

Early Chinese Colonization In Manchuria

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A detailed history of Chinese colonization in Manchuria cannot yet be written. Too many gaps are there that only careful research can hope to fill. What is given below is admittedly fragmentary and incomplete.

It cannot be far from truth to think that Manchuria, being contiguous to China proper in land and easily accessible by water, had been from very ancient times a home for Chinese stragglers. That many individuals and individual families from China proper must have managed to settle in the Liaotung Peninsula during the long stretch of Chinese history may reasonably be taken for granted. But organized colonization did not begin until the latter part of the fourteenth century when the Mings drove out the Mongols and became themselves de facto masters of North China. Before this, and ever since the Tang dynasty, or farther back, since the Han dynasty and the Three Kingdoms, for a period of over eleven centuries, it will be remembered, North China had been repeatedly overrun by Mongol and Tanguis tribes, and the Chinese enjoyed at best only a nominal control over the regions inside the Great Wall, not to say those beyond it; and naturally, colonization on a large scale would have been unthinkable in those days.

But in those days, it will be further recalled, the Chinese, while engaged in gradually assimilating the northern barbarians, were themselves taking time to spread southward, filling up what is now the provinces of Fukien, Kwangtung, Kwangsi, Yunnan, and Kweichow; and even now the force of southerly expansion has not spent itself. The successive waves of Hakka migration are now generally regarded as some of the most prominent landmarks in the process.

Returning to our story, we find that almost no sooner had the Mings unified the country, than a policy of extensive colonization was adopted. The first Ming Emperor, Hung Wu (1368-1398) was a man of insight and of foresight; he saw from the very beginning the necessity of filling up all the spaces recently vacated by the defeated and retreating Mongols. People from congested regions in the south were even ordered to migrate to the north, and many new settlements sprang up almost overnight. Such settlements were, as may be expected, partly military and partly agricultural and pastoral, and the adult males constituting them may be regarded as forming a sort of self-supporting militia, living upon what they themselves produced from the land they were developing and protecting. They were of three different sizes. The largest had a membership of adult males of about 5,600, representing generally as equal number of households, and was called a wei. The settlement with a membership of 1,200 was called a "su of thousand households," and that with a membership of 112, a "su of hundred households." Of every

hundred adult males in the settlements, thirty were expected to do military duty, the other seventy worked in the fields. The following is a list of the weis that were instituted in Manchuria during and shortly after the reign of the first Ming Emperor. ⁽¹⁾

Mukden	ca. 1370
Mukden	ca. 1370
Liaoyang	1371
Liaoyang	1373
Liaoyang	1373
Liaoyang	1375
Kingchow	1375
Haicheng (Newchwang)	1376
Kaiping (Hsiung-yao-cheng)	1376
Tungning (in Kirin)	1380
Fuchow	1381
Liaoyang	1384
Tungning (in Kirin)	1386
Ichow	1387
Acheng (in Kirin)	1387
Tiehling	1388
Peicheng	1390
Peicheng	ca. 1390
Peicheng	ca. 1390
Peicheng	ca. 1390
Peicheng	ca. 1390
Acheng	1390
Chinchow	1391
Chinchow	1391
Chinchow	1393
Chinchow	1393
Ichow	1393
Mukden	1398
Mukden	1398
Kaiyuan	1409
Kaiyuan	1409
Peicheng	1410
Hsincheng	1430

It will be seen that practically all the weis were within the confines of the present province of Liaoning. The three or four in Kirin are open to doubt; owing to changes in the names of localities, correct identification is now often impossible. But we read in the Ming records that there were in all 184 weis and 20 sus in Kirin, for which officers were appointed; but as there did not seem to have been any definite allotment of land to each wei and su, the historian had hesitated to list them. The Province of Heilungkiang was then in all probability entirely in the hands of native nomad tribes.

But from the meagre data we do possess, it will be clear that as early as the latter part of the fourteenth century, fully a hundred years before Columbus landed in the West Indies, (which marked the beginning of

(1) Shu Wen Hsien Tung Kao. Section on Geography.

many things in the West, particularly colonization) the regions in Manchuria watered by the Liao Ho were already being colonized by the Chinese. Calculating upon the basis of the 34 weis alone, each with 5,600 households, we would find a total of 190,400 households or separate families; and multiplying these by 5.5, which is about the average size for the Chinese family, both historically and at present ⁽²⁾, we easily arrive at a million for the whole population. But this is obviously not the whole truth. It will be recalled that these were but the first households and individuals that were induced or ordered to move into Manchuria between 1370 and 1430, a short open of 60 years. They only constituted the basic Chinese population, from which a rapid growth and expansion must be assumed to have taken place in the years which followed and preceded the Manchu Conquest. The latter began to be felt around 1620, about 200 years after the last recorded settlement in our list was ordered. Further, when the nature of the circumstances is taken into account, the rate of growth of the Chinese settlements must be assumed to have been very great, perhaps quite comparable to that of the American population of New England during the 18th century, which was variously estimated to be doubling itself in 25 (Hyle, for Rhode Island alone) 15-20, and even in 13 (Euler) or 10 (Petty) years. ⁽³⁾

While all this is admittedly only of an inferential value, it may be pointed out from definite records, that when the Manchus had captured what is now Mukden and made Liaoyang the Capital (1621), Chinese colonists were forced by the thousands to retreat inside of the Great Wall. In 1622, when Kuangning, now Peicheng, fell into the hands of the Manchus, "not less than a million" Chinese lost their homes, had to find refuge inside of Shanhaikuan, and the government had to rehabilitate in what is now Tientsin, Peiping, Hochien and Paoting. A million is quite a round number, and mathematics, as Prof. East of Harvard believes, has not been the strong point of the Chinese; but this bit of historical evidence would at least indicate that Chinese colonists in the Liao Valley must have waxed strong in numbers since they first came to settle there in the 14th and 15th centuries.

That Chinese colonization in Manchuria during the Ming dynasty was of much biological consequence and was not of a purely military and economic character may be inferred from two other lines of facts. The first is that, for the purpose of frontier protection, garrison houses were established quite apart from the settlements. One of many such stations was located in what is now Fengcheng, near Antung and the Korean border. The other and more important line of facts is to be gathered from the genealogies of many Chinese families ⁽⁴⁾ which contributed to the formation of the Manchurian weis. It will be seen that their members who went north at the order of the government, then in Nanking,

did so not as isolated individuals, but brought their wives and children with them.

More facts bearing upon Chinese colonization in Manchuria may be found in such encyclopaedic works as Shu Wen Hsien Tung Kao. In the latter, in the section on land revenues, references were made to colonization in Manchuria for the years 1382, 1395, 1406, 1429, 1509, 1570, 1577, and 1622. It was in 1622 that "over a million" Chinese made their retreat before the advancing Manchus, marking for a time the end of a long period of peaceful and successful colonization. In the year 1395, Yung Lo, then a prince and later the third and perhaps the most energetic of the Ming rulers, was recorded to have made a personal visit to the colonies. The land allotted to the colonists during the reign of Hung Wu amounted to 1,238,600 mu, or roughly 188,000 acres; but around 1550, it was increased to 2,915,866 mu, or roughly 442,000 acres. But this was only the officially allotted acreage located in the close vicinity of the settlements. The acreage that had been appropriated from time to time without official sanction as the settlements grew and expanded must have been many times the figures found in the records.

Beside the military and agricultural functions, Manchuria colonization served in a relatively few cases also legal or penal purposes. Able but recalcitrant officials were not uncommonly sent into exile with their families. Of the far-reaching consequences of such exiles, more will be said in a later section.

To the advancing Manchus who were militant and intolerant, the Chinese colonists had of course to give way. The less adaptable colonists returned to China proper, while the more adaptable ones submitted to the new rule and were enrolled as Chinese Bannermen, or Hanchiungs. The number who did this must have been quite large; well over two hundred families of different surnames are represented in the records as having served in important military as well as civil capacities, especially during the first years of the Manchu conquest. Of this number of families, the great majority had "lived for generations" within what is now the Province of Liaoning; a few, about half of a percent, however, had "lived for generations" in Kirin, showing that Chinese colonization during the Ming dynasty did reach the Western slope of Changpei Mountains. ⁽⁵⁾

The Manchus had reason to look upon Manchuria as their patrimony, and naturally their attitude toward Chinese colonization could not be very friendly. While they found it expedient to absorb whatever was left of the colonies, they determined to discourage any further migration of Chinese into Manchuria. This determination finally led to a definite policy of exclusion.

The policy of exclusion, however, was not adopted and acted upon until 1668, almost a generation after the

(2) This cannot be an over-estimate for rapidly growing communities, especially with the Chinese. The present average size for families in the same regions has been estimated to be 8-9.

(3) E. M. East, *Mankind at the Cross-roads*. P. 52.

(4) For example, the Genealogy of the Fan Family. 40 Vols. Section on family dispersion.

(5) Tsing Tung Chih. Section on Genealogy.

Manchus entered the Great Wall. For the first years, they found that the evacuation of the Liao Valley by Chinese colonists proved a decided disadvantage to their own people, who had not become adapted to agricultural life and who must have valued the measure of co-operative harmony which they had established with the colonists. So in 1653 the government saw fit to draw up a set of regulations with the explicit purpose inducing the Chinese to migrate and settle. Volunteer recruiting agents were awarded positions, either military or civil, in the governments of the districts, the importance of the position being proportionate to the number of settlers that the individual was able to muster. The settlers themselves were given monthly allowance of grain, a certain amount of seeds for every five acres of land opened up, and 20 heads of cattle for every hundred settlers.

The regulations were repealed in 1668. But during the period when they were in force, the Chinese population seemed to have grown very considerably. Abbe Huc, the famous Jesuit missionary and traveller, wrote of the conditions then obtaining: "The Great Wall was freely passed. . . . the Chinese population of Pe-Tche-Li (now Hopei) and Chan-Toung (Shantung) bursts like torrents upon Manchuria." The Gazetteer of Shengking states, of the same period, that more than a dozen hsiens, the traditional Chinese unit of government ever since the third century B. C., were created in order to accommodate the new influx of settlers and others who catered to their wants. It shows that in dealing with large numbers of Chinese who were accustomed to settled rural as well as urban life, the semi-military government by Banners proved no longer adequate. But when the regulations were repealed, the tide turned, as may be seen from the following meagre figures. ⁽⁶⁾

Year	Number of Male Adults	Increase over last count
1661	5557	—
1664	10329	4773
1667	27012	16643
1668	33572	6560
1669	34762	1190

Thus began the long period of exclusion. But the enforcement of the "Manchuria-for-Manchus" policy had required constant vigilance on the part of the government in the form of repeated edicts of warning and patrol and state troopers on the boundary line between Manchuria and China proper. Such efforts of vigilance may be summarized in the following chronological table:—

- 1668—Repeal of Regulations of 1653 referred to above.
- 1739—Chinese settlers in Kirin and Fengtien forced to become naturalized.
- 1740—Edicts dealing with exclusion of would-be Chinese settlers, naturalization of older settlers, and deportation in 10 years of those not willing to be naturalized.
- 1746—Edicts prohibiting Chinese to go beyond Shanhai-kwan.

1750—Deportation ordered, after the expiration of ten years.

1750—Deportation from Dolansor of settlers with families. Edicts prohibiting intermarriage between Mongols and Chinese.

1750—Edict prohibiting Chinese to go beyond Shanhai-kwan, Hsifeng Pass, and the boundary line between Manchuria and Mongolia as marked out by the Willow Fence.

1751—New rule in effect that only Manchus, not Chinese, were eligible as magistrates.

1762—The office of civil governor in Shangking became subordinate to that of the viceroy.

1776—Edict prohibiting settlers to go into Kirin, that is, beyond the southern extension of the Willow Fence.

1799 (?)—Another edict to the same effect.

1803—Edict emphasizing the prohibition of Chinese settlers with families to go beyond Shanhaikwan.

1824—Measures taken inducing Manchus residing in China proper to move back and develop the country so as to counteract the growing influence of Chinese settlers. These proved a failure within five years.

1870—Same measures inducing Manchus to move back to Heilungkiang. Complete failure.

Measures of this kind might stem the tide, or even turn the tide of Chinese immigration for a time, they could not, however, break and stop it. Chinese settlers kept on coming into Manchuria. Even the first prohibitive edict (1668) did not seem to have had much binding force. It should have been noted earlier that of the present Three Eastern Provinces comprising Manchuria, Shengking (later Fengtien and now Liaoning) had from the very beginning both the equivalents of a viceroy and governor, the other two having only military authorities. In other words, only Shengking was treated in a measure as a province. Now, of the 52 governors that successively sat in office between 1644 and 1751, 34 were Chinese, 17 were Chinese Bannermen, and only 1 was Manchu. Similarly of the 293 minor officials below the governor, 247 were Chinese, 28 were Chinese Bannermen and only 18 were Manchus. The preponderant share taken by the Chinese in the provincial Government is most significant. In the absence of statistical material, they show most convincingly that Chinese settlers enjoyed a steady growth in number and influence in spite of the pressure brought to bear upon them by the respective edicts of 1668, 1740, 1746 and 1750. They show further that as the Chinese community expanded and civil life became increasingly varied and intricate, officials of pure Manchu extraction and even those appointed from the Chinese Banners were no longer sufficient to cope with the situation.

(6) The Gazetteer of Shengking.

Another fact tending to show that the Chinese community had grown during these years despite many disabilities was that, in 1726, the prefecture of Fengtien (the prefect of Fengtien and the Governor of Shengking being identical) was enlarged to include Kirin, Ninguta, and Potune. This can only mean two things, either that the Chinese population in Shengking had so increased that more land was needed to accommodate them, or that the Chinese communities originally in the three localities had themselves grown in complexity so as to justify and require a change in the mode of government better in accord with Chinese traditions.

The latter alternative is easily the more probable. In fact, as early as 1676, there were over a thousand families within the city of Kirin. From time to time since 1661 labor was needed for the construction of junks in the dockyards for which the city of Kirin was then famous, and the Chinese had always been responsive to the call. In 1682, for instance, a large number of settlers moved there, and a fleet of over 40 war junks was the result. In Ninguta, too, there was a large Chinese community, which first had quarters outside of the city walls, but later about 1675 moved into the city, as the latter was vacated by the Manchu Bannermen, who had to go south on an expedition against Wu San Kwei. A good description of some aspects of social life in these cities, characteristically Chinese, is to be found in at least two or three works, at least one of which was written by a scholar among the settlers. (7)

But more direct evidence as to the prevalence of smuggling in those days is not lacking. In 1746, for instance, the governor of Shengking, one by the name Ho Pei, was reprimanded for having allowed batches of smugglers, amounting to "tens of thousands" to pass through Shanhaikwan.

After 1776, when the prohibition against settlement in Kirin was first proclaimed, the Chinese settlers began to push forward in a north-eastern direction into what is now Changchun and Hsinming, instead of going east. This continued for many years. An official investigation in 1799 found in Changchun 3330 Chinese families, cultivating an area of land amounting to 265,448 mu, or roughly 41,000 acres. A dozen years later, by 1812, the same community had gained 7000 additional souls, and the total land area had become about 3200 sq. m. Now all this had absolutely no legal backing. Quite on the contrary. In making Changchun a new centre of expansion, the settlers assuredly committed no offense against the letters of the edict of 1726, for Changchun was then hardly a part of Kirin. But as Changchun was located close to the northeastern extension of the Willow Fence, the settlers really stood in danger of defying the edict of 1750, which did not seem to have been superseded by later edicts. But anyway, the government was then busy with putting down the Peilien rebellion and was not in a position to reckon seriously with the settlers, it did nothing besides, on the one hand, making Changchun a part of Kirin so that the settlers already there might receive a watchful eye from responsible

authorities and, on the other, issuing in 1799 a new edict re-enforcing the terms of the edict of 1750, so that prospective settlers would be discouraged. That neither of these measures was of much consequence has already been made evident to us by the figures for 1812 above referred to.

Sometimes under extenuating circumstances, concessions were made by the government itself. In the summer of 1743, for instance, when the central part of Chihli (now Hopei), including the city of Tientsin, suffered from drought, the afflicted population was specially permitted to move into Manchuria. Again, in the next year, when Shantung and Honan became involved in famine, more people were allowed to go beyond the Great Wall unmolested by the guard on the borders. The same thing happened again in 1792, when another famine due to drought visited the region south of Peking (now Peiping).

The edict of 1776 making settling in Kirin unlawful and another in 1826 authorizing the establishment of kariens or reservations for settlers may also be regarded as a form of concession on the part of the Manchu Government. It had finally come to realize that complete exclusion of Chinese from Manchuria was out of the question, that the problem had already taken root, and that the only feasible measure was to localize it and prevent further ramifications.

But the greatest concession by the Government was yet to be made. During the first years of the reign of Tao-Kwang (1821-1850), the expeditions against the Mohammedans had so depleted the national treasury that new sources of revenue had to be sought or created. To the vast tract of virgin land in Manchuria, the attention of the Government was very naturally directed. "Up to the reign of Tao-Kwang," wrote Huc, "the regions watered by the Sougari (Sungari or Sunghuakiang) were exclusively inhabited by Manchus; entrance into those vast districts was prohibited to the Chinese . . . At the commencement of the present reign (Huc's travels took place in 1844-46), these districts were put up for public sale, in order to supply the deficiency in the Imperial treasury. The Chinese rushed upon them like birds of prey, and a few years sufficed to remove everything that could in any way recall the memory of their ancient possessors. It would be vain for any one now (1844) to seek in Manchuria a single town, a single village, that is not composed entirely of Chinese." Huc's words have of course to be taken with a grain of salt. But the important changes brought about by the concession, once made, may easily be inferred.

The prohibitive laws to Chinese colonization were finally repealed in 1878, particularly those that dealt with the bringing along of families. But the disabilities, long fostered, of a prospective Chinese settler, were not wholly done away with until 1905-1907, when both Kirin and Heilungkiang became regular provinces.

(7) K. C. Fang: Ninguta Chi Liao.