo Valvanne: Non-Recognition and Conflicting Opinions on Manchukuo

Hugo Valvanne was appointed as the next consul to Tokyo, after Winckelmann left to head Finnish diplomacy in Madrid and Lissabon during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>245</sup> Hugo Valvanne and his brother, Väinö Valvanne, were both translators and authors of theosophic literature. Theosophy is an occult movement founded in the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Finnish Theosophic Organisation was founded in 1907.<sup>246</sup> Hugo Valvanne's first post as a diplomat was in Tokyo, but he would later become the first Finnish ambassador to India in 1949. Although his spiritual beliefs were untypical for his time, his reports are factual, and his conduct reflected the official policies that Finland sought in East Asia.

During Valvanne's tenure, Finland had engaged in diplomatic relations with Japan for over ten years, and the relationship between Japan and Finland was friendly. Despite Finland not being a country of primary importance in Japan's foreign policy, Japan treated Valvanne and Finnish concerns with arguably more cordiality than other small powers.<sup>247</sup> During the mid-1930's, some states recognised Manchukuo's sovereignty for various reasons, as discussed in previous chapters in this paper. With regards to Manchukuo's recognition, Finland followed the non-recognition policy set by the League of Nations, after Finland had ultimately decided to vote to condemn Japan's actions in the League assembly of in February 1933.

In a report that discusses the announcement to make Manchukuo an Empire, with Henry Pu Yi as its emperor, Valvanne offered critical points of view on the issue.<sup>248</sup> He wrote that he asked the Chinese minister working in Tokyo, Minister Tsiang-Tso-Ping (as he wrote his name), about how China would react to Manchukuo being declared an empire.<sup>249</sup> The Minister replied, that it will not change China's non-recognition policy towards Manchukuo. Valvanne then wrote a whole page on the reasonings that the Chinese minister gave on why Japanese military circles wanted to make Pu Yi an emperor. Valvanne offers his own view as well: 'in making Manchukuo an empire, the Japanese seem to hope to lure some northern Chinese territories to join Manchukuo'.<sup>250</sup> He based his argument on the old loyalties to the Manchu- emperor of the area. He finished his report with:

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<sup>245</sup> 'Kuka kukin on (Aikalaiskirja): Who's who in Finland/ 1954/ 977', *Projekt Runeberg*.

<sup>246</sup> 'Teosofinen seura ry', *Teosofinen seura ry*, (2024), [accessed 02.03.2024] <<https://www.teosofinenseura.fi/>>

<sup>247</sup> Soini, 'Out of the Shadow of Russia', pp.38-39; Tokyo, 'Japanilaisten suhtautuminen Suomeen', 29.12.1933 (90).

<sup>248</sup> Tokyo, 'Mantsukuo keisarikunnaksi', 19.01.1934 (3).

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, (5).

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

'I have heard from Manchus, Chinese, and the Japanese, that Pu-Yi is not at all satisfied with his position where he is entirely led by the Japanese. His personal freedom has been limited, and he must have Japanese guards around him always.'<sup>251</sup>

Two interesting points emerge from Valvanne's image of Manchukuo. Firstly, he highlighted the Chinese point of view in the report, undoubtedly referring to the dispute of Manchuria's denomination since the Lytton report and League of Nations dispute. Secondly, he focused more than his predecessors on the Manchu-quality of Manchuria and emphasised a nationalistic point of view.

In his report from April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 'More about the Polish Minister's trip to Manchukuo', Valvanne described Japan's ambitions to gain recognition for Manchukuo.<sup>252</sup> The report starts with a recount of how the Polish Minister Moscicki's trip to inspect the conditions of the relatively large Polish community living in Harbin was headlined by the Japanese press as a prelude to recognising Manchukuo. Minister Moscicki had to correct the false news in an interview to the Japanese press. Estonia experienced a similar kind of incident when the Estonian trade representative Mr. Oinas was persuaded by the Japanese to return to Estonia via Manchukuo, which led to news in the Japanese press stating that Estonia would recognise Manchukuo.<sup>253</sup> Valvanne wrote cynically: 'The Japanese government knows how to squeeze the most juice out of any advertisement regarding Manchukuo.'<sup>254</sup> Valvanne, too, noted that many influential Japanese have urged him to make a trip to Manchukuo, yet Valvanne reminded that he was well aware that such a trip would certainly be diplomatically problematic.<sup>255</sup> However, in the same report, he writes that the Finnish citizens living in Manchukuo found it difficult to contact the consulate in Shanghai, and would like someone to inspect their conditions. Also in the same report, Valvanne reported the conversation he had with Minister Moscicki after his trip, and the characteristics that were highlighted were that the capital city Hsinking had modernised greatly, and that many Manchu and Chinese workers had settled there to seek work in Manchukuo that was, according to Moscicki's guess, safer and more organised than China.

Like Winckelmann, Valvanne emphasised the view that Manchukuo was controlled by Japan. Valvanne is very explicit about this point in the following passage:

'At this moment Manchukuo is in truth under the jurisdiction of Japan. As soon as the negotiations over the cession of the North-Manchurian railway have led to an agreement and the Soviet Russian staff of the railway has left the country, a phase of world politics has ended: Russia's direct influence in Manchurian affairs has ended. // Manchukuo

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.* (6).

<sup>252</sup> Tokyo, 'Vieläkin Puolan ministerin Mantsukuon-matkasta', 06.04.1934 (65).

<sup>253</sup> Tokyo, 'Mantsukuo ja Viro', 01.12.1934 (106).

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> Tokyo, 'Vieläkin Puolan ministerin Mantsukuon-matkasta', 06.04.1934 (65).

creates a great wedge between its two closest neighbours, The Soviet Union and China. Therefore, its political-strategic position is weak.<sup>256</sup>

Likewise in another report from April 1935, Valvanne directly likened Japan's activity in and after the 1931 Manchurian Incident as Japan's imperialism in China, and equated Japan to the other powers that still hold concessions in China.<sup>257</sup> Interestingly in this context, Valvanne does not talk about Japan's other colonies in the Korean Peninsula and Formosa (Taiwan), that had been absorbed to the Japanese Empire earlier.

Even though Valvanne explicitly condemned Japan's expansionary activities in Manchukuo, Finland's fear of Soviet expansion produced praise for a strong Japan. Japan was viewed as a counterbalance to the Soviet Union in the East; and the Soviet Union was, after all, the primary concern of Finland's foreign policy and security issues.<sup>258</sup> The consequences of this ideology are often apparent in the reports written from Tokyo, as the Soviet status in Asia was often pondered in the topics of all the envoys.<sup>259</sup> Valvanne, in the same report where he condemns Japan's conquest of Manchuria, wrote:

'From Finland's point of view it is naturally regrettable that a great power could defy the League of Nations successfully. [...] On the other hand, I think that Finland can be content in knowing that Japan still stands as a great military power on the other side of Russia.'<sup>260</sup>

In this train of thought, the Japan's illegal activities in Manchukuo are overlooked in favour of Finland's own agenda of wishing to see a powerful ally against the Soviet Union in Japan.

Even though Valvanne in the same breath described Manchukuo as an unlawful puppet state and a fortunate strengthening element to Japan's Asian dominance, Valvanne still maintained Finland's non-recognition policy in all official dealings with Manchukuo. A practical manifestation of this approach was the diplomatic etiquette which Valvanne chooses to follow with regards to the Manchukuoan ambassador in Tokyo, which Valvanne reported on in his report from July 1937.<sup>261</sup> In the report, he recounts how he, in conjunction with the envoys of other Nordic countries, decided to react to the arrival of the new ambassador of Manchukuo, Juan Tsen-To in July 1937. Upon arrival Juan Tsen-To sent, as is customary, a note of his arrival to all the chiefs of consulates in Tokyo. Valvanne reported

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<sup>256</sup> Tokyo, 'Mongolian merkitys', 26.11.1934 (95).

<sup>257</sup> Tokyo, 'Japanin eroaminen Kansainliitosta', 01.04.1935 (74).

<sup>258</sup> Soini, 'Out of the Shadow of Russia', pp.16-20.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>260</sup> Tokyo, 'Japanin eroaminen Kansainliitosta', 01.04.1935 (76).

<sup>261</sup> Tokyo, 'Mantsukuon suurlähettiläs ja Tokion diplomaattikunta'. 07.07.1937 (72-73).

about the decision he took together with the chiefs of the Nordic consulates on how to react to the note:

‘Taking into consideration the strict approach of the western great powers we, together with the ministers of Sweden and Denmark, came to the conclusion that we will not reply to the note of Manchukuo.’<sup>262</sup>

The ministers made this decision without the confirmation from their governments, as they viewed that sending a telegram on the topic would be too expensive. In the report, Valvanne argued that he acted in accordance with the official policy of Finland regarding Manchukuo; that of non-recognition. Thusly, Finland’s official approach to Manchukuo lead Valvanne to maintain distance from Manchukuo.

After 1937, Japan’s full-scale military assault in China began and yet some countries recognised Manchukuo *de jure*. Even so, Valvanne wrote a detailed report in which he went through the all the main points in the relations between China and Japan, starting with the rupture of the Tokugawa shogunate after 1853. This demonstrates that Valvanne was interested in understanding the historical context for current developments, and perhaps the readers of his reports appreciated the explanations he gave. Japan’s full-scale mobilisation in China brought to the forefront, again, the issue of legitimacy of Japan’s conquests, past and present, in China. In the report from July 1938, Valvanne described Manchukuo as a “puppet state” that the League of Nations could not return to China.<sup>263</sup> The Japanese-Chinese relationship, he wrote, was extremely difficult, but Valvanne argued both China and Japan agreed on the Pan-Asian slogan, ‘Asia for Asians’.<sup>264</sup> At the end of the report, he stressed that Finland, being a small, outsider nation, should try to keep good relations with both China and Japan.<sup>265</sup>

By 1938, some European countries had already recognised Manchukuo. In a report from January 1938, Valvanne disagreed with the views expressed by Japan’s Foreign Minister Hirota about Manchukuo.<sup>266</sup> Hirota argued that Japan’s influence in Manchukuo has been decreased, but Valvanne saw that ‘at least the door of Manchukuo has tried to be kept shut from other countries’, with regards to economic opportunity.<sup>267</sup> On the other hand, Valvanne wrote in many reports that Japan eagerly sought recognition of Manchukuo from foreign countries. Valvanne experienced this firsthand, and

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<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> Tokyo, ‘Kiinan-selkkaus. X. Kommentaareja’, 26.07.1938 (168).

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.* (173–174).

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Tokyo, ‘Japanin ulkoministerin puhe parlamentissa’, 26.01.1938 (51).

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

he reported of his conversations with the Polish minister in Japan, de Romer.<sup>268</sup> Poland seemed to have warmed up to engaging with Manchukuo, but de Romer insisted that Poland ‘wants to remain loyal to the League of Nations decision and will not recognise Manchukuo *de jure*’, even when the Polish community in Harbin was large enough to warrant the presence of a Polish minister there.<sup>269</sup> Later de Romer reportedly insisted that Poland would not recognise Manchukuo even though Poland and Manchukuo agreed to exchange *exequatur* rights for their consuls, to which Valvanne mused that Japan would probably understand such an act as a *de facto* recognition of Manchukuo on Poland’s part.<sup>270</sup> After Franco’s Spain and Manchukuo exchanged recognitions in December 1937, Valvanne observed: ‘After this, Manchukuo, Germany, Italy and Franco’s Spain have formed Japan’s current inner friendship circle.’<sup>271</sup>

During Valvanne’s tenure, Finland still maintained the non-recognition policy towards Manchukuo. However, like Ramstedt and Winckelmann, Valvanne’s reports reveal that he priced a strong Japan that could oppose the Soviet Union in the East. The image of Manchukuo conveyed in Valvanne’s reports did not support a view that Manchukuo was a sovereign state. His image of Manchukuo was that of a “puppet state” controlled fully by Japan. Though of Chinese origin, Valvanne viewed that Manchukuo would realistically not be returned as a Chinese territory. More than other envoys Valvanne described the Manchus of Manchukuo and pointed to Pan-Asian traditions in both Japan and China.

### 3.4. Ville Niskanen: Pressing the Chinese Point of View

Unlike his predecessors, Ville Niskanen was the first hardworking and upright consul stationed in Shanghai. Niskanen had graduated from secondary school in 1907, studied languages in London and Paris, and, before coming to Shanghai, worked in different consulates in Europe since 1921.<sup>272</sup> He was the first consul stationed in Shanghai who worked systematically and professionally, unlike the previous consuls. When he left Shanghai, due to a referral of a colleague, he was awarded with a meritorious medal for consular activity named ‘L’Ordre du Jade’ by the Nationalist Government (Kuomintang) on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1939.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Tokyo, ‘Japani ja Puola’, 16.08.1938 (215).

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> Tokyo, ‘Puola ja Mantsukuo’, 10.10.1938 (343).

<sup>271</sup> Tokyo, ‘Japani ja Espanja’ 28.08.1938 (277).

<sup>272</sup> ‘Kuka kukin on (Aikalaiskirja): Who’s who in Finland/ 1954/ 566’, *Projekt Runeberg*, [accessed 24.05.2024], <<https://runeberg.org/kuka/1954/0566.html>>.

<sup>273</sup> Kansallisarkisto, Ulkoasiainministeriön Shanghain pääkonsulinviraston arkisto. F KIRJEISTÖ. F40 Kiina. F40:13 Sanomalehdistö: Waitsiaopun ulkopuolella tapahtuva Kiina-propaganda, Kiina (1939-1945), (Ulkoasiainministeriön Shanghain pääkonsulinviraston arkisto:79).

When Niskanen arrived in China in 1934, Kuomintang had steadily increased their power, yet they were fighting various warlords and the Chinese Communist Party (who had begun their Long March in October 1934). Manchukuo was declared an Empire in early 1934, with Pu Yi as its Emperor Kangde 康德. Overall, most of Niskanen's reports focus on the internal strife and external threats of China, and seldom is Manchukuo described in detail. However, hints of how Niskanen came to view Manchukuo are found in his reports. They relate especially to what threats Manchukuo posed to China's internal stability, especially from the point of view of the Republic of China.

In December 1934, Niskanen explored Kuomintang's relationship with northern China in the report titled 'Triumphs of national unification'.<sup>274</sup> He wrote that after the revolution of 1911, Outer-Mongolia declared independence, and Inner-Mongolia remained as a part of the Chinese Republic. Since then, Chinese governments had granted the Mongols special freedoms to persuade them to stay as part of the Chinese Republic. The report reveals, too, that there was a Mongolian independence movement formed in 1933, and that the Japanese agitated the Mongols to rebel.

'Since the formation of Manchukuo, China lost half of its Mongol territories. Vigorous agitation is practiced with the inner-Mongols still in China, with the goal of joining them to Manchukuo or forming some kind of non-aligned territory. [...] In agitating discontent, the Japanese are known to have their eyes always on the game.'<sup>275</sup>

This description reveals that Niskanen described Mongolia as having belonged to China's Republican territory, when it 'lost half of its Mongol territories' to Manchukuo.<sup>276</sup> The agency of the Japanese in trying to persuade the Mongols to join Manchukuo was mentioned by Niskanen, pointing to the idea that Japan was also controlling Manchukuo. Furthermore, in this description it is evident, that the Mongols had their own ideas of identity and belonging, and that their allegiance did not necessarily lie with Republican China. Niskanen's report paints a picture of the Mongols seemingly having retained a sense of allegiance to the Manchu dynasty. In a later report, Niskanen recounted that the Mongol autonomists of Inner-Mongolia had chosen to side with the Republic of China, the 'less dangerous' connection according to Niskanen's report.<sup>277</sup>

Unlike Valvanne in Tokyo, Niskanen wrote much more on the border skirmishes on the Manchukuo-China border in 1935. His descriptions offer a more warring and unstable image of Manchukuo than those of his counterpart in Tokyo, Valvanne. He wrote:

'It is well known by now, that in North-China, no such state of peace has prevailed, which's stability would be somewhat guaranteed. Upon conquering Manchukuo,

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<sup>274</sup> Shanghai, 'Kansallisen eheytyksen voittoja' 22.12.1934 (21).

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.* (24–25).

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>277</sup> Shanghai, 'Sisä-Mongolian ja Nankingin suhteet', 14.06.1935 (97).

China's only area capable of commercial economy, followed by the conquest of Jehol, have skirmishes and armed confrontations followed one after the other.<sup>278</sup> Compared to Valvanne's report, where he described the trip of the Polish minister Moscicki to Manchukuo in 1934, the view of Manchukuo given by Niskanen was quite different with regards to the stability of the area. Whilst Valvanne wrote that, according to Moscicki, stability had increased in Manchukuo, Niskanen's report suggested differently when he wrote that the rebellious Mongols no longer wished to join autonomously to Manchukuo after hearing that the Japanese ruled the area 'authoritatively and heavy-handedly'.<sup>279</sup> Niskanen's reports of the border disputes also contained an image of Manchukuo as a stepping stone for Japan to continue its expansion to Chinese territory.

Niskanen's focus on the Chinese perspective is evident in all his reports. With regards to the sale of the East-China Railway company from Russia to Manchukuo, Niskanen also focused on the sale's significance on the Chinese in his report from March 1935.<sup>280</sup> First, he explained the origins of the dispute of the railway from Tsarist Russia to the Russo-Japanese war, Tsang Tso-lin's warlord era, and the 1931 Mukden incident. He also reviewed what contested issues relate to the sale of the railway from the Chinese point of view. Firstly, the railways were once built with Chinese permission and involvement on a territory that China regarded as its territory *de jure*, but the sale was conducted between the Soviet Union, Japan, and Manchukuo. The Republic of China also owned some stocks of the bank, which funded the railway. Furthermore, Manchukuo, as the formal new owner of the railway, would also gain ownership to the company's building in Shanghai, naturally creating an awkward situation for the Chinese. The report also draws attention to the worry that the thousands of tsarist Russians working for the railway would immigrate to Shanghai, where a large tsarist Russian population dwells, and worsen the overpopulation problem there. Lastly, Niskanen implied that the sale of the railway to Manchukuo strengthens its claims to sovereignty. He ended the report with the following:

'For China, the coil becomes ever more tangled. Japan solidifies its power and position in Manchuria- getting it back following the changing ownership of the railway becomes even more hopeless.'<sup>281</sup>

Overall, Niskanen put much more emphasis on the Chinese point of view in the matter of the railway controversy. Furthermore, he explicitly maintained that the Chinese see Manchukuo as their territory *de jure*, whereas the Tokyo envoys focused much more on the issue that Japan wielded real power on the puppet state it had created.

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<sup>278</sup> Shanghai, 'Kiinalais-japanilaiset suhteet', 30.01.1935 (9).

<sup>279</sup> Shanghai, 'Pohjois-Kiinan rauhattomilta alueilta', 03.04.1935 (60).

<sup>280</sup> Shanghai, 'Itä-Kiinan rautatien myynti ja nykyinen Kiina', 17.03.1935.

<sup>281</sup> Shanghai, 'Itä-Kiinan rautatien myynti ja nykyinen Kiina', 17.03.1935 (32).

Another interesting view of Manchukuo that Niskanen raised frequently was the dilemma of cooperation versus confrontation of Japan and China in Northern-China. Border skirmishes and the issues of the allegiance of the Mongols of Inner-Mongolia provided reasons for confrontation, but Niskanen wrote about the reasons for cooperation, too. Especially in the report titled ‘Autonomy pursuits of Northern-China and Chinese-Japanese relations’ from November 1935, Niskanen described the motivations behind the reasons why Japan and China sometimes want to cooperate.<sup>282</sup> Niskanen wrote that especially Japan’s official foreign policy wished to pursue friendly relations with China, in order to strengthen trade relations and to work together with Nanjing to suppress the advance of communism in Northern China.<sup>283</sup> In an earlier report, Niskanen had written about the ‘threat of communism in North-East China’, that both the Japanese and the Kuomintang were weary of.<sup>284</sup> Niskanen noted that the Japanese would have better chances in succeeding in creating an anti-communist front with Nanjing, when they do not resort to armed conflicts in pushing their demands.<sup>285</sup> The ideals of Pan-Asianism also contained, in theory, an element of unity and cooperation between China and Japan, and the ideology was actively promoted by Japan in the mid-1930s. Niskanen observed, however, that:

‘[...] the Chinese-Japanese-Manchukuoan collaboration [...] is one of the public goals of Japan’s politics that it pursues in every way, ways in which the Chinese are forced to retreat step by step.’<sup>286</sup>

In a later report from the same year, Niskanen described also the Hebei-Chahar Political Council and mass student protests (December 9<sup>th</sup> Movement). Niskanen’s many descriptions of simultaneous clashes and cooperation attempts paint a picture of the Northern-Chinese territory bordering Manchukuo as a demonstration of the duplicity of cooperative diplomatic efforts of Japan’s foreign ministry and masked expansion efforts by the Kwantung army.<sup>287</sup>

During Niskanen’s tenure, the recognition of Manchukuo by Italy, Germany, Poland, and Spain were important issues for China’s prestige abroad. Every case of *de jure* recognition of Manchukuo was met with fierce discontent from Chinese officials and the Chinese press, as Niskanen wrote in several reports.<sup>288</sup> In the cases of Italy’s and Germany’s Manchukuo recognitions, Niskanen reported that in

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<sup>282</sup> Shanghai, ‘Pohjois-Kiinan autonomia-hankkeet ja kiinalais-japanilaiset suhteet’, 25.11.1935 (165).

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.* (167–168).

<sup>284</sup> Shanghai, ‘Kommunismien uhka Luoteis-Kiinassa’, 28.10.1935 (159).

<sup>285</sup> Shanghai, ‘Pohjois-Kiinan autonomia-hankkeet ja kiinalais-japanilaiset suhteet’, 25.11.1935 (168).

<sup>286</sup> Shanghai, ‘Tientsinin pan-aasialainen liitto’, 05.12.1935 (179).

<sup>287</sup> Shanghai, ‘Hopein ja Tsaharin poliittinen neuvosto’, 20.12.1935 (191–194).

<sup>288</sup> Shanghai, ‘Italian de jure Mantsukuolle ja ero Kansainliitosta’, 16.12.1937 (144); Shanghai, ‘Saksan de jure Mantsukuolle’, 25.02.1938 (18); Shanghai, ‘Kiinan protesti Saksan de juren johdosta Mantsukuolle’, 11.03.1938; Shanghai, ‘Puola ja Mantsukuo’, 18.05.1938 (104).

China, the news was met with disappointment and pining for the former achievements in Chinese relations.<sup>289</sup> Niskanen also gave differing remarks of Manchukuo's settlements and trade compared to Valvanne; the Tokyo envoy reported that the Polish colony in Manchukuo was rather large and therefore, it may be easier understood why Poland wished to open a consulate in Manchukuo in 1938.<sup>290</sup> Niskanen, on the other hand, wrote that he heard that the Polish colony was 'not worth mentioning', nor was the state of trade, leading him to the conclusion that '[...] most likely, political points of view have settled the issue'.<sup>291</sup> The differences in descriptions between the Shanghai and Tokyo envoys suggests that to a large degree, the envoys formed images of Manchukuo based on the information they gathered from their post countries, and that those news seemed to naturally bring forth interpretations beneficial to the host country.

After Japan began its full-scale attack on China after 1937, media in Finland tended to report about the events from a pro-Japanese stance, according to Niskanen. In one report, Niskanen gave very straightforward feedback of the Finnish news articles about Japan's assault in China, stating:

'It has not been even a generation ago since we suffered from foreign oppression. And one would think that in a country like ours, where our future essentially depends on the maintenance of the values of international law, this ruthless war of conquest by Japan in Chinese territory should evoke spontaneous displeasure.'<sup>292</sup>

This passage reveals that Niskanen equated China's situation somewhat to that of Finland's, in the sense that a powerful, foreign power threatened the existence of a weaker country. The passage also points to an interpretation that Niskanen took a markedly pro-Chinese point of view on the issues surrounding Sino-Japanese rivalry.

Niskanen reported widely and resourcefully on Chinese issues. He somewhat naturally took a more pro-Chinese stance, just as consuls in Tokyo took a more pro-Japanese stance. Niskanen was even awarded a medal, 'L'Ordre du Jade', by Republican China for his meritorious consular activities. Niskanen's informative and skilful reports kept the foreign ministry in Finland informed about the Chinese points of views of current important events, and his texts make frequent references to the losses of Chinese sovereignty and the expansionist ideologies that Japan had to China. His views of the complex events in East Asia often contradicted the views of his counterparts in Tokyo. Especially Niskanen's image of Manchukuo was that of a Chinese territory forcibly taken by Japan that should be returned to China. Niskanen's image of Manchukuo also included an understanding that the Japanese ruled heavy-handedly in their puppet empire. Even though Niskanen was no longer consul

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<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>290</sup> Tokyo, 'Japani ja Puola', 16.08.1938 (214–215).

<sup>291</sup> Shanghai, 'Puola ja Mantšukuo', 18.05.1938 (106).

<sup>292</sup> Shanghai, 'Lehtiemme Kiinan-uutisista', 06.09.1938 (144).

when Finland recognised Manchukuo in 1941, Niskanen's reports, which promoted a Chinese understanding of Asian affairs, may have been a contributing factor to why Finland did not recognise the Wang Jingwei regime, when Manchukuo was recognised *de jure*. Another reason was, as discussed previously in this thesis, the attempt to keep some independence in decision making even when the military alliance with Nazi Germany was formed.

### 3.5. Karl Gustaf Idman: First-Hand Experience of Manchukuo

Karl Gustaf Idman was by far the most experienced diplomat and politician stationed in Finland's consulates in Asia, and his role in the construction of Finland's independence was notable. He studied law at university, and became a doctorate with a focus on international law in 1914, after which we worked for the Secretary of State of the Great Duchy of Finland and, after the revolution in Russia, handed Finland's address for independence to Lenin together with Carl Enckell and Pehr Evind Svinhufvud (to be Finland's third president) in 1917.<sup>293</sup> Thereafter he became the first chief of the Finland's Foreign Ministry and embarked on a diplomatic career in 1919, being stationed in consulates in Europe before his mission to Japan in late 1939.<sup>294</sup> Idman arrived to his post in Tokyo on the eve of the Soviet Union's attack on Finland in November 1939, and his earliest reports are focused on the reception of Finland's Winter War in Japan. Idman was extremely experienced in diplomacy, but unlike Ramstedt, was not an "expert on Asia". Perhaps for this reason, there is great shift in his image of Manchukuo before and after he makes his visit there to deliver his credentials as the newly appointed consul to Manchukuo in November-December 1941.

As Mikko Uola has demonstrated, Idman actively pursued Finnish recognition for Manchukuo, but his reports are still professionally written. In March 1941, Idman wrote about the puppet regime that Japan established in China, the Nanjing government (Wang Jingwei regime):

'[...] the Japanese themselves have started to doubt that there is possibility to pursue peace with China using the Nanjing government. Chunking's government has yet to show any signs of wanting to make peace with them.'<sup>295</sup>

Here, the Naning government refers to the puppet government that Japan created in China, whilst the Chunking government refers to Kuomintang's Republic of China. Idman's description shows that the Nanjing government was not stable, and that even its creators doubted whether it can be used to achieve its goals of forming workable relations with the mainland. Idman's image of the Nanjing

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<sup>293</sup> Sundström, Mia. 'Idman, Karl Gustaf (1885-1961)', *Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura*, [edit.10.11.2000], [accessed 24.05.2024], < <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/1699>>.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> Tokyo, 'Kiinan kysymyksestä', 17.03.1941 (59).

government, alongside Niskanen's pro-Chinese reports, may have partly affected Finland's non-recognition of the Wang Jingwei's puppet regime.

Even though Idman pursued the recognition question of Manchukuo, his descriptions of Manchukuo before visiting there still highlight that Manchukuo is a Japanese sphere of influence rather than a fully sovereign state. This image comes across in the report on the neutrality pact signed between Japan and the Soviet Union in April 1941, where Idman wrote:

'From the point of view of Russia, Manchukuo's recognition does not likely matter very much. After all, there is no longer any possibility, that it would be reinstated to China.'<sup>296</sup>

This passage shows a lot on Idman's view of Manchukuo. His image of it was that it once belonged to China but would realistically never free itself from the dominion of Japan. Perhaps due to this image, Idman also promoted the recognition of Manchukuo, as he felt that recognition would reflect the realities of power dynamics in the region as well as please Finland's potential ally against the Soviet Union, Japan.

An entire report of Idman's is dedicated to explaining the foreign relations of Manchukuo.<sup>297</sup> The report was written on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1941, after Finland had formally recognised Manchukuo, but the official news had not travelled to Idman yet.<sup>298</sup> The tone of the report is such that it highlights the aspects that testify to Manchukuo's functionality as a state, and he overlooks any problematic aspects that he might have known of. Idman explained that many states, including Germany, Italy, San Salvador, and the Soviet Union have in practice recognised Manchukuo. Idman also presented his own report on countries that have relations with Manchukuo, but have not recognised its independence, and reminded that many powers supervise Manchukuo without their citizens at home knowing anything of it. Manchukuo was also a *de facto* member of the Postal Union since 1935, he continued. Despite promoting the recognition of Manchukuo, Idman did acquit himself of acting against Finland's official non-recognition stance on Manchukuo in saying that he had not mingled with the Manchukuo and Nanjing regime representatives in Tokyo. However, he ended his report stating his opinion:

'As is evident in the account presented above, there is nothing that stops Finland from accrediting a consul to Manchukuo even in the case that its sovereignty is not recognised. I know that even accrediting an honorary consul there would be given value there.'<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Tokyo, 'Japanin ja Neuvosto-Venäjäin välinen puolueettomuussopimus', 21.04.1941 (87).

<sup>297</sup> Tokyo, 'Mantšukuon suhteista muihin valtioihin', 14.07.1941 (158).

<sup>298</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta*, p.287.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.* (161).

Idman's views on Manchukuo were straightforward: he saw no reason why Finland should keep such a distance from Manchukuo. Perhaps after the defeat in the Winter War, Idman had come to see that the League of Nations could offer nothing to Finland, and that tying closer ties with Japan as the mutual ally against Soviet Union would be beneficial.

The image of Manchukuo that Idman created in his reports after Finland's recognition decision of Manchukuo was extremely positive. After Finland had recognised Manchukuo in July 1941, Idman wrote a report that presented some basic information of the country, including the population, surface area, government regime, the Concordia organisation, trade, agriculture, industry, and education.<sup>300</sup> The tone of his descriptions is very positive, including words like 'progress', and Idman contrasts this progress to the previous conditions of 'abusive and exploitative' warlords.<sup>301</sup> Idman describes the Emperor of Manchukuo as a person who has power to make peace and war, and to form contracts with foreign powers.<sup>302</sup> That the real decision making power lied with the Japanese generals in Manchukuo's governance was not discussed by Idman. He finished his report with a note on education in Manchukuo: 'During its independence, much has been done in Manchukuo for the education of the population.'<sup>303</sup> Idman's text uses the word 'independence' to describe Manchukuo, which differs immensely from the contemporary view of Manchukuo as a 'puppet'.

After Finland decided to form diplomatic relations with the Empire of Manchukuo, Idman made a trip to Manchukuo's capital to present his credentials to the Manchukuoan government. The description of Manchukuo that Idman makes is unique: he was the only Finnish consul to describe Manchukuo after having visited there in person, and not just in spirit. His visit to Manchukuo in November-December 1941 happened via Korea, the colony of the Japanese Empire since 1910, and Idman also offered a description of his stay there.

'The Japanese influence seems to be very strong. The Koreans do not seem to have chance of gaining independence.'<sup>304</sup>

This description of Korea demonstrates that Idman was aware of the oppressive nature of the Japanese regime on Korea. His tone on Japan's influence in Manchukuo also changed after his visit there. In fact, his report of his visit to Manchukuo focused a great deal on the special status of the Japanese in Manchukuo. Compared to his July and August 1941 reports, that did not mention anything about the veto power of the Japanese in Manchukuo, his report of his visit described Japan's power in

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<sup>300</sup> Tokyo, 'Mantšukuo', 04.08.1941, (174).

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, (176–177).

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* (175).

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, (179).

<sup>304</sup> Tokyo, 'Käyntini Koreassa (Chosen'issa), 03.12.1941.

Manchukuo in great detail. Idman summarised in the introduction that: ‘Japan intervenes for political reasons and to gain economically. The majority in the government are the Japanese.’<sup>305</sup>

In the same report he also expressed contradicting views about the role of Japanese in Manchukuo.<sup>306</sup>

On the one hand, Idman viewed that the Japanese brought law and order to Manchukuo and did what the Chinese could not: creating stability in Manchukuo. However, at the same instance he claimed:

‘It is another thing entirely, that when the Japanese came, they did not come for friendly reasons, but to create a state, that would be closely connected to Japan and where the Japanese influence would be dominant.’<sup>307</sup>

Indeed, Idman’s view of the role of the Japanese in Manchukuo became much more negative due to his trip. In his report he noted, for instance, that:

‘One could easily sense that the people’s attitude towards the Japanese is hostile, as they their rude and ruthless behaviour raises antagonism. [...] It almost feels as though the Japanese are their own worst enemy.’<sup>308</sup>

Overall, the descriptions of the hostile attitudes of the Japanese in Manchukuo were not at all present in the reports that Idman wrote prior to his visit. This suggests that his image of Manchukuo, and the role of the Japanese in controlling it, changed completely after his visit.

Judging by the descriptions of Idman’s report of his visit, he seems to have become perplexed after visiting Manchukuo personally. On one hand, he produced an almost poetic description of the beauty of the capital Hsinking, where there Japanese had built boulevards with parks, market squares, ‘handsome’ buildings, and that ‘many streets open a view that stretches up until the horizon, that is despite its repetitiveness nothing short of magnificent.’<sup>309</sup> Simultaneously, the trip seems to have drawn Idman’s attention to the problems of Japanese intervention in Manchukuo. He drew attention to the fact that Manchukuo’s sovereignty did not appear to be complete:

‘Manchukuo does not have independent foreign policies, and the final decisions are made by Japan. This does not naturally lead to the conclusion, that Manchukuo’s own ministers and its population would not have their own views on political questions.’<sup>310</sup>

Overall, Idman’s reports of his visit to Manchukuo reveal that his images of Manchukuo before and after visiting clashed. To an extent, Idman seemed to be disappointed in finding that the Japanese ruled heavy-handedly in Manchukuo. At the same time, however, he still admired Japan’s

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<sup>305</sup> Tokyo, ‘Käyntini Mantšukuossa’, 10.12.1941.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> Tokyo, ‘Mantšukuon suhtautumisesta Neuvosto-Venäjäan’, 18.12.1941.

accomplishments in Manchukuo. However, Idman's image shifted from his previous optimistic image of 'independent Manchukuo' from August 1941 to an implied puppet-like regime.

Idman is the only Finnish consul who visited Manchukuo, and therefore his understanding of Manchukuo was not only limited to the ideas of Manchukuo that he received from outside sources, but his reports of his trips there offer a valuable insight into what image he formed after seeing, albeit a small part, of Manchukuo first hand. Idman made another trip to Manchukuo for its decennial anniversary in 1942, but unfortunately the texts produced during the trip (should any remain) could not be analysed in this thesis.<sup>311</sup> Such reports could have provided more information about how Idman's image of Manchukuo developed with more first-hand experience of the country. Unfortunately, too, Harald Tanner, the new consul to Shanghai from April 1939 onwards could not produce reports similarly to his predecessors, as China was engaged in total war with Japan.<sup>312</sup> Therefore, a comparison of the images from the Shanghai and Tokyo envoys cannot be made. Overall, however, the reports suggest that Idman's once optimistic image of Manchukuo as a land of promise was to a large degree shattered after his visit there in person.

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<sup>311</sup> Uola, *Suomi ja keskuksen valtakunta*, p.298.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218–219.

## 4. Conclusion

The research questions that guided this paper were: ‘What factors lead to Finland’s decision to recognise the Empire of Manchukuo in 1941?’, and ‘What image of Manchukuo was imagined and shared in the reports of Finnish diplomats in Tokyo and Shanghai?’. Based on the secondary source research on the history of Finnish diplomacy, the studies of the Axis powers relations, and the history of Manchukuo, this paper can conclude that the decisive factor for recognising Manchukuo was Finland’s alliance with Nazi Germany. Whether or not Finland’s closer ties with Japan as opposed to China had an influence on the recognition decision would require more archival research. Likewise, to what extent Ville Niskanen’s pro-Chinese reports affected Finland’s decision to not recognise the Nanjing regime would require extensive archival research in Finland. Historical image research reveals that the Finnish envoys in Tokyo and Shanghai had created images of Manchuria and Manchukuo based on the knowledge they collected and received at their post countries. In general, the envoys reported on East Asian affairs in a way that elevated their host country. This was perchance because they grew attached to the places and people, and, of course, because they formulated knowledge based on the news in their host countries. In addition, the personalities of the consuls affected the way in which they wrote about their images of Manchuria and Manchukuo, and it points towards how they shifted information based on their personal experiences and beliefs. To what extent the images of Manchukuo that the envoys shared in their reports affected Finland’s relations with Manchukuo? is a follow-up question to this research that would again require extensive archival research in Finland. Ideally, such research could also include research in the archives left of the former Empire of Manchukuo, and it would add to the historical studies of Manchukuo as an entity as well.

Finland’s recognition decision of Manchukuo in July 1941 envelops many interesting historical contexts and considerations. In the first instance, understanding the contested history and historiographical issues surrounding Manchukuo itself poses a challenge. Manchukuo was labelled as a ‘puppet’ by outside observers since its inauguration in 1932, and the League of Nations proposed a non-recognition policy of on the creation during the general assembly of the same year. Many countries followed this policy line, yet for various reasons, many countries also chose to recognise Manchukuo *de jure* or *de facto*. Much more has been written on the League of Nations failure to punish Japan for its opportunistic conquest of northeastern-China than the afterlife of the land of conquest. In recent decades, more scholarly interest has been given to understanding life in Manchukuo. However, as Manchukuo’s history relates to the past that is considered difficult to talk

about in East Asia, that is Japan's 20<sup>th</sup> century imperialism, even after almost eighty years since Manchukuo ceased to exist it creates friction. As an example: whilst there is a Unit 731 Museum in Harbin, China, the Japanese practice self-censorship of such a difficult topic as Unit 731, even though in recent years the National Archives of Japan have released documents regarding the unit.<sup>313</sup>

Just as understanding the history related to Manchukuo brings forth painful controversies in East Asia, so does Finland's alliance with Nazi Germany in Finnish understanding of World War II history. Incidentally, the two are connected in the topic of Finland's recognition decision of Manchukuo. As Finland's recognition of Manchukuo was motivated mostly by its alliance with Nazi Germany, and by extension the Axis Powers, understanding the nature of the alliance is important. It can be argued that Finland needed to please the Axis Powers but at the same time tried to maintain a degree of independence in decision making and friendships. The recognition decision of Manchukuo and the non-recognition of the Nanjing regime offers an understudied example of Finland's behaviour as an Axis-aligned power during the 1940s. The way in which Axis-aligned powers behaved towards each other during World War II across the globe would likewise warrant more research. As Daniel Hedinger states, 'the recognition that diplomacy is also a form of theatre, the performative aspects of which should be a focus, would certainly add to our understanding of the dynamics of the Axis alliance.'<sup>314</sup> Finland's diplomatic decisions in East Asia during the war also invite such an angle of research.

The diplomatic history of Manchukuo is entirely understudied. Even though Manchukuo was a puppet of Japan, many scholars have written about Manchukuo's diplomatic relations with individual countries. A new survey work of Manchukuo's diplomatic history in English, like Ailisha O'Sullivan's from 1982, would be welcome. There is uncertainty in the scholarship as to which countries actually recognised Manchukuo, and what those recognition decisions lead to in practice. Whether the recognition decisions were *de jure* or *de facto*, or that a country followed non-recognition policy but had observers or trade networks in Manchukuo, seems to have led to different interpretations of whether Manchukuo was recognised or not. The overly enthusiastic Japanese Empire puffed up any interest to Manchukuo to equate possible recognition, whilst the foreign

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<sup>313</sup> Takeuchi, Daishi. 'Tug-of-war unfolds over exhibit on notorious Japanese military unit', 04.06.2023 *The Japan Times*, [accessed 24.05.2024] <<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/06/04/national/history/unit-731-exhibition/>>; 'Controversy keeps Unit 731 testimonies from public display', 16.08.2023, *The Asahi Shimbun*, [accessed 24.05.2024], <<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14982616>>; 'Unit 731 Museum', *Atlas Obscura*, [accessed 24.05.2024], <<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/unit-731-museum>>.

<sup>314</sup> Hedinger, 'The Spectacle of Global Fascism', pp. 2004-2005.

countries in question hesitated. Making such a survey work would be difficult, as the researchers should ideally master Chinese, Japanese, English, and a number of other languages to conduct thorough research. Furthermore, should a researcher wish to take a more political scientific view on Manchukuo's diplomatic history, many interesting avenues of research would undoubtedly follow. Manchukuo would provide a good case study of a country that was condemned to non-recognition by the general international community, yet many defied the recommendation or built *de facto* relations with such a country behind the scenes.

The digitised archives of Finland's Foreign Ministry, that were used in this thesis, provide researchers with a rich and accessible primary source database to study Finland's diplomacy from 1918 to 1945. Much more could be written of Finland's role in the international diplomatic stage in English, as Finland is a case study of how small powers organised their diplomatic affairs in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With regards to Finland's diplomatic relations in East Asia, much more could be written. This thesis and my previous research have suggested that due to many reasons, Finland's relations with Japan were closer than those with China during the interwar and World War II periods. This kind of comparative approach to Finnish diplomacy between Japan and China is understudied, but it could provide a more in-depth analysis of Finnish diplomacy in East Asia. Especially incorporating archival work in Japanese and Chinese to further investigate the contours of Finland's relations with East Asia would make for a research avenue that is entirely understudied.

In this thesis, the historical image research was used to analyse the images of Manchukuo that the envoys of Finland in Tokyo and Shanghai formed during their tenures and shared in their reports. The findings point out that the envoys tended to create an image of a place they had never visited based on the information they received in their host countries. Therefore, a pro-Chinese versus pro-Japanese image formation surfaces. Although the images of Manchukuo as a puppet with no sovereignty suggest that the envoys mostly respected the League of Nations (and Finland's) non-recognition policy until July 1941, all praised Japan's strength against the Soviet Union, as dealing with its neighbour was the biggest question of Finnish foreign policy at the time. Only Ville Niskanen's and Karl Gustaf Idman's images of Manchukuo present the biggest anomalies: one was an image of Manchukuo that the Japanese controlled greedily with an iron grip, and the other was an image of Manchukuo that had been transformed into a modern state due to Japanese intervention. When measuring these two views with the historical research that has been conducted on Manchukuo, both extremes hold an element of truth.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I: Photographs of the Diplomatic Representatives to Tokyo and Shanghai in 1919-1945

Photographs taken from the Finnish Foreign Ministry's digital archive at:  
<https://um.fi/opendata/raporttiarkisto/1918/#navi> [accessed 11.03.2024]

#### Tokyo, Japan



Ramstedt, Gustaf John



Winckelmann, George



Valvanne, Hugo



Idman, Karl Gustaf

Shanghai, China



Wähämäki, Karl Gustaf



Niskanen, Ville



Tanner, Väinö

Appendix II: O'Sullivan's list of Manchukuo's International Relations

TABLE III  
DIPLOMATIC OR CONSULAR SERVICES IN MANCHOUKUO

1932	1937	1941
Austria +	Belgium +	* China +
Belgium +	Czechoslovakia +	* Finland +
*Denmark +	* Denmark +	* Germany
France +	Esthonia +	* Hungary
*Germany +	* Finland +	* Italy
Great Britain +	France +	* Japan
*Italy +	* Germany	* Mongolia
*Japan +	Great Britain	* Romania +
Latvia +	* Italy	* Vatican
Norway +	* Japan	
*Poland +	Latvia +	
Portugal +	Lithuania +	
*Spain +	Netherlands +	
Sweden +	Norway +	
United States	* Poland +	
	Portugal +	
	Sweden +	
	* U.S.S.R. +	
	United States	

\*Countries which recognized Manchoukuo

+Members of the League of Nations at the date shown

Source: The China Year Book (1932, reprinted, Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited: Nendelin/Liechtenstein, 1969), pp. 781-787; the Japan-Manchoukuo Year Book 1938 (Tokyo: The Japan-Manchuokuo Year Book Company, 1937), pp. 687-688; the Orient Year Book 1942 (Tokyo: Asia Statistics Company, 1942), p. 540.

Source: O'Sullivan, Ailisha M. 'Manchukuo's Relations with Other Nations', (published Master's thesis, University College Cork, 1982), p.34.