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Building Modern Military Men: The Northeast Military Academy in the Early Twentieth  
Century

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

Mi R. Kim

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, Chair  
Associate Professor Qitao Guo  
Professor Kenneth L. Pomeranz

2014



# **DEDICATION**

To my parents

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

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## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

Building Modern Men: The Northeast Military Academy in the Early Twentieth Century

By

Mi R. Kim

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Irvine, 2014

Professor Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, Chair

This dissertation, a history of the development of an institutional body at the Northeast Military Academy in the early twentieth century, sets out to show that focusing on regional military institutions such as this school can shed light on how, in addition to shaping the political landscape of early twentieth-century China through their actions, the military men of this time also influenced notions of what was progressive, masculine, and modern, and what kinds of visual, material, and institutional forms Chinese masculinity would take. By closely examining the fragmentary documents produced by the Northeast Military Academy, this dissertation explores the ways in which the men affiliated with the school affirmed their membership in an elite military cohort and their connection to the school and to each other. The school sought to train officers who would be physically fit, psychologically astute, technically skilled, but most importantly of all, act as leaders in battle and embody a source of pride and support for other soldiers, a task that was only partially realized. The textual and visual archive of the Northeast Military Academy chronicle the efforts of instructors and students to absorb, implement, and improve upon new military skills and an effort not simply building strong bodies in the form of its graduates, but also creating bodies that could properly digest specific kinds of knowledge and

make it their own. The dissertation attempts to reconstruct their fragmentary experiences by taking the reader on a journey through the rapidly shifting political terrain of Northeast China in the early twentieth century.

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation seeks to create a multi-faceted view of the Northeast Military Academy<sup>1</sup> from its fragmentary documentary traces. An institution established for the training of officers for the Northeast Army (also known as the Fengtian Army) of warlords Zhang Zuolin and his son, Zhang Xueliang, the school was integral to the operation of a powerful regional warlord power that was in control of northeast China (Manchuria) in the turbulent Republican period (1912-1949) and had ambitions for control over all of China, a dream that came to an end with the establishment of formal Japanese control of Manchuria and the Manzhouguo (Manchukuo) regime in 1932. Largely focusing on the school in the 1910s and 1920s, this dissertation surveys the ways in which it sought to shape its institutional identity and how its members sought to define themselves as soldiers, officers, and men. Examining and contextualizing the fragmentary records that they left behind using a range of contemporary sources, the following chapters seek to better understand the self-regard and aspirations of the men and the experiences and expectations that were developed at and reinforced by the school. Rather than being a study of an institution or a study of individuals, the dissertation investigates the interplay of the singular and collective aspects of the Northeast Military Academy, adding insight and texture to this important regional node of Republican Chinese military affairs, masculine identity, and political currents. In doing so, the dissertation explores the tensions that this process engendered and argues that the formation of the institutional identity of the school and the masculine identity of its members contributed to the formation of an exclusive elite cohort identity, that while

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<sup>1</sup> The school was called by different names at various points for example, Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang (found in the English-language literature translated as the Military School of the Three Eastern Provinces), Dongbei lujun jiangwutang (Northeast Army School), and Dongbei jiangwutang (Northeast Military School or Northeast Military Academy), although the operation of the school was fairly continuous through these name changes. For ease of reference and consistency, this dissertation uses Northeast Military Academy to refer to the Republican incarnation of the school under study here.

undergirding calls for national relevance and solidarity with all Chinese citizens, remained firmly rooted in a regional site.

Questions of war and the military in China complicate the analytical boundaries of military history, and the case of northeast China, a region of contestation and mixed sovereign control, has much to offer.<sup>2</sup> The technological advances in warfare in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century also meant that new methods to train soldiers were necessary, and the military schools like the Northeast Military Academy that came into being in the late Qing and the Republican period were conduits of modern military practices, knowledge, and culture. As will be explained further in the later in this introduction, this dissertation participates fully in the trend of "New Military History" in the U.S. academy, an approach broadly understood as incorporating social and cultural modes of analysis into detail-oriented empirical military history. This approach, beginning in the late 1950s, has sought to widen traditional military history's focus.<sup>3</sup> Rather than only discussing the minutiae of warfare and military technology, scholars have been investigating military figures, institutions, and events in broader economic, cultural, and social contexts as well.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The two major global poles of histories of military organizations and issues in the twentieth century are the two world wars (1914-1945), often described as total wars, which demanded the unstinting contribution of all sectors of society, not just the military, and the Cold War (1945-early 1990s), characterized by the combination of the effects of decolonization, détente between the US and the USSR, and the resurgence of guerilla and proxy warfare. Cold War dynamics between China and the USSR has a rich literature devoted to it, recent works focusing on not only on political intricacies and policies but also the impact of gender relations, education, and two-way cultural flows between the two powers. See Thomas P. Bernstein and Hua-Yu Li, eds., *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949-Present* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> As a work that seeks to understand individuals actors, one of the most influential works in the development of military studies in the U.S. has been John Keegan's *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), which sought to introduce psychological and social modes of understanding of individual soldiers and shift the focus away from simply battlefield analysis. In the field of China studies, Diana Lary's *Warlord Soldiers 1911-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) takes up the task of attempting to individualize and humanize the experience of Chinese soldiers during the Republican era from aggregate data. Recent studies in this vein for this period include works such as Edward McCord's look at the internal dynamics of military revolt, "Victims and Victimizers: Warlord Soldiers and Mutinies in Republican China," in *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China*, ed. James A. Flath and Norman Smith (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 130-152.

<sup>4</sup> However, a debate on the impact of military technology on war and policy which began in the 1980s continues – see in particular the work of Geoffrey Parker, such as *The Military Revolution: Military Innovations and the Rise of*

Grounded in cultural analysis, this dissertation looks at a military school that has been long neglected in academic studies in favor of more famous military schools in China such as the Whampoa (Huangpu) Military Academy, Baoding Military Academy, and Yunnan Military Academy.<sup>5</sup> Interest in the Northeast Military Academy has begun to increase in recent years, with the Liaoning Social Sciences Academy in Shenyang organizing a conference focused on the school in 2013 as well as the publication of a historical overview by scholar Wang Tiejun.<sup>6</sup> However, even here, the Northeast Military Academy has been long overshadowed by these other more famous schools, in particular Whampoa, which produced a number of leaders for the Guomintang forces, with Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) serving as the first commandant of the school. This dissertation investigates both the school's methods and aspirations toward molding these career soldiers into modern officers, offering not only a look at the organization and command structure of the Northeast Military Academy but also the flows of knowledge and cohort-based relationships along vertical and horizontal axes of analysis. The fragmentary documentary traces of the activities and personnel of the Northeast Military Academy have necessitated a flexible approach to the organization and flow of analysis, and the dissertation brings together investigative methods drawn from history, sociology, cultural studies, and visual studies to reconstruct the Northeast Military Academy during the height of its activity and influence in Northeast China, the 1910s and 1920s. As an investigation of an understudied, less prominent regional military school, this study has much to offer to the burgeoning field of

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*the West, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), which posits a military technology-based framework to explain historical divergences and dominates – and in some ways restricted – the terms of the debate as one of a "military revolution" in history.

<sup>5</sup> The Northeast Military School was one of several major officer training schools turning out officers during the late Qing and Republican periods that included Baoding Military Academy in Zhili, established in 1902 and closed in 1923. The most famous and prominent of these was Whampoa (Huangpu) Military Academy), established in Guangzhou in 1924 following Soviet models.

<sup>6</sup> Wang Tiejun, *Dongbei jiang wu tang* [Northeast Army Jiang Wu Hall] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2013).

Republican-era institutions and an often overlooked group of elites, the military officers who were essential to the workings of the modern Chinese military.

Indeed, scholars are increasingly recognizing that the history of twentieth-century China is in large part a history of war, in which military officers played a large role. Shifting away from large questions of whether major conflicts ought to be considered revolutions or rebellions, more and more attention is being devoted to the conflicts and how they have reverberated through Chinese society and culture.<sup>7</sup> After the heyday of political and diplomatic histories of China and high-level Chinese military leaders in the 1960s and 70s in the US and the 70s and 80s in China, the military as a field of inquiry is once again drawing scholarly attention. The study of education and militaristic aspects thereof in East Asia in the early twentieth century is also receiving renewed attention, often with a commemorative bent.<sup>8</sup> Questions of war and memory have also generated important recent works such as Tobie Meyer Fong's look at nineteenth century ruptures of war within China.<sup>9</sup> Masculinity as a lens through which to look at societal change in China, in contemporary works, also abound. These studies grapple with the ways in which categories such as generation and cohort affect individuals and examine how they shape interpersonal bonds created through a shared type of work or profession.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For an example of a study in which questions of rebellion and revolution shape its analysis, see the excellent Philip Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980). For an argument for re-evaluating the military and its role in the history and historiography of early twentieth century China, critically examining positive attitudes and belief in the military as a transformative institution, and according it a more significant place in institutional, political, and economic developments, see Hans van de Ven, "The Military in the Republic," in *The China Quarterly*, no. 150, Special Issue: Reappraising Republic China (June 1997): 352-374.

<sup>8</sup> For a recent work that combines academic analysis with an almost nostalgic look back into the past, see Xu Shengkai, *Rizhi shiqi Taipei gaodeng xuexiao yu jinying yangcheng* [Management and development of schools of higher education in Taipei during the colonial period] (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan Shifan Daxue, 2012) on Taiwanese higher education during the period of Japanese rule.

<sup>9</sup> Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in Nineteenth Century China* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013)

<sup>10</sup> Xiaodong Lin, *Gender, Modernity, and Male Migrant Workers in China: Becoming 'Modern' Man* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Unlike such ground-up studies, this dissertation shares its focal point with studies of the elite as a coherent social group with shared experiences, political views, and behaviors or attitudes, whether looking at technocratic elites in the People's Republic of China<sup>11</sup> or political elites and intellectuals in the last years of the Qing.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the traditional literati of China, the elites of the Northeast Military Academy, although part of a group whose status was experiencing upward change, faced a significant challenge in trying to define and consolidate this rise in status against deeply-held prejudices against and suspicion of the military. As this dissertation will argue, professionalization was an uphill task for the soldiers of the Northeast Military Academy, one that was only partially successful and faced challenges that not only came from society at large, but also from within the school's own ranks. Military officers were an essential component of these developments, and this dissertation asks what their priorities, concerns, challenges, and perceptions about their training as modern military men were by examining the cadets, graduates, and administrators of the Northeast Military Academy.

This school was not a military school that took young, untried men and molded them into soldiers, but more of a continuing education training institution, and the ages of the cadets also reflect that they were well into their military careers, with the majority of the men in their mid-to-late twenties and thirties and in a few cases, beyond. The Northeast Army was a substantial and well-organized, well-funded force that were, like other warlord armies, led by ambitious men and staffed by officers who cut their teeth navigating the topsy-turvy political world of the late Qing, through the fall of China's last dynasty, and the years of political struggle and warfare that

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<sup>11</sup> Susan Greenhalgh, *Just One Child: Science and Policy in Deng's China* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Tze-ki Hon, *Revolution and Restoration: Guocui xuebao and China's Path to Modernity, 1905-1911* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013).

followed.<sup>13</sup> There are many of these figures and forces in the period between the fall of the last imperial dynasty, the Qing, and the establishment of the People's Republic of China. This dissertation examines their experiences, generational formation, social position within a cohort, whether determined by seniority of age or rank or facilitated by institutional structures, other status or class-based distinctions within the cohort, and institutional or generational continuity and discontinuity to offer a detailed look at a generation of officers who came of age when the first generation of soldiers and statesmen were training at newly established military schools in China and Western-style military schools in Japan. When the first Northeast Military School classes were children, this earlier generation attended military schools dressed in modern uniforms and wearing their hair in the traditional queue,<sup>14</sup> which would completely disappear among Chinese officers by the time the Northeast Military Academy began turning out graduates in the 1920s and 30s.

The historiography of these roughly 30-plus years is dominated by concerns about nation-building and questions about the legitimacy of different groups or regimes to determine the fate of the nation. The regional warlord armies such as the Northeast Army and its leaders and officers have been long considered a transitional step or stumbling block for China's path toward a unified nation-state. Alternately, these regional armies have been treated as either enemies or allies of two major forces that contended for this unified China, the Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists led by Mao Zedong, a footnote to a story that concludes with the defeats, victories, and nation-building events of 1949. By focusing on a particular military school which produced officers for what has been often considered as a "illegitimate" type of army, this

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<sup>13</sup> See chapter 2, "The Politicization of the Military: The New Army and the 1911 Revolution," of Edward McCord's *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993) and Edmund S.K. Fung, *The Military Dimension of the Chinese Revolution: The New Army and Its Role in the Revolution of 1911* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980).

<sup>14</sup> Tong Te-kong and Li Tsung-jen, *The Memoirs of Li Tsung-jen* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), 21. Li Tsung-jen (Li Zongren, 1891-1969) entered a military elementary school in 1908.



dissertation seeks to approach the history of warlord armies and the militarization of China from an alternate vantage point, one that sidesteps but remains cognizant of the dominant Communists versus Nationalists narrative and the concerns about the nation in military strategy, rhetoric, and operations. By looking into the goals, activities, and aspirations of a regional military institution, this dissertation argues that the activities and perhaps the lifespan of a regional army may be a useful basic unit for doing a history, rather than a nation-state. This is difficult because oftentimes we will find that the fate of armies and nation-states are quite intimately linked. However, the case of China in the early twentieth century offers an interesting case for the ruptures between these kinds of national histories. Examining a regional army can refocus our attention from the formation of what we call "China" in the present-day as the decisive outcome of the meeting of two military-political forces, the Communists and the Nationalists. The well-known—or perhaps notorious—short-lived state of Manzhouguo offers one vantage point for looking at the national narrative, but it is still a nation-state based view, however unsteady those claims may be, and the longstanding conception of Manzhouguo's illegitimacy, which existed even from the beginning of its creation, makes it difficult to pose it as an "alternative" at all.

Although the Manzhouguo period has been intensely studied and continues to produce interesting work, the Republican period in Northeast China has had comparatively fewer studies.<sup>15</sup> The years that the Northeast Military Academy was most active overlaps with the "Nanjing Decade," (1927-1937), named for the Nationalist government based in Nanjing at the time. Scholars like Chang Jui-te and Hans van de Ven have described this period as being characterized by moral mobilization of men and women. Moreover, this period saw the rapid development of a modern industrialized military and a bureaucratic state apparatus affixed to a

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<sup>15</sup> Rana Mitter's important look at elite collaboration in Manchuria is one counterexample. See *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000).

semicolonial or imperfectly sovereign political map. Rana Mitter's study on the 1930s and 40s regime in Manchuria in particular is an excellent exploration of how far these features exist—or did not exist—in the northeast. A close look at the administrative and institutional features of Zhang Zuolin's military and this army's efforts in developing an institution of military education can also broaden our understanding of modes of governance in the region as well, for he strongly influenced other political-military actors in the region, as in the case of top-level administrators in Heilongjiang.<sup>16</sup>

Without discounting the importance of the struggle of the national-level forces, this dissertation focuses on a particular regional organization in an uncertain period when all contenders for the control of China held, in some sense, a regional base, a state of affairs that persisted until quite far into the twentieth century. Looking mainly at the 1910s and 1920s, this dissertation sees a process of military professionalization and bureaucratization in the Northeast military forces of Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Xueliang that is truncated by the onset of the war with Japan. Like Mitter's study of high-level collaborators and resisters during the period of Japanese rule, this dissertation is a close look into an elite strata of Manchurian society, the officers of the Northeast Army who attended and graduated from the region's premier military training institution. Looking at the history of the region from the viewpoint of military organizations or the rise and fall lifetimes of regional militaries, especially non-national ones, such as the many warlord armies of early twentieth century China, presents a alternate kind of historical timeline and organizational schema.

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<sup>16</sup> Blaine R. Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer: Manchuria's Russians under Chinese Rule, 1918-29* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 54.

In the vein of recent studies that have emphasized the importance of looking at internal dynamics of military and militaristic dynamics in China<sup>17</sup> and incorporating the complex geopolitical context in which militaristic institutions developed in the early twentieth century,<sup>18</sup> this dissertation looks inward to the minute details of the operations of an important regional military institution while centering it within the shifting political, social, and cultural terrain of the Republican era. This study is concerned with the shape that modernity took for a select group but rather than being shaped by questions of the formation of the nation, the dissertation takes as its focus the process of professionalization within the Northeast Military Academy. In extending this analytic focus, the dissertation also looks at Northeast Military Academy with relation to its parent organization, the Northeast Army, and as an entity within Northeast China, or Manchuria, in the fast-changing times of Republican China.

During its years of major operation in the 1910s and 1920s, the Northeast Military Academy carried out a program of study and training geared toward preparing soldiers to become effective officers during a time when military power was in ascendancy and the activities of soldiers had a great influence on all levels of Chinese society. While the course of war, the organizational structure of armies, and the lives of famous top-level military figures in early twentieth century China have drawn much scholarly attention, soldiers themselves remain understudied. As Diana Lary has pointed out in her work on warlord soldiers, part of this is due to the lack of extant sources on ordinary enlisted men. Often, even basic records such as enlistment documents were haphazardly kept or not kept at all; soldiering was a highly mobile and uncertain profession, and battles, victories, and defeats all contributed to the constant loss or

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<sup>17</sup> James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire Building in Asia* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Erik Esselstrom, *Crossing Empire's Edge: Foreign Ministry Police and Japanese Expansionism in Northeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

absorption of troops and other fluctuations in the makeup of the many armies that fought for control of the country. Historically speaking, soldiers' experiences have tended to be as easily lost as their lives. The everyday experience of soldiers have left behind few traces while continuous patterns of displacement and widespread war in early twentieth century China have created or widened gaps in the documentary record that are difficult to patch when it comes to the military at the ground level.

Because they were an elite officer corps that formed the backbone of the various warlord armies of the period, more can be known about the graduates of the Northeast Military Academy and other similar military schools, although this is still not a significant difference from ordinary enlisted or conscripted soldiers in general. However, for all their impact on those around them by their command of men and participation in military engagements, upon first glance, not much seems to be there to glean when it comes to historical records about these officers. While memoirs and remembrances of the Northeast Army officers, particularly those who went to Taiwan after 1949, comprise an important bank of information about some of these men, their lives are still fairly fragmentary on the whole.<sup>19</sup> Held in large part in the Liaoning Provincial Archives in Shenyang, where most of the research for this project was carried out in 2011-2012, the texts that bear the footprints of these men are predominantly succinct, bare, and impersonal in nature. Because of the limitations of its source base, this dissertation does not make any claims to have reconstituted the lives of the graduates of the school with a high level of detail and depth, nor assert that it has given to or recovered for them a voice. Rather, given these constraints, the dissertation is an attempt to augment what little we know about this important regional center of modern military education.

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<sup>19</sup> See *Dongbei wenxian* [Northeast literary magazine] (Taipei: Dongbei wenxian she); memoirs also tend to be those of those very high up in the ranks and rarely that of the ordinary soldier.

Military studies of the past several decades have tended to strongly emphasize the sociological and relational makeup of military organizations<sup>20</sup> and this dissertation also employs modes of sociological analyses to flesh out the shape of the Northeast Military Academy. At the same time, it attempts to expand upon the basic building blocks of military history—analyses of battles, equipment, technology, and overall, institutional organization—by combining detail-oriented military history with insights and theories from cultural history and visual studies.<sup>21</sup> This "new military history" has been an approach that seeks to normalize military history by aligning it more closely with the methodologies and theoretical outlook of other fields of history, and attempts to move military history beyond the stereotype of minute analyses of battles and equipment that misses the forest for the trees.<sup>22</sup> In doing so, this dissertation attempts to incorporate methods and sources that have not been used extensively in military-focused histories of China, such as photographic images, for a broader social and cultural look at military actors and institutions. With its concern for how the representation and self-representation of military men inform one another, I see this dissertation as intersecting with works that examine visual media and war and the material-visual culture of wartime China.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For example, see the 1980s literature on revolutionary soldiers in both Soviet Russia and China, Roger R. Reese, *Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers: Social History of the Red Army, 1925-1941* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1996), Ellen Jones, *Red Army and Society: A Sociology of the Soviet Military* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1985), and Jonathan R. Adelman, *The Revolutionary Armies: The Historical Development of the Soviet and Chinese People's Liberation Armies* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980), which are often concerned with diagnosing the possible causes for deviation from military norms, such as cases of insubordination.

<sup>21</sup> For recent military history works in this vein that take a multi-layered approach to issues of gender and identity in the military, see Sabine Früstück, *Uneasy Warriors: Gender, Memory, and Popular Culture in the Japanese Army* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2007), Wang Shiyong, *Guomin geming jun yu jindai Zhongguo nanxing qigai de xingsu, 1924-1945* [The Nationalist Army and the formation of masculinity in modern China, 1924-1945] (Taipei: Guo shi guan, 2011), and Eugene Park, *Between Dreams and Reality: The Military Examination in Late Chosŏn Korea, 1600-1894* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> See JT Glatthaar, "The 'New' Civil War History: An Overview," in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 116, no. 3 (July 1991): 339-369; Stephen Morillo and Michael F. Pavkovic, *What Is Military History?* (Cambridge; Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2006), 37-43.

<sup>23</sup> Carolyn FitzGerald, *Fragmenting Modernisms: Chinese Wartime Literature, Art, and Film, 1936-49* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013).

Most of the documents encountered during the period of archival research for this dissertation in the city of Shenyang, where the Northeast Military Academy was located, were conventional building blocks for an institutional history, for example budgets, expenditure reports, ledgers for equipment and supplies, and various kinds of communications between different offices and organs about movement of personnel. However, the most tantalizing as well as frustrating documents came in the form of even more fragmentary material, such as travel itineraries. The majority of the sources consulted for this dissertation are housed in the Liaoning Provincial Archives in Shenyang, in Liaoning Province, also known unofficially as China's No. 3 archive after the two major national archives at Beijing and Nanjing. Largely un-digitized as of yet, the documents at the Liaoning Provincial Archives that concern the Northeast Military Academy range from budgets, telegrams, internal documents, handbooks, reports, and photographic graduation albums. In addition to materials held at traditional archives like the Liaoning Provincial Archive, the dissertation also avails itself of sources held at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences, Jilin University Library, Beijing University Library, widely-available publications of the Nanjing Second Historical Archives, and newly digitized and electronically available publications from the Republican period. Many of the sources for the Northeast Military Academy are incomplete and fragmentary. This dissertation attempts to deal directly with this issue, emphasizing the materiality of the sources and building its narrative around the lacunae that the documents contain. These archival blank spaces, I argue, offer much potential for constructing histories of military men in China.

The modern organizational structure of the Northeast Military Academy represents a break from the structure of the military during the Qing dynasty, which was composed of largely hereditary forces and soldiers who were often expected to hold other occupations, such as

farming, when they were not actively serving in campaigns. It should be noted, however, that the structure of the military during the Qing was a dynamic one, as Mark Elliott has argued. The Qing army was a "hybrid institution that combined a range of military, social, economic, and political functions" that changed over time.<sup>24</sup> The range of functions that the modernizing early twentieth-century armies in China served was narrower, but nevertheless, not purely military; the blurring of the boundary between the military and the civilian as a defining feature of the twentieth century's total wars is well known, and the administrative blurring between civilian and military in China during the Republican period has been demonstrated by scholars like Hans van de Ven and Chang Jui-te. Reaching further back into the past to find continuities in military traditions, other scholars see a late imperial incorporation and promotion of military values happening earlier, suggesting an eighteenth century connection to the nineteenth century militarization of local society,<sup>25</sup> with intriguing implications for the rise of military values and the status of the military between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

However, this dissertation is concerned with continuities as much as discontinuities. Mark Elliott notes that the Qing army underwent a shift from a "power elite" to a "prestige elite" by the late eighteenth century. As this elite's political power, leveraged into social and economic privileges, began to be steadily diluted by the mid-nineteenth century, the old armies' fates were sealed by China's defeats in a series of wars against the British, the French, and their allies. The early twentieth century warlord Chinese armies laid claim to both power and prestige. Their claim to power was underwritten by their access to and command of modern arms. Their claim to prestige, on the other hand, would be more tenuous and fugitive, even as the importance of a

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<sup>24</sup> Mark Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 40.

<sup>25</sup> Joanna Waley-Cohen, "Militarization of Culture in Eighteenth Century China," in *Military Culture in Imperial China*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 278-295.

modern military in conducting modern politics grew in China from the mid-nineteenth century gradually with the Self-Strengthening efforts of military pioneers like Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang (the Xiang and Huai armies). Owning prestige proved to be a challenging and not entirely successful endeavor even for elite Chinese soldiers, as the case of the members of the Northeast Military will show.

While focused on the beginning decades of the twentieth century, this dissertation, with its close look at developments in regional military education in the 1920s, complements the more extensively examined story of military and political developments of 1930s and 1940s Manchuria. The dissertation begins with a close look at the commemorative projects of the Northeast Military Academy through both text and image. Other writings by military men were instructional manuals related to training and methods, but in both genres, military men made strong claims to truth, authenticity, and fidelity to what was real, a claim, that the first chapter, "Officers, Portrait Albums, and Military Portraiture: Absorbing Indelible Looks and Recalling Silent Voices," argues was taken up by not only text, but the new combination of photographic image and text. This chapter looks at the portraits of a group of soldiers who graduated from the Northeast Military Academy in the 1920s alongside formal military-style portraits and images of soldiers from the late Qing and Republican eras from diverse sources—ranging from legal journals to popular periodicals—to discuss the changing aesthetics of masculinity in China at this time. In addition to shaping the political landscape of early twentieth-century China through their actions, the military men of this time also influenced notions of what was progressive, masculine, and modern, and what kinds of visual and material forms Chinese masculinity would take.



In particular, soldierly dress and photographs of soldiers constituted an important part of China's nascent modern culture. Photography, with its high fidelity to visual detail, was well suited to project martial values through a disciplined military aesthetic. Conversely, photography's ability to compress and obscure an unprecedented density of information leaves significant gaps in its message and disrupts its claims to represent the authentic and the true. The graduation albums, designed to be a reservoir of collective memory for the graduating cohort, also contains elements of its own destabilization, in which text and image work together as an active, multidirectional conduit for both remembering and forgetting. Recent studies have highlighted in particular the potential of photography as storage sites of memory, selective records of the past that serve as a conduits for multiple meanings in the present. The photographic album has also attracted much attention in the realm of art history by scholars who view it as an institutional configuration of visual information that de-emphasize individual identities.<sup>26</sup> In a recent work on albums of botanical illustrations in late nineteenth century Japan, Maki Fukuoka has examined the use of text, photography, and image in catalogues of material medica to advance a carefully curated form of knowledge, one that claimed absolute fidelity to and authority over the reality being represented, as Western scientific methods and discourses began to be adapted in Japan, East Asia's early adopter of these new practices and knowledge. Her argument that the collective exhibition of individual entries in these albums promoted "a dialectic of seeing that focused on comparative and contrastive viewing"<sup>27</sup> and emphasis on the epistemological concerns displayed by the ordering and framing of images in albums informs my own readings of the graduation albums of the Northeast Military Academy.

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen Bann, "The Photographic Album as a Cultural Accumulator," in *Art and the Early Photographic Album* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>27</sup> Maki Fukuoka, *The Promise of Fidelity: Science, Visuality, and Representation in Nineteenth Century Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012), 87; 192-193.

Whereas the school employed the technology of the photographic album, as I will argue, to visually establish the unity of its institutional body, the photographic cataloguing of individuals in Asia and elsewhere abound with examples of the technique used to differentiate and disassemble identities and lives, as the history of the photographic archive as a tool of surveillance has shown. This history been examined closely by writers such as Foucault and more recently in the context of historical memory in Asia by anthropologists studying war, violence, and their aftereffects.<sup>28</sup> Art-historical work on the representation of Asian subjects in photography more generally has also tended to focus on them vis-à-vis their relation, opposition, and subversion of colonial power.<sup>29</sup> Chapter 1 attempts to draw from both aesthetic and historical modes of scholarship on photography in order to mine meaning in terms of the experience of the graduates. The albums of the Northeast Military Academy, I believe, stand as an archive whose intentions and effects are simultaneously parallel and yet dissimilar to the practice of photography as an exercise of privilege and power, discipline, and surveillance.

Photography as a tool of recording the images of individuals can be salutary and affirmative, as in the creation of the graduation albums of the Northeast Military Academy, a way of pulling together disparate individual lives into a collective whole. In other institutional contexts, where the goal of the recording is different – for instance, to punish rather than celebrate—photography can be deployed to obscure, de-humanize and efface the identities and lives of the people that it captures on film. To observers viewing the images, the photograph can appear as not merely an impersonal, objective record, but a subjective witness, imbuing the image with meanings to excavate and power to speak. The photographic album, as a specific

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<sup>28</sup> Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).

<sup>29</sup> Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013).

type of photographic archive, promotes certain readings and resists others. At the same time, the archiving of individual images in photographic albums preserve the individuals depicted within them in intensely personal ways at the same time that they are aggregated into the service of broader, institutional purposes of commemoration and collective memory. As Chapter 1 will argue, the inherent tension between preservation, erasure, or transformation of identity through photography, is one that exists even in outwardly coherent and carefully curated archives such as the graduation albums of the Northeast Military Academy.

Chapter 2, "Building the Military Body: Forging the Troops and Founding the Cohort," delves into the texts contained within the Northeast Military Academy graduation albums. Analyzing their rhetorical content in conjunction with contemporary writings by and about military men, the chapter explore the ways in which the men affiliated with the school affirmed their membership in an elite military cohort and their connection to the school and to each other through individually and collectively authored prefaces that framed, enhanced, and affixed meaning to the photographic representations of individual soldiers. The celebratory texts express the hopes of the elite men to remain a single body against the high odds of war and the inescapable tide of time. The chapter argues that the combining of text and image was integral to the success of this effort and that the process contains, but does not wholly mitigate, the tensions between institutional conformity and individual identity within the albums. As a look at a group of officers in Republican China, the chapter contributes to the growing body of literature on Chinese elites and generational cohorts. Much of the histories of the military in Chinese studies has focused on towering figures and political-military leaders, and this chapter seeks to contribute to the literature that explores connections between the military and gender, taking to heart the importance of "pluralizing masculinities in the military" and de-mystifying the figure of

the military man.<sup>30</sup> It argues that the construction and display of masculine military identity in the Northeast Military Academy was informed by, and in many ways compatible with, the gendered discourse over the fate of the Chinese nation, but also pushed against negative views of military men and the deeply established preference for civil, not military, expertise in political affairs.

Through the framing texts of their celebratory prefaces, the albums construct a sophisticated discursive site in which soldiers of different ranks could affix their memories of shared experiences, a space in which all men who belonged to the cohort and the institution could be imagined as equals. The albums resolutely project a message of solidarity while also reinforcing the hierarchical bonds between the graduates, an effort concentrated and sustained across time and space through the structure as well as materiality of the albums. In the same process, however, the ambiguities contained within the texts complicate the aspirational and commemorative aims of the men involved. The prefaces can be divided into two types: those authored by individual school administrators and instructors and those that bear the collective authorship of the graduating student body. However, no clear boundary between collective and individual voice exists in the prefaces. And although several positive themes can be discerned within these writing—the importance of shared sacrifice, the need to cultivate individual talents while striving for a solidarity that transcends strict military hierarchy—the prefaces also reveal a deep concern with the harshness of military life and the fragile relationship between the soldier's body, the cohort, and the nation, which could be torn apart at any time by the vicissitudes of battle. Increasing scholarly attention has fallen on the sociology of the modern armed forces and the sociology of soldiers since the 1980s, with the publication of monographs as well as the

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<sup>30</sup> Paul R. Highgate, "Introduction: Putting Men and the Military on the Agenda," in *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* ed. Highgate (Westport, Conn.; London: Praeger, 2003), xvii.

establishment of journals devoted to the subject such as *Armed Forces and Society* and *Men and Masculinities*, with a high interest in the everyday experience of individual soldiers.<sup>31</sup> In the field of Chinese history, the experience of demobilization, as not merely the formal exit from an army but the ongoing process of adjusting to a non-military life after war, is attracting greater attention, in a shift that looks at not just the impact of warlordism but on the soldiers themselves, with several volumes leading the way.<sup>32</sup> As a study of an elite group which has been relatively understudied in the field of Chinese history, this dissertation aims to shed more light on a group of men whose impact on the politics of northeast China was great, and yet left behind a contested historical legacy.

Chapter 3, "Training Officers: Martial Values and Everyday Action in the Northeast Military Academy," examines the handbook and training materials of the school. These materials contain regulations, codes of dress and conduct, merits and demerits, and other details of everyday life in the school. This chapter will attempt to reconstruct some of the experiences of the soldiers who attended the Northeast Military Academy. The Northeast Military Academy sought to train officers who would be physically fit, psychologically astute, technically skilled, but most importantly of all, brave leaders in battle and a source of pride and support for other soldiers. The instructors and administrators of the school, like other soldiers, militarists, and political commentators of the time, recognized the need for competent, highly trained officers if they were to be successful on the battlefield. The disciplining and regulation of individual bodies was essential for fulfilling this goal, and this chapter will take a look at the development of

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<sup>31</sup> See John Hockey, *Squaddies: Portrait of a Subculture* (Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter, 1986), Martin Shaw, *Post-Military Society: Militarism, Demilitarization and War at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), and Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>32</sup> Neil J. Diamant, *Embattled Glory: Veterans, Military Families, and the Politics of Patriotism in China, 1949-2007* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009); James Flath and Norman Smith, eds., *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

training and instruction at the Northeast Military Academy to reconstruct what kinds of martial values it tried to inculcate in its student body. The officers who taught and were trained at the Northeast Military Academy had an educational experience that was quite different from that of the average Republican-era Chinese recruit, including greater access to military knowledge, goods and services, higher wages, and greater power.

The Republican period was a time of shifting identities and roles for both Chinese men and women. For soldiers, martial values, *wu*, came to the fore in opposition to scholarly learning and refinement, *wen*, as the cornerstone of their masculine identity. The concepts of *wu* and *wen* have exercised a push and pull over values and priorities of political actors throughout Chinese history. However, through military-style training and drills instituted in schools during the Republican period, martial values also more broadly affected those in civilian society. Tracing the development of this dialectic through the late imperial and Republican periods, Wang Shiyong argues that the emergence of a "new masculinity" out of the dialectic push and pull between *wu* and *wen* can be seen in the Republican period, which was able to be promulgated throughout large sectors of society through modern education. Biomedical and technical knowledge translated into China from the west through the intermediary of Japan beginning in the nineteenth century was an important component of this process, changing ideas of what constituted healthy bodies. As one way of achieving these new ideals of what healthy bodies ought to look like, military-style training offered not only a way to improve individuals, but dovetailed with growing concerns about China's future in the world and its status as a nation.<sup>33</sup> Military power was seen as a way forward, with trained military officers at the vanguard, leading the way using their military training, knowledge of military science, and by example. A deeper

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<sup>33</sup> Wang Shiyong, *Guomin geming yu jindai Zhongguo nanxing qigai de xingsu, 1924-1945* [The National Revolutionary Army and the formation of modern Chinese masculinity, 1924-1945] (Taipei: Guoshiguan, 2011), 41-52.

look into the goals, values, and concerns of the elites who nevertheless had a wide variety of contact with civilians and ordinary recruits or conscripts is valuable for adding greater understanding to this important but understudied group.

Chapter 4, "Consumption and Production at the Northeast Military Academy," argues that the Northeast Military Academy was much more than a place to train officers; it was a complex institution with many attendant organs that was a consumer of goods such as tea, lamp oil, and paper, as well as services, employing carpenters and repairmen to keep the school in shape. It was an employer of people and a consumer of goods and services as well as a training center. By analyzing the financial documents related to the operation of the Northeast Military Academy, this chapter will build upon chapter 4 with the goal of portraying it as a living, breathing entity, not simply a site geared toward the production of modern military officers, knowledge, and techniques. Although the information preserved in these documents is fragmentary, the dissertation will draw upon studies of economic developments in Northeast China/Manchuria to situate the consumption patterns of the school within the context of consumption in the late Qing and Republican periods, to join the growing literature of studies that seek to illuminate how consumption itself was changing within, and changing, early twentieth century China. This chapter also contributes to the growing body of literature on practices and patterns of consumption in world history, in particular the gendered consumption of leisure activities and products, that takes seriously the "meaning-making potential of consumption" as part of the construction of social status, a means of leisure, and a sphere of activity meant for the display of taste and aesthetic appreciation.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Beth Fowkes Tobin, "Introduction: Consumption as a Gendered Social Practice," in *Material Women, 1750-1950: Consuming Desires and Collecting Practices*, eds. Maureen Daly Goggin and Tobin (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 7-8.

The consumption patterns examined in this chapter reflect the privilege of the men of the Northeast Military Academy relative to the ordinary civilian population in Manchuria at the time, and therefore exhibit a wide range of items and products, some of which may be considered luxury goods. As such, the chapter is a look at a narrow slice of Chinese society in terms of consumption; at the same time, fragmentary documents such as inventories and records of the wages of people employed by the school provide a window through which consumption at the Northeast Military Academy may be placed within the broader economic and social context, as well as providing a look into an aspect of military life in early twentieth century China that has not been the traditional focus. Chapter 4 seeks to illustrate some of the types of consumption and production that occurred at the school, creating a history of "material men" arguing that while privileged, consumption at the Northeast Military Academy was not atypical, but rather reflecting long-running trends within China and the global economy while at the same time inflecting it in ways that could only be possible through the power of the institution.

Finally, chapter 5, "Training Trips and Soldiers' Travels through Manchuria: Bodies in Motion," features as its centerpiece a training trip itinerary of a group of Northeast Military Academy students. The movements of the cadets and instructors of the Northeast Military Academy was not strictly travel, but reveal a variety of information about the priorities of the school and the space that the men navigated on these trips. The chapter attempts to reconstruct this training trip by taking the reader on a journey through the rapidly shifting political terrain of Northeast China in the early twentieth century, using the itineraries of these training trips as a guide. The chapter will engage with the different genres and narratives of Northeast China to take the reader on a journey across a lost but not completely irretrievable landscape. The Manchurian terrain mapped out by rail travel and the observations and experiences these



historical conditions facilitated, will be explored using a variety of contemporary views of travelers navigating the heterogeneous time-space of the new technology of trains.

By focusing on the Northeast Military Academy as an institution and its pedagogical and professionalizing concerns, this dissertation does not directly address the process of mobilization and demobilization, rather focusing on the period of training and active service of the officers known to have been associated with the Northeast Military Academy. The mobilization of civilians in addition to soldiers in wartime and the blurring of these categories, particularly in the twentieth century, while beyond the scope of this dissertation, are important issues to keep in mind in studies of military institutions during this period of total and totalizing war. I hope to raise questions concerning the relationship between the civilian and the military and suggest further avenues of research in the conclusion. While the dissertation focuses on a group who were formally and explicitly affiliated with the military, it does not seek to diminish the importance of this blurring in wartime China. Indeed, the process of demobilization is often more ambiguous and incomplete for civilians because they occupy a liminal space in wartime.

This dissertation is a history of a select group of elites, using sources produced at the highest levels of a military organization. It does not and cannot reflect the experiences of ordinary soldiers or conscripts. However, because the experiences of ordinary soldiers depended so heavily on the behavior and training of their commanding officers, as Diana Lary has strongly argued,<sup>35</sup> understanding these mid-level officers is an essential component of understanding military life in early twentieth century China. The limits of the dominant discursive concern of the Northeast Military Academy are clear. Their claims to cultural and martial virtue may have been self-serving, and indeed, the positive assertiveness of the officers' commemorative writings

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<sup>35</sup> Diana Lary, *Warlord Soldiers: Chinese Common Soldiers, 1911-1937* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

may have been so strong because the reaction against the military was so negative, and the status of and attitudes toward soldiers remained strongly negative as well. This dissertation is not intended to defend or uncritically reproduced the discourse on Chinese soldiers in the early twentieth century, but rather to engage a specific institutional body of elite soldiers on its own terms.

## CHAPTER 1

### Officers, Portrait Albums, and Military Portraiture

Photographs of ordinary Chinese soldiers have a lot to tell, and more to conceal. In these photographs, the identities of their subjects are sometimes known, but often their stories have disappeared or are inaccessible to anyone looking from the point of view of a stranger, at a cultural, geographical, or temporal remove, or all of the above. The thoughts and feelings that might have occupied the soldier while he sat for the camera are almost always irretrievable, and it is rather the aesthetic interventions of the photographer that has built the lasting image that comes to stand for a life now past. In contrast, faces of many of China's top military and official figures from the late Qing and Republican periods are better known, and indeed, it is in military uniform that we often find them in, even when some figures, like Sun Yat-sen, may have never personally commanded an army. This chapter first begins with a brief look at how military visual elements have been assembled and deployed in the late Qing and Republican periods to establish a genealogy of military and military-style portraiture in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century China. Materially and representationally shaping Chinese masculinity through widely circulated and viewed images, photographic images of soldiers and uniforms established a new mode of masculine representation. This chapter argues that this new modality allowed the graduating officers of the Northeast Military Academy to visually codify and affirm their relationship in a greater institutional whole, one that was simultaneously facilitated as well as destabilized by the medium of photography and the format of the photographic album.

The photographic likenesses of China's leading military commanders and political leaders are immediately recognizable to many. These larger-than-life figures grace countless books,

documents, and nowadays proliferate unceasingly on the web, and have become familiar through continuous process of mechanical, electronic, and cultural reproduction and even appropriation, as when the faces of famous figures like Mao Zedong graces a kitsch tourist souvenir. On a second glance, they are not so different from the portraits of relative unknowns that may exist only in archives. Looking at a set of different military portraits in different contexts, this chapter argues that military portraits aspire to conformity at the same time as they valorize individual identity, and that it is only through recourse to specific textual markers of time, space, and social relations or extra-textual biography that such portraits can hope to achieve this important principal effect. One of the basic things that the military portrait does is express a wish to be represented as a soldier, and military portraits in commemorative albums express a wish to be remembered in the company of other soldiers. Between the image of the famous and the unknown is a difference of degrees. One of the commemorative military portrait's main visual features, sameness, enhances the image's anonymous properties even when individual identities can be detected; military portraits contain, and sustain, a powerful tension between conformity and anonymity. This tension is essential to the operation of the military portrait as a genre, its functions as a tool for commemoration, and its simultaneously privileged and precarious role in the exercise of personal and national memories. The images in the photographic albums serve to delineate a clear-cut hierarchy of power, that of the institution and of the officers within the cohort, at the same time that they make a claim to the shared and common allegiance and brotherhood of which ranks and chains of command are only the organizing principle, a paradox whose tension is sustained through the deliberate framing of images and text.

Biographical knowledge of a photographic subject, i.e. "the references mobilized to help the image speak exist outside of the image proper,"<sup>36</sup> more firmly affixes portraits of better-known military men to the fabric of history. However, the epistemological complex that intersects with China's military portraits is not necessarily that of colonial empires. Certainly, some of the warlords that rose to power during and after 1911 entertained dreams of becoming the founder of the next Chinese empire, rising from the hinterland to claim the throne like a modern-day Zhu Yuanzhang, but the question of the nation was what occupied the country from the highest levels of government to the streets of China's rapidly urbanizing coastal centers. Beginning in earnest with the Self-Strengthening Movement from 1861 to 1894 and the development of the Qing New Armies from 1895 to 1911, militarization was looked upon favorably up until the 1910s and 1920s though not without its detractors. Leading intellectuals like Kang Youwei, among the more structural reforms in politics that they championed, held that a change was necessary,<sup>37</sup> and outward, symbolic change in the form of dress was one of the areas in which old established patterns of comportment and display underwent dramatic transformation. It was at this time that both established forms of dress were eroded and the status of the soldier steadily "gained in social prestige and political importance."<sup>38</sup>

China was not the only place to grapple with and choose militarization, as evidenced by intensifying developments in European countries in the decades leading up to World War I and

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<sup>36</sup> James Hevia, "The Photography Complex: Exposing Boxer-Era China (1900-1901), Making Civilization," in Rosalind C. Morris, ed., *Photographies East: The Camera and Its Histories in East and Southeast Asia* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2009), 96.

<sup>37</sup> On Kang Youwei on the link between bodily dress and politics, see Wang Ermin, "Duanfa, yifu, gaiyuan: bianfa lunzhi xiangwei zhiqiu [Cutting hair, changing dress, altering the calendar: symbolic intentions of reform]," in *Zhongguo jindai de weixin yundong—bianfa yu lixian taojihui* [Research conference on the modern Chinese reform movement—reform and the establishment of the constitution] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1981), 61.

<sup>38</sup> Antonia Finnane, "Military Culture and Chinese Dress in the Early Twentieth Century," in *China Chic: East Meets West*, eds. Valerie Steele and John S. Major (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 1999), 119. For adaptations of indigenous modes of dress into Western military uniforms, see Thomas S. Abler, *Hinterland Warriors and Military Dress: European Empires and Exotic Uniforms* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

larger patterns of militarization in East Asia. Indeed, modernizing the armed forces was seen by many as *the* way to modernize China. Japan had successfully done so, after all since the Meiji Restoration, and was unique in being an Asian nation going toe-to-toe with more developed Western nations, winning wars and territorial concessions from China just as European and American colonial powers had done. Even in the realm of general education, military styles and values found a place as displayed in uniforms and *junguomin zhuyi*, the ethos of military citizenship and militarized service to the state.<sup>39</sup> Military modernization therefore presented an attractive path toward wielding full sovereignty and international influence. It was seen as a way to ensure China's political survival and moreover, underwrite its entry into the modern nation-state system as an equal player.

The writings of Cai E (also known as Cai Songpo, 1882-1916), one of the first Chinese graduates of the prestigious Rikugun Shikan Gakkō (Imperial Military Academy) in Tokyo and a follower of the reformer Liang Qichao (1873-1929), exemplifies this positive attitude shared by many in the circles of power, but still fiercely contested by others. Soldiering had never been regarded highly in the later imperial period; the civil examination system was the path to success, not enlistment in the traditional, functionally hereditary armies. An ardent voice for militarization, Cai pushes back against the attitude that soldiers were somehow base in an 1899 article in the reform journal *New Citizen*:

There is a saying that good men do not become soldiers, just as good iron is not used for nails. Although these are the words of foolish bumpkins, one hears them everywhere, and elders still recite them as a warning to the younger generation. Alas! Soldiers are the shield and the wall of the nation, a sacrifice for the people, and objects of respect, honor, and veneration—there is nothing quite like a soldier! They offer their lives and their deaths; they forsake advantage and desire; they exchange all those things that bring joy to life for bitterness and hardship; and they set aside their individual interest for the benefit

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<sup>39</sup> For more on the reforms of late Qing and early Republican education, see Sally Borthwick, *Education and Social Change in China* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1983).

of the public good—is there any greater benevolence than this? This despising of such great men—is it not strange?<sup>40</sup>

The taking up of arms and becoming a soldier is not merely an act that is praiseworthy, but one that is inherently moral, in seeming contrast to what soldiers are known to do, engage in violence. The moral character of the military and soldiers, as will be seen in chapter 2, is a thread that the preface writers of the Northeast Military Academy also take up. In a 1916 piece titled "A Plan for Military Affairs," Cai reiterates the value of military institutions to the nation, asserting that "in peacetime the army serves as the military school of the nation," and that as the best citizens of the nation, soldiers lead by example, strengthening and contributing to the well being of the nation. In Cai's view, therefore, "making a good soldier is the way to make a good person; the education of soldiers is the way in which citizens are molded."<sup>41</sup> But pressure to change from both within and without were having far-reaching destabilizing effects in China, The burgeoning militarism of the 1910s on continued to contribute to the breaking up of the new Republic into a patchwork of warlord fiefdoms, ushering in a backlash against militarism even as it became a part of life. The upward swing in militarism influenced all aspects of life in China, and nowhere was this development more visible than in clothing.

Taken from the pages of the album and placed into the wider context of this war-scarred landscape, the portraits of the graduates, in their crisp, clean uniforms project order in the face of rapidly deteriorating political and social conditions on the ground. Famine, droughts, plagues of locusts, widespread banditry, inflation, constant warfare, and a high turnover rate in regimes in nearly all parts of China after 1911 added up to periods of intense chaos interspersed with

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<sup>40</sup> Cai Songpo, quoted in Colin Green, "Turning Bad Iron into Polished Steel: Whampoa and the Rehabilitation of the Chinese Soldier," in *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China*, eds. James A. Flath and Norman Smith (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 158.

<sup>41</sup>Green, 159.

periods of relative calm and enduring anxiety about the future. Competition between regional militarists also meant that conscription against one's will into a warlord army or an irregular regiment of soldier-bandits was a real possibility for Chinese men. Forgoing conscription and joining an army of one's own volition guaranteed very little in the way of benefits, with troops sometimes going without pay for months. A soldier who had the bad luck to fall under the command of an incompetent or cruel officer could find himself living in hell. Even if the organizational and social side of things worked as they should, illness, hunger, and of course death could be depended upon to make a soldier's life miserable, short, or both. The clean-cut image of the modern officer, educated in a military school, wearing dress uniform, visually repudiated the grittier realities of the soldier's life. It showed the sitter as he and the institution of the military school wanted him to be portrayed: molded into a form embodying the aspirations and ideals of the new modern China.

Moreover, the graduates' uniform helps us place them in time and give us a window into the history of clothing and fashion in China. Antonia Finnane argues that politics, more than any other factor, has influenced the choice of what is worn in China, and that Chinese "generally heeded the call of the nation" when it came to matters sartorial.<sup>42</sup> The political upheavals of the late Qing, continuing into the Republic and the era of warlords, ushered in the military uniform as the costume of choice for not just militarists. Military ornaments could be seen on prominent Qing officials like Li Hongzhang (1823-1901), sometimes contrasting sharply with the loose, relatively free-flowing traditional court costume. Portraits from this period capture the profusion of medals, braid, lavishly embroidered epaulets, and the like. The crisp, tailored lines of Western suits and military uniforms offer up an even greater contrast, especially in portraits taken at the time where both styles of dress occupy a single representational space.

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<sup>42</sup> Finnane, "Military Culture and Chinese Dress in the Early Twentieth Century," 16-17.



Wearing Western-style uniforms, the New Armies and later the warlord armies and Nationalist and Communist troops became "the vanguard of vestimentary change in China,"<sup>43</sup> and the mass production of uniforms "helped effect [sic] a convergence of vestimentary histories, East and West."<sup>44</sup> Observers from outside China also noted the effect that donning uniforms could have, and even the ways in which photographs of individuals in new modern dress influenced the perception of an individual, as Aleksander Chrepanov, an advisor to the Whampoa (Huangpu) Academy in Guangdong noted when he met Sun Yat-sen:

Sun Yat-sen, of medium height and rather stocky, was dressed in a semi-military field jacket. The well-known portrait of him in this costume conveys thresemblance exactly. He shook our hands in a simple, friendly way, without any unnecessary ceremonies. Our feelings of constraint and timidity left us.<sup>45</sup>

The unassuming and familiar figure cut by Sun Yat-sen in his military style outfit helps to put him at ease. For Cherepanov, it was the man that matched the portrait, not the other way around. At other occasions, however, the question of what to wear could be vexing, as when Cherepov relates a conversation with fellow Soviet advisors in which they discuss the merits of wearing a uniform. Wearing civilian clothes attracts undue attention, one of Cherepov's colleague says, advises all to wear a Chinese military uniform, to which another civilian colleague concedes although uniforms ties those who wear it to hierarchies of subordination, it is necessary in some cases to wear them in order to blend in.<sup>46</sup>

At a time of fluid and shifting definitions of gendered identities, the military uniform had an important masculinizing role to play in how ordinary Chinese women as well as men chose to clothe themselves. Late Qing and Republican adoption of this new code of dress sought to affirm

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<sup>43</sup> Finnane, "Military Culture and Chinese Dress in the Early Twentieth Century," 69-71.

<sup>44</sup> Finnane, *(Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 297.

<sup>45</sup> Aleksander Chrepanov, trans. Alexandra O. Smith, Harry S. Collier and Thomas M. Williamsen, eds., *Notes of a Military Advisor in China* (Taipei: Office of Military History, 1970), 109.

<sup>46</sup> Cherepanov, 131.

the present and reject the past.<sup>47</sup> On its surface, the visual portrayal of military men in mediums other than photography display a much stronger continuity with older visual conventions: bodies that squarely face the front, the strategic addition of identifying accouterments such as weapons, and the hierarchical ordering of bodies where the highly ranking commander dwarfs his subordinates. Later military portraits, as those found in the graduation albums of the Northeast Military Academy, adopt a dramatic narrowing and vignetting of individuals, and in group portraits, the emphasis is on standardized dress and comportment in scale. However, the captioning of military portraits during the Republican period, as in the graduation albums, is not new, as the illustrations of Wu Youru show.<sup>48</sup> The importance of identifying portrait subjects was clearly recognized. Nor was this tendency to marry image to text in photography unique to military portraits, as can be seen in the carefully choreographed and designed official portraits of Empress Dowager Cixi.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Finnane, "Military Culture and Chinese Dress in the Early Twentieth Century," 302.

<sup>48</sup> Wu Youru, *Dian shi zhai hua bao: Da ke tang ban* (Shanghai: Shanghai hua bao chu ban she, 2001), 10 vols.

<sup>49</sup> See David Hogge, "Piety and Power: The Theatrical Images of Empress Dowager Cixi," in *Trans Asia Photography Review* 2, no. 1 (Fall 2011): <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0002.108>.



Figure 1. Li Hongzhang and Qing officials with Western diplomatic envoys, 1901.



Figure 2. Li Hongzhang and Qing officials with Western diplomatic envoys, date unknown.



Figure 3: 1917 portrait of Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925).

In a portrait from 1917 bearing an inscription for a "Mr. Shang Zhou," Sun Yat-sen, hailed as the father of the nation, poses for a full-length portrait in formal military dress. His hat, sword, and white gloves are popular items for militarists and officials of this period. Every piece of clothing and accessory in this photograph has been perfectly tailored to fit. The background, a pale-colored wall, provides a neutral plane against which to display the clean lines of the dark coat. A space has been cleared around Sun Yat-sen's feet so that his boots are also easily visible, not a single speck of dust in sight. Sun looks solemn and dignified, calmly looking directly forward as he rests his hands on the hilt of his sword in front of him. The photographic complex that surrounds this image of Sun Yat-sen has spatial, temporal, ideological, and geographic dimensions. The portrait has been rendered for public view, constituting a sort of exhibit of political values. Images of Sun Yat-sen more commonly show him wearing the traditional scholar's robe or suit that he popularized.

During the Republican period, civilian clothes became masculinized and militarized, and the rising status and influence of military figures meant that the military costume of the West, filtered through China's contact points with Japan, acquired increasing authority and appeal. Nowhere else is this process more plain than in the birth of the Sun Yat-sen suit (*Zhongshan zhuang*) in 1920, "generally attributed to Sun's purchase of a Japanese military uniform from the Rongchangxiang Woollen Fabrics and Western Suits Shop on Nanjing Road—or alternatively to his bringing a uniform back from Japan, and taking it to this shop for alterations [...] creating a civilian suit out of the uniform."<sup>50</sup> The kinds of uniforms worn in military portraits also become simpler and plainer, signaling a shift away from the ostentatious visual ornamentation that became associated with the excesses of warlordism. Although traces of the fashionable pageantry of military costumes did not disappear, as can be seen in the example of the portrait of militarist

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<sup>50</sup> Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China*, 182.

and Baoding Military Academy instructor Gu Deyao (1880-1941). In this image, the dark background against the well-lit figure of Gu emphasizes the close-fitting cut of his pristine uniform. As in Sun Yat-sen's portrait, he holds a sword out in front, with a determined and resolute expression that seems to say that he is ready for anything.



Figure 4: Gu Deyao, undated photograph.



Figure 5: Zhang Zuolin, undated photograph.

The expression Zhang Zuolin in this portrait is less assertive. He looks straight ahead, directly into the viewer's gaze. He sits facing forward, dressed in a field uniform with no obvious marker of his rank save for the general's star on his cap. His mouth, slightly open, is frozen by the photograph, seemingly on its way to either a smile or a grim line. The choice of lighting for the portrait, unevenly distributing light across Zhang's face and across his eyes, produces an eerie effect; the overexposure of the right side of the portrait divides Zhang between visual flatness on his left and a more three-dimensional affect on his right. It is challenging to not read Zhang's biography into this image. His military and political maneuvers, his ambitions, and his violent death by assassination looms over the portrait, granting it a funereal air. As this portrait suggests, photographic images, once produced, photographic images lend themselves to multiple readings and meanings, some that align neatly with the circumstances of its making and the intentions of the image's creators, and others that do not fit so easily. The representational power of photographic images to convince and persuade the viewer of the existence of verisimilitude and one-to-one correspondence with reality is often a double-edged sword.

Chinese elites articulated their concerns regarding the modernization of the Chinese military from the middle of the nineteenth century, and military modernization efforts only gathered momentum going into the twentieth century. Finnane, examining the role of clothing and fashion in the modernization of and nation-building in China, writes that women's sartorial choices and standards of feminine beauty have been used by both Chinese and Westerners as an index to gauge China's development;<sup>51</sup> bound feet has probably been most commonly used as evidence of China's backwardness by detractors and reformers alike. In contrast, the military uniform and the severely-cut masculine clothing that it inspired, enveloping and transforming the

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<sup>51</sup> Antonia Finnane, "Introduction: Fashion, History, and Nation," in *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1-17.



profile of the entire body, signified progress and modernity. They served as a vehicle for transforming the visual aesthetics of gender, and transgressing gender as well, as increasingly numbers of both men and women adopted the new dress code in the early twentieth century. At the same time, the masculinizing bent of the new code point to the ways in which militarization affects the range of choices available to people in representing themselves to those in their social orbit as well as the outside world.

Unlike portraits of famous militarists in newspapers and books, the portraits of graduates of the Northeast Military Academy found in graduation albums had a much narrower audience. There is still much work that needs to be done on how the images were produced, if such portraits circulated among soldiers outside of the album, and in which contexts these images might have been viewed. In this chapter, I hope to have laid some theoretical and conceptual groundwork that can help start answering these question. The question of photography as memory is another area with great potential for analyses of military portraits. Lending credence to military portraits and specifically graduation albums as a vehicle for memory storage and retrieval, photographs of people who attended famous military schools like the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangdong, still circulate in recently published books and biographical dictionaries. In the Liaoning Provincial Archives, where I did the bulk of my dissertation research, people still come in to look at the albums, not to extract from them sociological data or material for academic analysis, but to look for the names and corresponding faces of relatives. Uniforms indicated one's membership in a specific social organization and sartorial details such as insignia displayed the uniform wearer's standing within and relationship to the group. The wearing of the uniform for the purpose of being photographed for the inclusion in a commemorative album went one step further, telegraphing the uniform wearer's commitment to

the organization as well as the organization's investment in the individual being pictured. The visual idiom of the commemoration album photograph established and reinforced this message.

Placing portraits in commemorative albums, celebrating an institution or an event, is to affix meanings sustained by collective memory and facilitated by images embedded in the ideological and historical structure of military institutions. Portraits of soldiers promoted martial values, ideals to the public and to other soldiers; images form an integral part of Republican China's nascent modern military culture. Peter Perdue's breakdown of military culture, which he divides into three interrelated components, is highly useful in considering the images in relation to broader cultural trends in the early twentieth century. He defines military culture as composed of 1) strategic culture, encompassing elite decision-makers' attitudes toward the use of force to obtain their goals, reflecting preferences that derive about pre-existing and assumed paradigms of conflict, enemies, and allies; 2) culture of the military, referring to norms and behaviors distinctive to those who are part of military institutions; and 3) the civilian side of the equation, the attitudes that exist within society towards the use of force and coercion.<sup>52</sup> In addition, we should also consider the visual and material culture of the military, paying close attention to the ways in which representations of soldiers and the military lifestyle intersect with military ideology. In its ability to compress ideology into a visual artifact, photography served as the perfect medium representing soldiers, at the same time exposing the unstable interstices of military values and ideals. Military portraits work as biography in the singular, and as collective portraiture in the aggregate. These portraits' very repetitiveness reinforces notions of unity, solidarity, and connection across time and space, simultaneously valorizing individuals while subsuming them into the collective body. They attest to the processes of modernization while

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<sup>52</sup> Peter Perdue, "Coercion and Commerce on Two Chinese Frontiers," in *Military Culture in Imperial China*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 318.

obscuring the jagged edges and human costs of China's ongoing transition into modernity, and reveal a space in which this genre of photography can produce new narratives of China's recent past.

A little-studied aspect of portrait photography in early twentieth-century China concerns portraits of military men. Although ubiquitous—published in newspapers, postcards, and other formats designed for consumption—military portraiture has received little scholarly attention. While well known and widely utilized as a source of sociological data and biographical reference for Chinese officers, the visual element of photographic albums produced of specific training institutions have yet to be more fully explored. And while, photographs of military school graduates are not particularly difficult to find, the biographical information of individual soldiers who did not have a high profile or some connection to a famous event can be highly fragmentary. These historiographic blank spaces become deeper and broader when we intensify our attention to both what their portraits attempt to convey and do not purport to say. To compound this hazy state of affairs, military portraiture in China as a historical topic has not garnered much scholarly attention, but drawing on the recent trend of putting the military back into studies of Chinese culture and history led by scholars like Hans Van de Ven, Chang Jui-te, and Antonia Finnane, as well as the works of James Hevia and others on photography, I hope to bring into greater exposure some of the meanings, and ambitions represented by the military portrait in China. Because most if not all graduates of the Northeast Military Academy were also officers in the Northeast Army and its allies, and may have been active soldiers before entering the school, and yet were cadets as well in the context of the school, I will generally refer to them as graduates, rather than just soldiers or cadets, which confirms their relationship to the institution of the school without completely obscuring their relationship to the army.

This chapter takes for its subject four cadet portraits found on a particular page in the 1927 graduation album of the Northeast Military Academy, a school established in Shenyang by the warlord Zhang Zuolin (1875-1928), and overseen by his son Zhang Xueliang (1901-2001) after the elder Zhang's assassination in 1928. The process of choosing these photographs for analysis has been contingent, arbitrary, and roundabout. The selection of this particular set of four graduation portraits has been determined by events in the past whose shape eludes definition, the historicizing agent of which happens to be the hand of a nameless, faceless soldier. An inscription from that hand, found on the page, adds an additional discursive layer to the experience of viewing the images and trying to puzzle out their meanings.

In this chapter, I remain primarily concerned with the problems posed by these particular portraits in the context of the commemorative album, but by also considering stand-alone portraits of military men alongside them, I will be able to add a further analytical dimension to the challenge of type and typicality to individualistic photographic representations of soldiers in China. To begin, the chapter will explain the organization of the album and how its various pieces work together to promote its message of togetherness and the importance of shared experiences. Although the albums and their organization are explicitly hierarchical, they also make a strong assertion of unity through the use of visual parity, drawing upon visual elements that enhance both individual identities and collective anonymity at the same time. These two elements, as this chapter will argue, are integral to the function of the other in the space of the graduation albums.

In doing so, the chapter lays the ground for how the substantive context of the album and the institution of the military govern the meanings embedded in the graduates' images. To this end I have found James Hevia's notion of the photography complex highly useful, but after de-

emphasizing the aspect that sees the use of photography as a imperialist tool that pries things open. In the case of military portraits, it seems, rather, that the photograph works to configure and secure a specific reality against external mediators with varying degrees of success. Thus, this chapter will instead draw more heavily on the "relationship between photographic images and different forms of representation that also circulate through the complex, such as written description and other visual media" in its analysis of portraits of ordinary soldiers and well-known military figures.<sup>53</sup> The ability of photographs to capture verisimilitude is a powerful one that paradoxically erases the lived specificities of the subjects even as it preserves them therein. Indeed, the fidelity of this preservation have long vexed and aroused the suspicions of scholars of photography—on reflection, photography's other, suspect ability is that of *projecting* verisimilitude and authenticating itself in one fell swoop, whether the reality the photograph has capture is real or not.

As John Tagg remarks, "the existence of a photograph is no guarantee of a corresponding pre-photographic existent" — photographs can be doctored or remixed, and they can misreport, miscommunicate, or mislead. Christopher Pinney, in his studies of colonial photography in India, has demonstrated that the desire to claim ownership lurk in the photographic images of people from "other" lands and further complicate the issue of authenticity and verisimilitude when it comes to photography. The camera was one of the tools deployed by colonial authorities for the objectification of people and the forceful exercise of surveillance and control. At the same time, even colonial photographs allowed practitioners and the individuals that were being recorded

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<sup>53</sup> Hevia, p. 82.

room for asserting their identity, exercising their imagination, and transmitting their own culture.<sup>54</sup>

Happily, the inclusion of a soldier's image in a commemorative album has the effect of legitimizing the pre-existence of the individual portrayed, and not only the album but also the portraits of the other cadets vouch for his membership in the collective. Counterfactually, it would be absolutely toxic to the entire enterprise if a graduation album were to feature anyone who had not earned that spot through experiences shared with his cohort, the collective experience of whom serves to embody the very *raison d'être* of such an album. Yet as Tagg goes on to point out, every photograph is constructed, being "the result of specific and, in every sense, significant distortions which render its relation to any prior reality deeply problematic and raise the question of the determining level of the material apparatus and of the social practices within which photography takes place."<sup>55</sup> Lacking concrete information about the circumstances of the making of the portraits, we can only speculate, but the fact that these four portraits are part of a graduation album does offer us some clues. Portraits contained within the textual lattice of the commemorative album firmly retain the ability to identify individuals and prevent them from falling into types or being reduced into stereotypes, stock characters, and anonymous and interchangeable representatives of entire cultures, as was the case for so many photographic images produced of Asian subjects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Because the production of the album would have been a logistically complex affair, information and instructions concerning the photographing have been widely disseminated at the school beforehand. On the day when their portraits were to be taken, the graduates would have

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<sup>54</sup> See the chapters "'Stern Fidelity' and 'Penetrating Certainty'" and "Indian Eyes" in Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (MacMillan Education, 1999), 2.

had to wash, shave, and put on their best uniform; perhaps they had their hair cropped on the same day or at some previous point. Before the picture was to be taken they would have adjusted their collars and cuffs, straightening out the sleeves, wiped any dust from their boots, and stood in line, ready for inspection. While they waited their turn to be sat down in front of a plain backdrop and photographed, they may have chatted with other graduates around them or may have been compelled to be silent in obedience to military protocol or the instructions of superiors. The photo-taking process, likely carried out by a local photography studio or a military photographer, might have had an assembly-line flavor to it with hundreds of graduates needing to have their portraits taken. The albums do not contain information on the makers of the images; the analysis can only remain at the level of aesthetic conventions detectable through the final image and any analysis of the photographers' creative intent can only be speculative at best. The portraits that appear in each of the Northeast Military Academy's graduation albums are nearly identical in appearance and pose, so one challenge for the photographer or photographers would have been to carefully match each photograph with individual cadets so that there would be no confusion as to the identity of the sitter when the images appeared in the album. Precautions against mix-ups must have been taken while the album was being produced, although, as Tagg and other scholars would caution, this does not preclude the possibility of mistakes in attribution or in the details of names and other biographical information.

Although the overall organization of these albums does not change significantly over the history of the Northeast Military Academy, except in an increase in page count as the years go on, there are some difference between the album of 1927 and previous ones: the pages are numbered, and in the back, the album lists the names and information, but not images—presumably due to the limits of cost and space—for the graduates of all previous years, implying

a concern with continuity. Why would it be important to include these names, if not for keeping a record of all who came before this graduating class? Beyond record-keeping, the names of the graduates of classes one through five broaden the temporal scope of the album and establishes a sequence of accomplishments building on previous ones—the number of graduates successfully turned out—along with a simplified history for the school based on individuals. Armed with a name from one of these lists, it would be possible to look a graduate up in an older album. At the same time, the individual graduates have not been individualized beyond a cursory, basic level within the album itself. Their images are composed not to stand out but rather to achieve a visual parity with the other portraits. Individual identification is the non-variable prerequisite for an image's participation in volumes such as the Northeast Military Academy's graduation albums. Ironically, because conformity is highly valued in this genre of portraiture, this individualist criteria for inclusion, an absolutely necessity if the album is to perform its commemorative function for viewers, does not reduce the interchangeability of the portraits.

As will be explained in more detail in chapter 2, the prefaces to the graduation albums played a significant role in shaping the narrative and affect of the albums. At the front of the 1927 album, on page one, we find a foreword from Zhang Xueliang followed by two separate forewords from instructors and a fourth and final foreword not from an individual author but the collective cadet body (*quantu*). Accounts of officers in China in the early twentieth century suggest that literacy may have been an issue even for this elite group, so this document may have been written by committee and approved by the cadet body, or assigned to an officer or staff recognized for their writing ability. Certainly the texts would have had to be approved by higher authorities within the school. In all four forewords, the authors emphasize the value of the collective identity fostered by membership in the school and the important role that the military



will play in the building of the nation. In his foreword to the 1927 album, Zhang Xueliang writes that unlike in the olden days, when military knowledge was taught and more importantly, disseminated from person to person in a systematic fashion, in modern days, "the world is full of people who are unable to calm the country's chaos because they lack *wu*,"<sup>56</sup> in direct contrast to soldiers, who can lead and protect those around them thanks to the training they have received at the school.<sup>57</sup> Zhang's outlook aligns well with the prominent militarist Cai E's assertion that "to train a good soldier is actually to train a good citizen." In their foreword the graduates echo the views of Zhang and the other writers on the importance of the training received at the school as well. But adopting a pragmatic tone, they also admit that "the army is not kind; this is something we cannot change"<sup>58</sup>—this is precisely the reason why they must rely on each other's support, because good or bad, they're in it together. The language is similar across the board, underscoring the uniform quality of the pieces and conveying a unified message of solidarity containing the promise of great things for the future for all the graduates under the aegis of the

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<sup>56</sup> *Wu* can be translated variously as martial spirit, sense, or know-how, and in Chinese philosophy, usually placed in diametric opposition to *wen*, culture/civilization. Nurtured in a long tradition of works dealing with military affairs such as the globally famous *Sunzi bingfa* (end of 6th century BCE or late 5th century BCE, conventionally known as 'The Art of War') and the *Wujing zongyao* ('Essentials of the Military Classics,' an imperially commissioned military encyclopedia from the eleventh century), the conceptualization and practice of *wu* took place in the realm of developing strategies for governing the state. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, *wu* as the successful application of modern technical and scientific knowledge to military affairs began to accrue to *wu*'s longstanding meanings related to the management of people and statecraft.

<sup>57</sup> Zhang Xueliang's relationship with the world represented by *wu* is intensely interesting. The military conflicts of early twentieth century China and Zhang's role in persuading Chiang Kai-shek to join forces with the Chinese Communist Party to fight the invading Japanese army dominates his biography. But in Zhang's interviews later in life, a sense of ambiguity comes through: recalling his early years, his initial ambition to be a doctor, and his admiration for his father, the warlord Zhang Zuolin, Zhang Xueliang, once known as the Young Marshall, remarks that "My father wanted to make me into a scholar [*wenren*]. Strangely enough, I also wanted to be a scholar, but I didn't, and ended up becoming a murderer [*sharen*]" (*Zhang Xueliang kou shu lishi* [The oral history of Zhang Xueliang]), p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> Edward McCord makes a strong argument for viewing Chinese soldiers as both victims and victimizers during this period of incessant and widespread war. The inhumane behavior and violence that soldiers could inflict on civilians had counterparts in the unchecked brutality that officers could mete out on subordinates under their command. For a vivid account of an internal military conflict pitting common soldiers against military leaders, see McCord's chapter, "Victims and Victimized: Warlord Soldiers and Mutinies in Republican China," in *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China*, eds. James A. Flath and Norman Smith (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011).

military. The language used in all of the forewords is optimistic and proud, as befitting the nature of the publication, but threaded with caution as well.

Following this section are the images of the instructors, and then the cadets, who are divided according to their military division with each section clearly separated with a title page. With the beginning of each new section, pagination reverts to one in the following organizational schema: infantry (*bubing*), pages 1-64; cavalry (*qibing*), 1-13; artillery (*paobing*), 1-18; and the engineering corps (*gongbing*), 1-6. Instructors' images are placed two per page and are consequently larger. The cadets' images, printed four to a page, are smaller.

In this album, but not in several others, the graduates are organized by age in descending order rather than by other measures of seniority and hierarchy such as military ranks. Unlike in previous albums, the graduates do not wear caps with their dress uniforms. (The choice of whether to photograph with or without a cap, judging from the albums that I have looked through, appears largely aesthetic.) This section for current graduates is followed by a section that lists the personal information of the five previous graduating classes. The locations given as contact places for each graduate range from post offices, teahouses, train stations, military posts, village names, and generic place markers. In other albums, some graduates give two or even three separate locations, reflecting the high mobility of soldiers but perhaps also a desire to not to lose contact, to remain reachable by other members of the school or by friends and acquaintances in the army. The images I analyze below appear on page thirty-six of the album, in the section featuring graduates of the infantry division.

The four images on this page, appearing in black and white like all the other photographic images in the album, are arranged in a square grid, and the photograph appears fairly small on the page with each image vignetted, with text below. The text that accompanies each image takes

up almost as much space as the images on the page. The layout of the portraits and the text is rather crowded, leaving margins nearly as wide as the images on either side of the central cluster. Borders made up of simple, stylized leaves evoking laurels adorn both the top and bottom of the page, with a capital 'M' marking the center of the line demarcated by the border. What the 'M' and the wings that stretch out on either side of the letter might stand for is unclear; the 'M' could mean 'military' or may be purely decorative.

Moving to the photographic images themselves, we can see that all the graduates are dressed in the same uniform, and that each image has been carefully composed to leave the relatively same amount of space between the sitters and the plain background of the image. The graduates on the top right (Yang Zhenqing) and bottom left (Liu Qinxiang) face squarely forward, while the graduates on the top left (Zhu Fengyuan) and bottom right (Zhang Dianjia) hold their bodies at a slight three-quarter angle facing to their left. Their expressions are composed and impersonal, but a little confidence does come through in some of the portraits. Although all four sitters have angled their heads differently, all four meet the viewer's gaze head-on, seemingly imperturbable.

Text placed immediately below each image imparts some basic information about each graduate: his name, courtesy name (*zi*), age, native place, unit and rank, and contact/residence location. This information for the graduates of infantry division page thirty-six is reproduced in the table below, which corresponds to the portraits' placement in the quadrants of the page.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zhu Fengyuan (Jingtao)</li> <li>• 30 <i>sui</i></li> <li>• Yingkou County [Liaoning Province]</li> <li>• Northeast Army, 20th Infantry Brigade, 46th Regiment, 2nd Battalion, Battalion Commander</li> <li>• Residence in Desheng District, Yingkou County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yang Zhenqing (Jingru)</li> <li>• 30 <i>sui</i></li> <li>• Ningyang County, Shangdong Province</li> <li>• Northeast Army, 67th Division, 13th Brigade, 25th Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 6th Company, Company Commander</li> <li>• Village in front of Xi Mountain in Xibei District, Ningyang County, Shandong</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liu Qinxiang (Qinzhao)</li> <li>• 30 <i>sui</i></li> <li>• Li County, Zhili Province (located in present-day Hebei)</li> <li>• Zhili Army, Sixth Army, 23rd Division, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Regiment, Lieutenant Commander</li> <li>• Permanently stationed at the garrison in Juyuan, Li County, Zhili Province</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zhang Dianjia (Guansan)</li> <li>• 30 <i>sui</i></li> <li>• Haicheng County [Liaoning Province]</li> <li>• Northeast Army, 6th Brigade, 17th Regiment, 3rd Battalion, Captain; transferred to the 34th Advance Army Regiment Headquarters</li> <li>• Donghe Inn in Beiyang Gangzi, Haicheng</li> </ul>
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However, what is most striking about this page is not the images or the text above, but the handwritten inscription in pencil on the top left corner. Our inscription writer has not signed his name; nevertheless, he knew one of the four men whose photographs appear on this album page. Based on the location of the inscription, the writer may be addressing Zhu Fengyuan, but this is not certain since the top of the page is where there is the most space to write on the page. In any case, the fact is that without this inscription, this page would have had nothing in particular to distinguish itself from the pages that come before and after it to anyone who did not know one or more of these men personally. The photographs, when viewed in the context of the album as a whole, are marked by a carefully planned sameness that discourages the elevation of a particular portrait. The placement of the portraits, vignettted and equally spaced within its own quadrant, controls this effect.

Thus, on page thirty-six of the album in the section for infantry cadets, someone, presumably another graduate or at least a soldier, probably in the officer class, has left a curious inscription in pencil on the top left-hand corner. I have transcribed and translated it below to the best of my ability, but several factors make the text unclear. The original handwriting is shaky, and in several places, the rendering and choice of characters are quite strange. The low-quality photocopy of the page from the archive has blurred the last line, but has preserved enough detail that it can be reasonably construed. The inscription refers to a date whose importance difficult to

assess because it is not clear which events happened on that day. The more significant issue, however, one far more challenging than mere orthographic oddities, characters that seem out of place, or even the lack of details that would help define and orient the event, is that the inscription leaves very few clues as to the context of its making. In leaving this note behind, its author has added mystery, not clarity, to the images found on this page. The inscription reads as follows:

You and I (your older brother) have had the privilege of friendship and together we have faced hardships over many years. From the bottom of my heart I would like to tell you that on this day I have put you in an unrighteous position in our general affairs involving private matters; regarding what happened on August 5th, the shame of Huiji [a large city in Zhejiang Province, perhaps referring to a military engagement?], my ability was not enough and the time was that of harvest; [but] if one has known shame, and from it learns bravery, is this not praiseworthy?

What prompted this writer to leave this message? Where did he view this album? Did he intend or expect that the addressee would see the message? It may be worth asking if this message was even intended for the eyes of another, or written for the writer's own particular reason and/or benefit. Was this a confessional note, composed mainly for the writer's own benefit? Did he worry about others coming across this message? What general affairs and which private matters? What happened on August 5th that the writer felt compelled to commit his feelings of shame and inadequacy associated with that day to paper, even in the less indelible medium of pencil? The questions multiply the more one puts one's mind to the issue of the inscription on the page.

The faint pencil marks overwhelm the images. They become oriented to the text, which becomes a center of gravity that "distorts" the intended message inscribed within the images of institutional belonging. The ambiguous narrative of an interpersonal relationship, full of gaps, disrupts the narrative of soldiers as the heart, soul, and future of the nation prefigured in the forewords. The text heightens the memory-generating aspect of the images instead, but here, too,

not in the ways that the structure of the album or the portrait promotes. Within the photography complex of this page, this handwritten note narrows the context in which the images are to be viewed—an individual's story rather than the expansive story of the institution and the cohort—while simultaneously decompressing the portraits and making their boundaries more porous. The text sanctioned by the album attempts to crystallize the descriptive text around each image and offer up a individualized portrait, hermetically sealed against misattribution; the unorthodox text of the anonymous writer offers a way through which the viewer to cast their own imagination on the images by showing that their seemingly self-evident state is unstable and permeable.

As we can see, certain kinds of text helps these portraits resist becoming a generic image of a Chinese "soldier," "officer," or "military school cadet." It might be simpler to assert then that descriptive text carries with it more authority than the image when it comes to military portraits. On the other hand, the compression of reality possible in photographic representation cannot be completely discounted. The album text loses its immediacy and freshness when it loses its connection to the visual referent of the portrait; perusing the long lists of names at the back of the graduation album is a more monotonous and impersonal process than looking at the graduate portraits, although this is not immune from the flattening effect of unchanging congruence. Conversely, other kinds of text, such as the inscription, have the effect of turning things inside out and upside down. But despite these textual precautions, the text does not entirely eliminate the risk of the images falling into the 'type' trap.

Even with the foundation provided by the graduation album and textual exegesis, visual conformity does not permit certainty. Speaking of photographs of unnamed indigenous subjects in colonial India, Christopher Pinney remarks that "anonymity, together with the assumption of fixity, was fundamental to notions of 'type' and 'typicality,' terms which abound from the 1850s

outwards."<sup>59</sup> This fixity is difficult to counter, and where any photograph is concerned, anonymity is always just around the corner. What Bruno Latour would describe in terms of "optical consistency"<sup>60</sup>—consistency *par excellence*, to be sure—compresses the reality of the individual sitter and the conditions under which the picture was taken. The aesthetic language of the portraits deliberately negates details that would distract or detract from the military portrait's ability to remain in conversation with others of its visual order. The stability of this order is more fragile than it seems at first glance, for it can be easily disturbed, as in the example of page thirty-six, by text that falls outside the parameters of the context in which the images appear. The "limited vocabulary" of the image,<sup>61</sup> while more than sufficient when linked with the explicit vocabulary of written text, reveal a fundamental weak point in the military portrait's capacity to guarantee individual identification. There exists a fluid space within photographic portraits between the poles of individuality and representative image, and the graduation portraits of the Northeast Military Academy demonstrates photography as an agent for a powerfully fraught preservation as well as erasure. In the following chapter, the agency of the text within these graduation albums, penned by the instructors and graduating officers to burnish and buttress the images' claim to unity and collective identity, will be examined.

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<sup>59</sup> Pinney, 53.

<sup>60</sup> Hevia, 96.

<sup>61</sup> Hevia, 94.

身經兩下 知滿  
之交患難相依  
多年歸騎之經  
相告本同因處  
務勞涉及私交  
隨弟不義八月  
五月之步險境  
取力知不足時  
未至知取近乎



朱逢源

縣口營 歲十三 濟景  
旅二十第兵步軍陸北東  
長營校少營二團六十四  
宅本裏勝得口營



楊振清

縣開寧東山 歲十三 德敬  
旅三十師七十六軍陸東山  
長連連六營二團五十二  
村前山西北西醫開寧東山

第二隊 步兵科



劉芬

縣靈隸直 歲十三 藻擒  
三十二第軍六第軍陸隸直  
附連尉中營二團二第旅  
安即永源聚鎮史留縣靈隸直



張殿甲

縣城海 歲十三 三冠  
營三第團七十旅六第軍陸北東  
都團軍面方四三調現附營崗上  
棧和東子崗湯北城海

三六

Figure 6: 1927 infantry graduates of the Northeast Military Academy



## CHAPTER 2

### Building a Body of Collective Memory

This chapter focuses on the textual components of Northeast Military Academy graduation albums, in conjunction with contemporary writings by and about military men, to explore the ways in which the men affiliated with the school affirmed their membership in an elite military cohort and their connection to the school and to each other through individually and collectively authored prefaces that framed, enhanced, and affixed meaning to the photographic representations of individual soldiers. Through these writings, the administrators, instructors, and graduates of the Northeast Military Academy gave voice to their aspirations for the Chinese nation as well as themselves in relation to its political future. By elevating military training and trained soldiers to the role of not simply defenders of the nation but nation-builders, the men of the Northeast Military Academy sought to raise the prestige of the school and that of soldiers to be commensurate with the decisive role they envisioned for the Northeast Army beyond the geographical confines of Manchuria. The training received at the school and the bonds forged there would, according to the prefaces, position the men to shape China. While rhetorically powerful, the appeals to the unity of the institutional body of the school also reveal an intense concern with the potential dissolution of that same body through war. In addition, they contain a tacit acknowledgement of the inevitability of the loss of its individual components from death alongside a claim to the immortality of the collective in the face of unavoidable loss. The prefaces, expressing both the highest hopes and greatest fears of the men who passed through the halls of the Northeast Military Academy, illuminate the paradoxes that come into being when entrusting individual memories to the care of a collective, institutional body.

On the national stage, the price of failure could be very high, as can be seen in the many casualties of large-scale conflicts going on during this period. In fact, the publication of these graduation albums bracket several years of intense warfare and military activity in northeast and north China. Tensions boiled over in 1924 into the Second Zhili-Fengtian war, which pitted Zhang's Northeast Army against the forces of rival warlord Wu Peifu and his supporters, devastating wide swathes of northern China. 1925 was the year of the May 30th incident, when workers and labor activists in Shanghai were shot by police, sparking widespread protests, riots, boycotts, and censure, a sustained anti-imperialist backlash that reverberated throughout China. With Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) at the helm, the Northern Expedition pushed Guomindang forces into northeast China in 1926. 1926 also marked the year in which Zhang Zuolin assumed control in Beijing, but this state of affairs would not last – 1926, as Gavan McCormack argues, was the beginning of the end of his career, culminating in his death by assassination in June 1928 and the passing of the command to Zhang Xueliang, who continued his father's efforts to boost military power and education in the northeastern provinces.

The prefaces, found at the beginning of each of the graduation albums of the Northeast Military Academy, can be divided into two types: those authored by individual school administrators and instructors and those that bear the collective authorship of the graduating cadet body. However, no clear boundary between collective and individual voice exists in the prefaces. And although several positive themes can be discerned within these writings—the importance of shared sacrifice, the need to cultivate individual talents while striving for a solidarity that transcends strict military hierarchy—the prefaces also reveal a deep concern with the harshness of military life and the fragile relationship between the soldier's body, the cohort, and the nation, which could be torn apart at any time by the vicissitudes of battle.

Engaged in a form of literary production and the cultivation of the image of learned men, although their knowledge was of a different kind than the literary men of old, and would certainly not have been valued by the literati of the late imperial period, if not outright derided. However, in doing so, they constituted the periphery of an era of diverse and profuse literary production,<sup>62</sup> when organizations and institutions dedicated to the creation and promotion of various literatures and popular culture in the Republican period, often with an explicit political agenda such as instilling a national culture in the populace, proliferated.<sup>63</sup> Republican China was eager for new kinds of texts, primed by a "diffusion" of print media and literary culture during the Qing made possible by numerous writers, industrious booksellers, and avid readers.<sup>64</sup> During this period, new print outlets and expressive forms rose to match the development of new literary genres and explorations of social and gender roles.<sup>65</sup> This world was not only Chinese, but woven through with multiple literatures and languages.<sup>66</sup> Located at the very far margins of the literary and cultural world of Republican China, the men of the Northeast Military Academy, in the graduation albums, were engaged in a project of collective memory that while not making

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<sup>62</sup> For a colorful panorama of the many different kinds of literary societies, writers' groups, and publishers, see Michael Hockx, ed., *The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1999), Kirk A. Denton and Hockx, eds., *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2008),

<sup>63</sup> For an in-depth look at one emblematic publishing society, the Popular Reading Publishing House (Tongwu duwu biankanshe), see Long-Hsin Liu, "Popular Readings and Wartime Historical Writing in Modern China," in *The Challenge of Linear Time: Nationhood and the Politics of History in East Asia*, eds. Viren Murthy and Axel Schneider (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014), 181-214.

<sup>64</sup> See Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of literary production in the Republican period that exploited these new communicative venues through experiments in genre and form, see Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, and Richard J. Smith, *Different Worlds of Discourse: Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> Many scholars have been increasingly focusing on the multiple paths of influence in the writing of late nineteenth and twentieth century East Asia, usually starting from the works of cosmopolitan elites who acted as conduits or nodes of different languages, cultures, politics, and literatures. See Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995) and Karen L. Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), and for works looking at the influence of Japan into and out of China in particular, see Richard King, Cody Poulton, and Katsuhiko Endo, eds., *Sino-Japanese Transculturation: From Late Nineteenth Century to the End of the Pacific War* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2012).

pretensions to literariness *per se*, nonetheless traversed a number of genres. The prefaces of these albums perform different roles, and acting as framing texts, construct a sophisticated discursive site in which soldiers of different ranks could affix their memories of shared experiences, a resolutely masculine space in which all men who belonged to the cohort and the institution could be imagined as equally important members of the collective body. Although the albums faithfully reproduce the organizational hierarchy of the military, showing explicitly that the men are not each others' equals, they also stress the shared aspects of their military identity that assures each man a place among his fellow officers as part of the select group of graduates of the Northeast Military Academy. Each individual member of the collective, by virtue of being included in the commemorative exercise of the graduation album, affirms his fellows' same membership in this exclusive group. The albums resolutely project a message of solidarity while also reinforcing the hierarchical bonds between the graduates, an effort concentrated and sustained across time and space through the structure as well as materiality of the albums. In the same process, however, the ambiguities contained within the texts destabilize the aspirational and commemorative aims of the men involved.

The photographic albums created for the purpose of commemorating these men's graduation from the Northeast Military Academy contain a paradox. Time and again in the prefaces that affix meaning to the images within, the writers proclaim the everlasting quality of the bonds forged at the school. The institutional body, composed of the graduates and instructors, are immortal in spirit and share a bond of brotherhood that cannot be broken, even by death. The skills they have learned at the school, the prefaces assert, will undoubtedly allow them to serve as the foundations and leaders of a strong, unified China. At the same time, the inevitability of parting casts a heavy shadow over their words, calling into question the transient nature of the

time spent in each others' company at the school. The volatile political situation of China, poised between rival international powers and contended by numerous internal factions, also lie heavily over the outward confidence displayed in the prefaces. The Republican period was rife with political factionalism and rapidly shifting allegiances, where one's ally could become one's enemy depending on the situation. Even within the Northeast Army lay tensions among the officers as discussed later in this chapter. In the face of such uncertainties, the Northeast Military Academy's graduation albums attempt to triumph over the possibility of pain, death, and even discord. Acting in concert along with the images discussed in the first chapter, the prefaces make a claim to a spiritual brotherhood, anchored by their shared experiences at the school, that transcends boundaries of time, space, or even indeed military hierarchy. This special brotherhood forged at the school is contrasted sharply with the bonds between civilians and those not of the school, emotional appeals to the power of memory conveyed through not just text, but images, and a common belief in the capacity of collective memory to recall the past, preserve the present, and anticipate the future.

The 1923 album, created to commemorate the fourth graduating class of the Northeast Military Academy, contains four prefaces. The first of the prefaces in the album, written by Xiao Qixuan, the director of the school, addresses the graduates, stating that the aim of the education provided by the Northeast Military is for the building of the Chinese Republic through the training of the cadet body toward the fulfillment of this goal. Speaking directly to the materiality of the album and the images of individual bodies that it houses, Xiao stresses that the true body of the collective is made manifest in the soul, or spirit, (*jingshen*) of the collective body, rather than the physical bodies of the cadets. In this sense, the shared spiritual body of the collective exists and will forever exist regardless of the vagaries of the physical world. However, at the

same time that he asserts that the unified spirit had no end and will last in perpetuity, Xiao writes that the names of the members of the body, recorded for posterity within the albums, gives form to the connections among the very same. Tethered thus to the institutional body and its indestructible spirit, the men nurtured at the school will go on to distinguish themselves in military and public service.<sup>67</sup> Military action, specifically achieving favorable results in battle, is the main concern, and war is what the school has been training the men to excel in. The view taken up in the preface is longer, looking forward to a time when war will not be a constant presence in their lives. Even so, Xiao stresses that military service and the taking up of arms will always be an integral component of the soldiers' lives, writing that "In the future, once we control all the armies and [everybody] near and far is convinced to comply, then we shall use our force to advocate peace and break up wars, and there will be no exceptions. Afterwards, then the public will know this by example."<sup>68</sup> It is a bold move on Xiao's part to claim that the Northeast forces will rule not only Manchuria, but the rest of the country, and moreover become supreme over the many armed forces competing for control of China. His preface is one part prediction and one part exhortation aimed at the graduates to step up to the challenge. At the same time that it is aimed at rallying the graduates and members of the Northeast Army, it is also a potential warning to their competitors and advance notice of what is to come, in the way that the preface serves as a prelude to the visual show of numbers and strength displayed in the pages of the graduation album.

Military power and the burdens, privileges, and duties that they provide for make up the cornerstone of these men's shared identity. In fact, military might, envisioned as control over all

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<sup>67</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 904, *Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang di si jinian pu* [The graduation album of the fourth graduating class of the Three provinces army school] (1923), 1.

<sup>68</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 904, *Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang di si jinian pu* [The graduation album of the fourth graduating class of the Three provinces army school] (1923), 1.

the warring factions of Republican China and military control over the entire country, is seen as the means to an end. The individual men portrayed within the pages of the album are also the means by which this objective will be achieved, and it is for this reason that Xiao asserts that the album has been made. He writes that "The fact that people use this record to make an album of modern famous generals says that the publication of this record is not in vain,"<sup>69</sup> thereby arguing that the men of the Northeast Military Academy will certainly be important figures in China's future. The aspirations reflected in the preface and materialized in the creation of the album are national in scope and yet, at the same time that it takes care to clarify the purpose of the album suggests an awareness of potential misreadings, or perhaps even misuses of the 1923 album and what it contains.

The second preface of the 1923 album, bearing the authorship of the First Brigade graduating class, begins with an exhortation to excel and become strong for the sake of the group for the sake of bringing society together and leading it. As in the preface of Xian Qixuan, the second preface highlights the role of the military forces of the three northeastern provinces of China as a whole. Now that their time in training in school is over, the graduates must go out into the world, taking up their vocation and all that it entails. Soldiers, the preface claims, are the ones who are the most honorable, powerful, and have the greatest ability to achieve these goals. The grand sweep of the preface's claims most certainly reflect the generally positive view in the 1920s shared among Chinese intellectuals as well as the military of the potential of military power to lift China's status in the world. The overwhelming positive assessment of soldiers and their ability to affect change also emerges in the reading of this preface, as well as a claim to a long lineage of famous military figures who played decisive roles in China's history. In addition,

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<sup>69</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 904, *Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang di si jinian pu* [The graduation album of the fourth graduating class of the Three provinces army school] (1923), 1.

as with the first preface, there is an apparent need to make sure that the true meaning and utility of the graduation album is clear. The publishing of names and faces of all the individual graduates along with their instructors is not an exercise in vanity or self-promotion, or even that of simply a tool for assisting their ability to remember. According to the preface,

The publication of this album is not to be just a souvenir, but to hope each man acquires a sense of responsibility, to have the resolution of not fearing to die on the battlefield, to show extraordinary glory at Changbai Mountain and Heilong River and sow our mighty names in the Divine Land, to compete with the historical achievements of Ban Dingyuan and Yu Yunwen.<sup>70</sup>

By referencing famous geographical locations and well-known, widely admired military men of the distant past, the preface evokes the grandeur of China, predicts the heroism of their actions in battles to come, and places them in a long, albeit vague, genealogy of military achievement. In the imagination of the graduates, the very mountains and rivers of the Northeast will be witnesses to the glory of the men, and knowledge of their prowess will be known far and wide. Those who see this fact will be reminded of figures like Ban Dingyuan, also known as Ban Chao, a general of the Later Han who hailed from a prominent family of scribes, soldiers, and statesmen. Celebrated for his successes on the field, Ban Chao was credited with many important victories against the Xiongnu as well as rival Chinese commanders during a period when many different contenders were fighting for control. Rising to prominence about a thousand years later, Yu Yunwen was a Song official and general who distinguished himself during a period of conflict between the Song dynasty and the Jurchen Jin dynasty, in particular in a much-heralded naval engagement in 1161. It is notable that the figure that the preface references here is a general who fought against the Jin, a non Han Chinese dynasty, for the early twentieth century was also a time when Han Chinese elites voiced sentiments against the Manchu Qing dynasty,

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<sup>70</sup> "Xuyuan" (Preface), Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo 904. *Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang di si jinian pu* [The graduation album of the fourth graduating class of the Three provinces army school] (1923).



painting the Qing as outsiders and inept rulers who had allowed China to be overrun by foreign powers. Manchuria loomed large in the national imagination, with the ethnic identity of Manchus itself undergoing change in response, as Dan Shao has argued.<sup>71</sup>

In contrast, then, the preface aligns the men of the Northeast Military Academy as those on the side of China imagined as a native, Han polity. Complicating this association is the reference to Changbai Mountain, the mythical and symbolic site of Manchu identity. The preface positions the Northeast Military Academy and by extension the Northeast Army as legitimate defenders of a Chinese nation with a specific ethnic connotation, but at the same time, calls the Manchus to mind, invoking these meaning-laden geographical witnesses to previous dynastic glories. Interestingly, the forces arrayed against the Northeast Army was not simply singular or foreign, given Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Xueliang's uneasy alliance with Japan, but domestic, in the form of the rival warlords that commanded other regional armies during the Republican era. Perhaps, then, the choice of Yu Yunwen suggests a further denigration of the Northeast Army's enemies as barbarian and illegitimate, an association that appears again in the prefaces of later albums that will be examined.

The third 1923 preface, authored by the graduates of the school's Second Brigade, bears a message similar to the second preface, laying out the importance of the shared day-to-day experiences that the three hundred and sixty-odd fellow graduates have shared over the course of their military education. The preface highlights the passionate patriotic feeling engendered by the training received at the school, and the ability of soldiers to not only fight in war to protect the country, but leading them afterwards. The writers of the preface tells their fellow graduates that

If you can use what you have learned here to teach our patriotic youth to actively engage with the principle of flexibility [*jingquan*], to be an exemplar and not seek to be extreme,

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<sup>71</sup> Dan Shao, *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907-1985* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).

to change soldiers subtly, to develop military discipline without words, to make everybody feel a heartfelt admiration, and unite in spirit, then you can successfully teach them skills without the need to be strict.<sup>72</sup>

In this view, the advantages of military training of the kind taught at the school are readily apparent, allowing soldiers to be leaders without expending any force or needing to enforce any rules, but rather leading by example. However, the authors admit, the efficacy of military discipline, training, and ways of thinking are not always apparent in society or even among the ranks. What then, they ask, can explain the ineffective application of these principles, as well as the fact that both the common people and enlisted soldiers disobey orders?

In response, the writers of the preface find their answer in the quality of the example being set. They write that "If you view your soldiers like your children, then they are willing to go with you into a deep creek, and if you treat your soldiers like beloved sons, then they are willing to die with you," arguing that simply showing subordinates what ought to be done is not enough; they must be also be made to understand and further refine their understanding.

Otherwise, the learning of skills may as well be meaningless; soldiers without a deep appreciation of the importance of leading by example will not win battles or gain the respect of others in any official capacity. The preface, borrowing the authority of classics works about war, maintains that "even though you may win all of your battles, this is not the ideal; if you can deter troops without resorting to battles, this is the best strategy."<sup>73</sup> In other words, the outward form of how to lead soldiers is not as important as the underlying principle of leadership, which in an ideal sense should not incorporate any kind of coercion.

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<sup>72</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 904. *Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang di si jinian pu* [The graduation album of the fourth graduating class of the Three provinces army school] (1923).

<sup>73</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 904. *Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang di si jinian pu* [The graduation album of the fourth graduating class of the Three provinces army school] (1923).

On its surface, the attitude that good examples will naturally create good soldiers appears to be pure idealism. Looking deeper, it reveals a deep concern with the problem of maintaining proper discipline and curbing unwanted behavior among soldiers. The negative reputation of soldiers during the Republican period was in many ways well-deserved as noted by contemporary observers and scholars alike.<sup>74</sup> The idealism, then may be proportionate to the reality, and the resort to a language of nurturing an attempt to deflect attention away from the inherent coercive violence of soldiers' work. As Siniša Malešević points out in her study of the relationship between collectivity and the capacity for violence, the highly developed social organization that underpins modern institutions also allow them to make good on the threat of violence in ways that less organized entities cannot.<sup>75</sup> The more organized and efficient the modern army being built by warlords in this period was, the more powerful and deadly they could be. And yet, it is the work of soldiers that is seen as the essential element in creating a strong and prosperous nation. The third preface mentions that "there is the saying that the basis of founding a country totally relies on thorough military preparedness"<sup>76</sup> – the scale of the problem facing warlord armies of the period was enormous, and one that the instructors and the graduates, who already were or would become officers in charge of enlisted or conscripted men, would have been well aware of.

The early 1920s were a period of large-scale changes within the structure of the Northeast Army as well, with "new" and "old" factions vying for pre-eminence. The officers divided according to where they had received formal military training. A portion of high-ranking officers

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<sup>74</sup> See Diana Lary, *Warlord Soldiers: Chinese Common Soldiers, 1911-1937* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Edward McCord, *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>75</sup> Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of War and Violence* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>76</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 904. *Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang di si jinian pu* [The graduation album of the fourth graduating class of the Three provinces army school] (1923).

trained in Japan formed the old guard under the leadership of Yang Yuting, with graduates of the Northeast Military Academy and the War College in Beijing making up the up-and-coming new blood. Affiliation heavily affected issues of advancement, with graduates of the Northeast Military Academy being increasingly favored. Graduation from the Northeast Military Academy became an important criteria in the 1920s as contending factions within the army sought to reorganize it to better pool and develop talent. This went hand-in-hand with a drive for greater professionalization in the Northeast Army, involving a crackdown on opium smokers among the soldiery or officers drawing extra pay for men they did not command, and a mandate to identify underperformers and weed them out.<sup>77</sup> The imperative to recognize and reject unworthy elements within their ranks must have been keenly felt, as attested to by the prefaces and their emphasis on the fitness and worthiness of the cohorts that they are representing.

Indeed, the task set before the men of the Northeast Military Academy, as filtered through the preface, is monumental in scope and fraught with immense, unavoidable challenges. The preface ends with words of encouragement, declaring that

Though today we are slated to part from each other, it is also because we have to part from each other that we will help raise China to the status of the top of the powers and to relieve the worries of our countrymen, and by doing so, meet the nation's goal of cultivating us talents and fulfill the purpose of heaven's creating us. Doing so also rewards the higher-ups and officers' sincere hope in nurturing and educating us. Besides, if we all leave our photos in this alumni record, doesn't that equal to us all being here (in the same hall)? Therefore, people say, though our actions lead us apart, our spirits (are still together). For this, we composed this preface today.<sup>78</sup>

Rather than a vehicle for self-aggrandizement or a simple record of the graduates and their efforts, the album is thus fashioned into a testament to the efforts of the instructors and

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<sup>77</sup> Gavan McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911-1928: China, Japan, and the Manchurian Idea* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1977), 102

<sup>78</sup> [Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 904. *Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang di si jinian pu* [The graduation album of the fourth graduating class of the Three provinces army school] (1923).

administrators instead, embodying their hope for what the graduates may achieve, one that the graduates themselves share. This witnessing is an expression of gratitude and its own reward, in addition to the implied recompense for the nation.

Ultimately, the preface ends on a final note reminding the cadets that what the album achieves is something tangible, a method by which to overcome any distance and exist at the same time and in the same space. Much has been written about the connection between memory and identity, with some scholars arguing that memory has a distinctive physiological component, acting as a conduit of consciousness over distances of time and space, while others further differentiate between types of memory that are tied to the physical, such as the neurological processes that form habit, and memory processes that consciously retrieves past experiences independent of physical cues.<sup>79</sup> The commemorative albums, with their integration of text and photography, are a means *par excellence* of activating and storing memory. Framed by the textual narrative that the prefaces provide, the graduation albums of the Northeast Military Academy are a technology of collective memory. The somewhat contradictory emphases found in the prefaces suggest multiple strains of thought about the activity of commemoration among the men at the school. Some of the themes are complementary in ways that buttress the official commemorative goals of the institution, while others are less concrete, less dominant, that reveal the malleability of institutional memory.

This tactile emphasis on what the album creates is most directly addressed in the fourth and final preface from 1923, offering a closer look at the psychology of the soldiers and what the album means to them. At first echoing the theme of nation-building found in the previous works,

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<sup>79</sup> See Mary Warnock, *Memory* (London; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987) and Max Deutscher, "Memory," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (New York: Routledge, 1998), 297.

the fourth preface goes on to emphasize the materiality and particularity of the album itself in a manner that is worth examining in detail.

Then, the graduation album that has been printed here is no ordinary thing compared to an ordinary graduation album that is merely limited to a book of names on each page with years, ages, and native places. The portraits printed and gathered today make up the form of those who will be separate at a future date. Browsing through the various pages and the various heroic spirits within them, one is struck with awe in an impressive and dignified manner as though one is meeting them face-to-face. One's feelings are also like this.

To always and constantly bear these printed images in mind, to think of them fondly and as kindred spirits, even in the future, all these are functions of the graduation album. Whether you hide away your talents, become poor and frustrated, defy convention, leave behind a thousand years of merit, kill enemies to achieve victory, or aspire to sweep through the world like a sea to clean it up, it is hoped that the spirit of the album will bind us together, for there is nothing that is ever used only for fighting.

Today the printing of the graduation album has been completed. The names of we three hundred-odd men are contained in one book henceforth toward a deep and profound wish. The oceans may dry into stone or decay, but our unity cannot be undone; the earth may grow old and the heavens may fail, but the rift will not be allowed to grow. If we can carry on in our original resolution, carrying out difficult tasks, then we will not only not be unworthy of the honor of our talented reputation, but also not be inferior to all the scholars under patronage in ancient times.

Therefore, this graduation album can be viewed either as a blood oath or a sworn brotherhood, hence the value of the graduation album can be as that of gold and jade. But to treat the publication of this album like a procedure, to read its preface like a flower-like essay, then that is the album being devalued. How, then, should we understand the publication of this album and its preface correctly? It is hoped that talent such as you can use your strength and lead troops to save the country from its crisis, that your words and action match and this record does not become empty words. Now, since we will soon separate, as we still hope to take different ways to the same ends, then our generation will be lucky and China will be lucky.

As filtered through this preface, the album emerges as a mutual agreement to remember and celebrate, as an oath by proxy. The language of the preface elevates the graduation album to the status of a treasure made out of rare, valuable materials, its contents differentiating it from similar albums. And yet, lest the aesthetic and sentimental qualities of the album cause graduates

to interpret it incorrectly, the preface cautions them to remember also that the album is a sign of hope for the potential contributions that the cadets can make to the well-being of China. A year prior to the publication of this album, Zhang Zuolin had declared the independence of the three northeastern provinces under his control. It was far from smooth sailing for Zhang and the forces of the Northeast, however, as tensions between Zhang and other regional warlords escalated in the early 1920s, resulting in the First Zhili-Fengtian War in 1922 and Zhang's defeat in Beijing and subsequent retreat. 1923 was a pivotal year between the formal establishment of Zhang's rule in the region and the first Guomindang and Communist united front in 1924, and the Northeast Army would fight against the forces of rival warlord Wu Peifu again in the Second Zhili-Fengtian War of 1924-1925, where the Northeast Army was several times pushed to the brink of defeat and only managed to salvage victory with bitter losses and more importantly, the timely defection of a member of the Zhili clique, the warlord Feng Yuxiang. While Zhang Zuolin's control over Manchuria was clearly established for the most part, his position was by no means secure. On the heels of these conflicts, the years 1926 to 1928 would usher in the Northern Expedition, a campaign with the goal of defeating the warlords and pacifying China's north and northeast. The Northeast Army were in command of one of China's best-stocked artilleries, control over one of the most industrialized regions of the country, and were on friendly terms with Japan – for the time being, with mutual trust in short supply.

With tensions in Manchuria between various parties always simmering under the surface, the instructors and graduates of the school faced the real likelihood of participating in battles first-hand and dying in action or losing a comrade with each shift in the winds of war of the volatile 1920s. Dominick LaCapra, discussing history as experience, posits trauma as a rupture,

repression, or disassociation in the continuity of what is experienced by human beings.<sup>80</sup> The prefaces, with their blunt acknowledgment of death, suggests that trauma may not only be disruptive, but rather also potentially connective. Raising the possibility of death on one level is a straightforward attempt to give a positive meaning to a traumatic event, the loss of a member of the cohort. On another level, reminding the graduates of the reality of death may be foregrounding a trauma that is necessary for the triggering of memory. The prefaces work through the impending trauma and defuse them, denying it any sense of mystery or taboo. If anything is truly distressing to contemplate, it is not death, but being forgotten in a way that devalues the training and experience of graduating from the school. Although the spiritual bonds forged through shared experience at the school is the criteria for membership, the artifact of the album and the experience of reading and viewing through the conduit of the physical body is an essential component of retrieving the memories within.

Memory studies, particularly those of the 1980s, draw heavily on evolving understandings and historiographies of the Holocaust and attempts to retrieve the historical lived reality of the experience as well as verify those memories that were in circulation in both inanimate texts and the still living. Sparking debates about the relative merits of memory for constructing authenticity, scholars like Pierre Nora and Maurice Halbwachs have argued that memory requires a specific culture that acts as a repository for it.<sup>81</sup> Halbwachs, in particular, takes on the issue of collective memory by arguing that by definition, collection memory does not extend beyond the group itself. Collective memory, in fact, holds the possibility of discontinuities, contrary to the usual stated claims of collective memory, as memory is lost in

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<sup>80</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), 117-23.

<sup>81</sup> A strong critique of Nora's distinction between history and collective memory has been made by Perry Anderson, who views Nora's work as excessively concerned with the reification of a national essence which then only exists to be recovered through the exercise of memory, in a circular fashion.



transmission through successive generations.<sup>82</sup> For Halbwachs, memory is the messy and discontinuous transmissions from one point to another, and history is what is made orderly and with clear boundaries from these irregular pieces. He identifies a dynamic wherein as older members of a group disappear or become isolated from the group, the group's social memory "erodes at the edges," but cautions that "stating whether a collective remembrance has disappeared and whether it has definitely left group consciousness is difficult, especially since its recovery only requires its presentation in some limited portion of the social body."<sup>83</sup> Extending the metaphor of the body to albums, they can be argued to be acting as bodies in proxy, by housing the facsimiles of the individual members of the group. This collective body was not neutral but rather charged through with both positive and negative emotions. In spite of the claims to the inviolate life of spiritual brotherhood, neither was the collective body permanently secure. Rather, it was a body in perpetual danger of dispersal from internal forces—prescribed by duty and service—and continuously in need of resistance against external forces that sought to tear it apart.

In light of the ongoing struggle in which the Northeastern forces were embroiled, then, the constant refrain of encouragement in the prefaces of these albums makes sense. The 1925 album for the fifth graduating class, containing three prefaces in total, carries another piece by Xiao Qixuan, and while shorter than the 1923 preface, Xiao reiterates some of the same concerns displayed in his previous essay, expressing confidence in the graduates and the skills they have learned during their training. More important than technical skills, in Xiao's perspective, is the fighting spirit instilled in the graduates during their time at the school. The second preface of the

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<sup>82</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 78-84; 140. Showing influences from philosophers such as Henri Bergson, who saw the physical body as the mechanism for remembering, and sociological thinkers such as Emile Durkheim, Halbwachs emphasizes the importance of the social element, or *milieux*, for the construction of the social memory a given individual finds his or herself participating in.

<sup>83</sup> Halbwachs, 142.

1925 album, authored by graduates, strikes a somewhat different tone, simultaneously lamenting their imminent separation and adopting a tone of acceptance. Parting is inevitable, "However, the way of heaven cannot change for a hundred days, and human affairs cannot be unchanging for a hundred days. Gathering and leaving are constant things in human life, so why mind it?"<sup>84</sup> Their immediate future holds few surprises; it is better, rather, in their view, to focus on what the far future will bring. For that purpose, the graduation album has been created, and "In particular the publication of the graduation album is not specially to show names, and home towns, but also add photos. This is to display the commemoration of the unity of spirit. At some point in the future, at leisure, it can be reviewed by somebody."<sup>85</sup>

In this way, the preface establishes the album as locus of spiritual identity and an experiential, and specifically visually immersive, environment. The viewing and re-viewing of the formal portraits inside the album, framed by the words of the prefaces, is intended as a display of institutional and spiritual unity. The format of the commemorative album, with photographic portraits taken of men wearing the same type of uniform, sitting in the same kind of posture, and vignettted and listed in the same kind of organizational schema, preserves differences and yet presents them all with a high level of visual parity. Although the organization of the men within the albums remains strictly hierarchical, in descending orders of rank and then age, the prefaces work to elide these differences and suggest that visual parity was as valued as visual fidelity. Individual identities are essential to the proper activation of the memory of the school and its members, but it is only in the collective sense that the images can invoke awe and admiration befitting the status and potential of the men of the school.

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<sup>84</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, *Minguo ziliao* 905, *Di wu qi qian renzhi jiaoyuan yi lan biao* [List of active instructors of the fifth graduating term] (1925), 3.

<sup>85</sup> [Liaoning Provincial Archives, *Minguo ziliao* 905, *Di wu qi qian renzhi jiaoyuan yi lan biao* [List of active instructors of the fifth graduating term] (1925), 3.

Moreover, the preface imagines for the graduates a time in the future when the pressing matter of winning at war will not be an issue, a thread that is picked up by third preface, also bearing the authorship of the graduates, who proclaim that they have dedicated themselves bodily to the nation. Identifying themselves as "people of learning" from the moment of their graduation, the cadets reflect that graduation does not change friends who have gone through thick and thin. They write that,

Although the time for graduation is coming, the future is still long ahead. If we think deeply, then we will be resolute to fight against the enemy, and if we all lean towards moral principles, then the organization will be solid. Using this way to deal with the enemy, then enemy can be reduced, and using this to plan for success, then success is coming soon.

Presaging future success is yet another function of commemorating a cohort though formal means such as a graduation album. The preface asserts that only soldiers can be relied upon to bring a measure of relief to the people of China, and predicts that from among the graduates who will have left their names in the album, "In the future, somebody will have left their successful name here, and another one will have left their reputation elsewhere (in remote places or a foreign country).<sup>86</sup> Using idiomatic language that once again references the defeat of invading barbarians (Xiongnu), this preface goes on to envision a glorious future of service for the members of the school.

In the album for the sixth graduating class of the Northeast Military Academy, the authors of one of this album's four prefaces, while repeating the same themes as raised in earlier albums, also injects an additional air of exclusivity in stark contrast to those who have not received education at the school, stating that

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<sup>86</sup> [Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 905, *Di wu qi qian renzhi jiaoyuan yi lan biao* [List of active instructors of the fifth graduating term] (1925), 5-6.

the graduation album's price is equivalent to the genealogical record of sworn brothers and also just like a record-book of blood oaths. The album is invaluable, then how could its function not be listed in a preface? All my classmates, please encourage yourselves. Now it is the decisive time for our country, and this is exactly the time that men are needed. However, on the road to high official positions, there are many people; a great many of those who go on the path as ordinary soldiers are not well educated. The album will exist forever. I hope that in the future many great names who have gone on to achieve great merit and are respected for ensuring the security of the country may be found among those in this album. If this is the case, then the publishing of this album need not have been in vain. And those who are classmates with the people in this album will also feel honored. If there are other people who were not a member of this album and also were not the one who I talked about were able to achieve all the things I mentioned above, then, I hope our classmates will observe and surpass him.<sup>87</sup>

Although filled with positive emotions like pride and hope like the ones before it, this preface also contains an implicit fear. The creation of the album and all that it entails will have been for nothing, the preface suggests, if the school does not produce men who go on to win glory on the battlefield or in the arena of political leadership. Without question, the 1920s was in no way, shape, or form short of opportunities for soldiers to distinguish themselves; this era of fighting between warlord armies also afforded soldiers with just as many chances to fail.

In light of the political and military developments of the 1920s at both the regional and national levels, then, the prefaces can also be read as not articles of commemoration for an honor already received or job well done, but as commentaries on contemporary events and forecasts for the graduates and the schools' future, both near and far. In a preface for the 1928 graduation album, Zhang Xueliang, who assumed control of the Northeast Army at the death of his father in the same month as the publication of this album, directly references the setbacks suffered by the Northeast Army only a few years prior:

In 1925 the great army pursued the Communists (and lost the battle), hence the establishment of the cadet school in Beijing with the 900 cadets who are graduating today. While publishing the information of the cadets, the cadets came in. I told them:

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<sup>87</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 907, *Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang di liu qi jinian pu* [The graduation album of the sixth graduating class of the Three provinces army school].

Lament! Heaven is not tired of chaos. Heresies rise, the Way has been extinguished, thieves are prevalent, and China is being invaded. Ah, the people of our country suffer violent misfortunes! When in situations that are lik knives on the neck and fires entering homes, promoting virtue and reciting *The Book of Filial Piety* is insufficient to escape from them. This is the reason why those wishing to save the country must first train soldiers; to train soldiers, they need to create officers. This is the reason that the school was established. It was created in the Northeast provinces and promoted to Beijing. The changes to this world are great and require many talents. Right now everybody is aware of the calamity of the Communists, such as those most prominent in the Hengfou area of Hunan, and Guangdong's Haifeng and Lufeng Soviets. Outside of Hunan, who knows how many are growing secretly! However, the authorities are not working together on this urgent matter, instead, they were using various tricks to profit personally. Compared to the Communists, it is even worse! This is worth weeping over.

The end of your study is the beginning of your moving ahead. Moving forward needs to start from saving the country, and saving the country should starts from saving the people. People who were in poverty should be settled and relieved. People who are violent, cruel and immoral should be driven away. It is your responsibility to stop the killing after victory of the soldiers that remain and settle the good people after removing the cruel ones. You cadets are soldiers. The way of the military lies in constant changes and the way to practice being soldiers relies on emphasizing rules. My words are endless on this. Even though there is ritual, and discipline, among the five rituals, military rituals are the first. *The Book of Changes* says, troops rely on discipline. If every one of you can follow etiquette and discipline, it would not be difficult to even rule the country, not to mention govern the military. I hope every one of you use this (what I said) to encourage yourself.<sup>88</sup>

The affective language found in earlier albums still persists, but an even stronger sense of the necessity of ethics comes through. At the same time, the preface cannot but maintain an uneasy rhetorical distance between the lofty principles that it espouses and the historical reality it purports to describe. Zhang frankly acknowledges that the ordinary people suffer violence, but leaves the identity of the agents of that violence, namely, soldiers and the like, deliberately vague. Commonplace ethics are conjured up in shorthand with reference to the classics and then summarily dismissed in favor of the figure of not simply the soldier, but the well-trained officer. The men of the Northeast Military Academy, as exemplars of the officer class, are portrayed as the vanguard of a military power that will rescue the people from the ills that afflict them. A

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<sup>88</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, *Minguo ziliao* 908 (June 1928).

series of enemies are named, each one worse than the one before, but Zhang eschews the language of heroic sacrifice for good governance and what he considers to be ethical soldierly behavior. That Zhang found it necessary to forbid the killing of soldiers left over at the end of an engagement suggests that soldiers' behavior on the battlefield, for which officers were ultimately responsible in his view, may have been either less than satisfactory, or prevalent enough among armies in China in general that it was worth pointing out. The reminder of the bad, in this sense, serves as a prompt to be good.

In the third preface of the 1928 album, Yang Yuting, a decorated officer of the old guard and an administrator at the school, also refers to pressing ongoing concerns, one of which, left unspoken in the prefaces, may have been the rise of officers who came into conflict with the more established group of officers, their influence on the wane, that Yang represented. China's lack of military competitiveness when compared to foreign powers deeply troubles him. Also troubling in Yang's view is that the military are seen to be at fault, rather than fairly recognized as the solution to China's problems. He writes,

Western powers are having meetings to limit military budgets, however, no agreement has been reached; meanwhile, Britain and Japan are continuing to make as many ships as before. Today, people cursing warlords leads to military affairs. Cadets are expanding and arsenals are enlarging. Everybody is trying to expand their territory, why do this? Ancient people say, if the world is peaceful, pay attention to who is the prime minister, if the country is in chaos, pay attention to who is the general. Another saying goes: you can leave your troops not in use for a thousand days, however, you cannot afford to not be prepared for even a single day! Then when military affairs are settled, can we afford to neglect military preparedness?<sup>89</sup>

Interestingly, Yang finds it necessary to justify the mission of the school, to train officers who will act in an honorable and exemplary fashion and inspire the soldiers that they lead to act in the same way. A sense of frustration is evident. From his vantage point as one of the most prominent

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<sup>89</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, *Minguo ziliao* 908 (June 1928).

officers of the Northeast Army, Yang sees that conflict in China is only escalating, requiring further investment in the training of good soldiers, but despite their efforts and what they can do for the nation, soldiers are not held in high esteem. Like his fellow preface writers, Yang in his preface takes care to identify and clarify what the purpose of the albums is, commemorating the graduating cohort of the Northeast Military Academy with an eye toward the future, but the preface at the same remains bogged down in the present, and his defensive rhetoric undercuts the album's claims to hold the names and faces of men who will become the leaders of China. 1928, a time of confusion and struggle among the top brass of the Northeast forces after the death of its leader, and not a glorious future, is brought into focus.

Yang's preface highlights some of the contradictory pulls of the intentions within the albums. They stand as a record of the identities of individual officers, a reservoir of institutional memory, and as a declaration of collective goals and aspirations. But if the prefaces form a body of text that live as they are read, even given the instructions, warnings, and guidelines outlined by the prefaces, the prefaces lend themselves to a multiplicity of meaning. On the one hand, the prefaces display a confusion of genre and temporality – are they terse commentaries on contemporary military activities and the status of the military or are they celebratory texts? Are they about the past, the present, or the future? On the other hand, the prefaces can be seen as encompassing all these myriad features in an affective web of memories, experiences, and hopes. While claiming to be preserving eternal legacies and unfading memories, the prefaces also look far into the future, opening the albums to more than one possible purpose. The graduation albums contain the possibility of recording the contemporary concerns of the institution. Simultaneously, it exists as an eventual funerary text, a usage that the prefaces concede if not completely accept, with their emphasis on the unchanging and undying nature of the spiritual

body of the institution. The calls for the graduates to excel and ensure a place for themselves in national history also follow this tendency to try to weaken the specter of disappearance and death that shadows the entire enterprise of commemoration.

In the albums, there exists an unsolvable tension between the remembering of the graduating cohort in a prescribed manner that supports the commemorative goals of the institution, and the forgetting of who these men are, what their actions meant, and why they should be remembered at all. Paul Ricoeur, on his work on the phenomenology and uses of memory, argues that memory is contingent on whether the primary agent of the act of remembering is individual or collective.<sup>90</sup> The multiplicity of voices within the collective memory contained within the prefaces further complicates the functioning of memory in these graduation albums. This is key in the construction of the graduation albums of the Northeast Military Academy, and I would argue inherent in the creation of any type of commemorative project. The prefaces, as an additional tool for retrieving individual memories kept in the care of an institution, build into the albums the potential for the disruption of the memories associated with the images of individual graduates. Through elevated language, affective calls for maintaining unity, and frequent metaphors of familial bonds, the prefaces seek to create mutually reinforcing bonds between the school, its administrators and instructors, and its cadets as part of one collective body. The anticipation of trauma to this body further heightens the emotive aspects of the prefaces and in a sense, raises the stakes for both the remembering and forgetting of its constituent parts. Transforming the harshness of the experience of military training and life at the school – the challenges, hardships, inequities, and setbacks, the text of the prefaces beautifies these everyday elements and transforms them into a call for expending strength for

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<sup>90</sup> Paul Ricoeur, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).



both personal and national prestige and a caution to conserve the memory of such honors for the good of the reputation of the school and by extension, the Northeast Army. Through the photographs and texts within the albums, memory is indexed to the same set of visual conventions, priorities, and goals, and yet, by the very mechanisms of this commemorative effort, that memory is rendered into a object of many facets and temporalities.

## CHAPTER 3

### Martial Values and Everyday Discipline at the Northeast Military Academy

The administrative and training materials of the Northeast Military Academy, containing regulations, codes of dress and conduct, illustrative diagrams of military dress, records of merits and demerits, and ephemera, detail many of the everyday aspects of life at the school. This chapter examines such materials produced by and about the school and investigates the military culture that the school's administrators, instructors, and cadets attempted to create and sustain. It argues that the development and implementation of this process was influenced by physical culture, changing conceptions of the body in space and time, and the needs of the institutional body. The process was simultaneously contingent upon the concerns, decisions, and priorities of the individuals who made up this collective body. Looking at how martial values and goals in the school and the Northeast Army's program of training officers was conceived and received, the chapter examines both the potential for and limits of a regional military school's effort to produce modern military men.

While concentrated in one institutional site, the production and projection of martial values and organizational goals at the school was a process immersed in the trend of the times, the rising valuation of military power and the growing closeness of the worlds of the military and the civilian, albeit in ways that introduced more military values, aesthetic forms, and culture into the civilian realm and not the other way around. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the arena of politics in Manchuria,<sup>91</sup> and yet in society and culture, most explicitly in education, the

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<sup>91</sup> See Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000), which explores the complicated bridging of power between civilian and military authorities in northeast China in the early twentieth century, and how these historical relationships complicate contemporary Chinese views of what it means to resist in the name of the nation and what it means to

kinds of martial values espoused at military training centers could also be seen in the widespread adoption of military-style drills, exercises, and activities in non-military schools. As a place for the generation and incubation of martial values, and as part of a powerful military institution, the Northeast Military Academy was also a site of the reception of ideas at large about what martial values should and could be. The school and its members participated in a broader culture where military modes of conduct and behavior could be found in education and politics, and popularized in different cultural forms, including the literary and the visual. While focusing on the martial values, goals, and their meanings to the Northeast Military Academy, this chapter will also discuss how these values were a part of the shifting cultural landscape of Republican China.

The Northeast Military Academy sought to train officers who would be physically fit, psychologically astute, sound of judgment, and technically skilled. Most importantly, it aimed to produce officers who would be a source of pride and support for other officers. Furthermore, the school saw the officers that it trained as becoming leaders who would inspire the men serving under them by example. The instructors and administrators of the Northeast Military Academy, like other soldiers, militarists, and political commentators of the Republican years, recognized the need for competent, highly trained officers if they were to be successful on the battlefield and make gains in Republican-era politics. The disciplining and regulation of individual bodies was essential for fulfilling this goal, but this was a task that was not without its challenges. This chapter also takes a look at the development of training goals and instruction styles at the

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collaborate against the interests of that nation. Other additions to studies of collaboration in China is Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005) and Benjamin Geoffrey White, "A Question of Principle with Political Implications"—Investigating Collaboration in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, 1945–1946," in *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 3 (May 2010): 517-546. See also Law Wing Sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power: The Making of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Aberdeen; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), which takes a look at the close working relationships between groups that have often been seen as separate and antagonistic.

Northeast Military Academy. In doing so, the chapter will generate a portrait of the martial values the school tried to instill in its cadet body and furthermore preserve through its institutional body.

To investigate how its values and goals informed the military culture of the school, it is necessary to first try to pin down what military culture is. To do so, this chapter draws from various insights from scholars who have looked at war and military culture in China,<sup>92</sup> in particular Nicola De Cosmo, who defines the study of military culture as an "effort to understand war-society relations and see how civilian/intellectual/literary developments influenced military institutions"<sup>93</sup> to analyze and contextualize materials concerned with the day-to-day business of operating the Northeast Military Academy during the Republican period. In this view, the military as an institution does not exist in a vacuum, but is embedded within the culture at large, interacting with the civilian world of ideas, values, and fashions. This interaction is a two-way street, with concepts, priorities, and styles incubated in military contexts filtering into civilian spheres of cultural activity.

As simultaneous generators and receptors of military culture, elite officers like those trained at the Northeast Military Academy occupied a privileged, highly visible position. Although as cadets, they occupied a position of less power and authority than the administrators and instructors in charge of training them, these men were certainly not blank slates to be molded

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<sup>92</sup> Led by the publication of the conference volume *Chinese Ways in Warfare* edited by Edward L. Dreyer, Frank Algerton Kierman, and John King Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974.), important works exploring the significance of military institutions in this vein have been Hans van de Ven, *Warfare in Chinese History* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000), Peter Lorge, *Warfare in China to 1600* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2005), Kenneth Swope, *Warfare in China since 1600* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2005), David A. Graff and Robin Higham, eds., *A Military History of China* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), and the work of Nicola Di Cosmo, all of which show a concern with looking closely at the military itself for internal dynamics within its institutions, forms of organization, and cultures, rather than only looking at the ways in which the military and civilians realms of activity have affected each other.

<sup>93</sup> Nicola Di Cosmo, ed., *Military Culture in Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

into whatever shape their higher-ups saw fit. Culture is simultaneously created by and constrains the individuals practicing it; the military culture of the Northeast Military Academy can be seen as a set of strategies that are transmitted via an institution that are made up of "choices, habits, skills, [and] styles" cultivated in military contexts,<sup>94</sup> whether that is in the formal confines of military academy halls or the hierarchy of ranks, or the informal exchange of information and interpersonal ties that grow between members of a military institution. Upon a closer look, the fabric of the military culture and martial values at the Northeast Military Academy reveal seams that offer insights into the lives of the men at the school and their engagement with this culture.

The values that the Northeast Military Academy sought to instill in its members were to be developed internally for the cultivation of soldiers' own moral behavior and projected outward to serve as an example to other soldiers. In less lofty terms, this was to first take place within and upon the bodies of the cadets themselves, woven into their daily habit, and visually displayed in the halls and the grounds of the school itself. The outward visual projection of the discipline and martial character being shaped by the Northeast Military Academy, this chapter argues, was an important component of the military culture of the school. One of the most direct, distinctive, and visible ways this was accomplished was through the wearing and display of uniforms. The modern Western-style military uniform with its minutiae of displays of rank was adopted by many Chinese militarists and even civilian administrators during the late Qing and the Republican period, and the Northeast Army was typical in its use of military insignias and regalia during this time.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Wayne E. Lee, "Introduction," in Lee, ed., *Warfare and Culture in World History* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>95</sup> No. 2 Historical Archives, *Minguo junfu tuzhi* [Republican Military Uniforms] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe 2003), 21-29.

For cadets in the research class at the school, their collar insignia would be three red triangles on a horizontally striped background and for cavalry cadets, one yellow triangle on a background with one stripe running horizontally through it, and military engineering cadets wore a collar insignia of two white triangles on a striped background. In all cases, the insignia was worn on the left collar.<sup>96</sup> With these kinds of insignia, administrators, instructors, and cadets at the school would learn to instantly recognize which class and division a cadet would be in – learning this visual language of identification was an important component in learning to be a modern soldier. Simple recognition was not the goal, but intimate understanding of the system of classification and hierarchy that structured the military. Like classifying and hierarchical systems of military dress of pre-Republican China, Republican military dress conveyed sameness along with difference. Uniforms represented unity, but also carried with them the means with which to telegraph important distinctions in affiliation, rank, and specialization. Differences in rank, in particular, inflected the relationships of hierarchy and power among the men at the school. These differences could also manifest in areas such as different pay grades, for example, with instructors with certain specialties such as mapmaking and geography receiving higher pay than instructors of military science.<sup>97</sup> The concern with identification and recognition extended beyond the organizational structure of the Northeast Army itself, as suggested by training documents produced for the school that detailed the flags of countries and national militaries.<sup>98</sup> Closely observant of designs, proportions, colors, and details, such materials must have served a practical purpose, to allow cadets to correctly identify who or what they might encounter in the course of their service.

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<sup>96</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC10 2134 000363-000364, *Sheding Dongbei jiangwutang ji ge xiaoban lingzhang fuhao tuyang* [Formulation for the collar insignia design for each school class] (February 16, 1931).

<sup>97</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC10 2144 32538.

<sup>98</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC10 33351 000700-000740.

It was not only the military that had an interest in such sartorial details. Many of those outside the military shared an interest in military or military-style attire during the Republican period, especially in the details of insignia, visually diagrammed and explicated for readers in law journals and their meanings explored in fiction.<sup>99</sup> This interest included not only Chinese uniforms but uniforms of various militaries from around the world, served by writings that sought to inform, surveying the variety and how China's uniforms measured up in comparison.<sup>100</sup> Military styles deeply influenced civilian modes of attire in the late Qing and Republican period, creating a masculinizing effect.<sup>101</sup> The appreciation of uniforms was not only functional or aesthetic. Rather, attention to military uniforms also touched upon questions of organizational, regional, and national strength and prestige. Sharply dressed soldiers made regular rounds of China's popular media in photographic images that were reproduced in the pages of magazines and newspapers. The images could serve as propaganda and publicity, as in an image of Zhang Xueliang, his wife at his side, as he salutes the graduating cadets at a Northeast Military Academy graduation ceremony.<sup>102</sup> In marked contrast to earlier depictions of military uniforms that painted the Qing imperial military uniform as superior over western-style uniforms,<sup>103</sup> photographic images of soldiers in modern uniform presented an image of the modern soldier to Republican readers, instantly recognizable by the crisp, tailored lines of his western-style uniform. Conversely, in contrast to the image of the sharply dressed soldier in modern uniform,

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<sup>99</sup> *Minguo falü wenxian shiliao huibian* [Republican law and literature] 6: 2571-2629; Hong Zuqing, "Junfu" [Uniform], in *Minguo ribao* [Daily Republic] 12, no. 2 (1921): 4.

<sup>100</sup> For example, see Lang Pu, "Shijie ge guo zhi junfu" [Military uniforms from around the world], in *Dongfang zazhi* [Far Eastern Miscellany] 27, no. 3 (1930): 101-103.

<sup>101</sup> Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>102</sup> Dongbei xinwen she, "Shishi shiling: Dongbei lujun jiangwutang juxing biye li Zhang Xueliang ji furen qin zhi xunhua ji gei jiang qingxing" [Current events in brief: Zhang Xueliang and Madame Zhang personally attending and giving out honors at the graduation ceremony of the Northeast Military Academy] in *Liang you* [Good friend] 48, no. 12 (1930): 11.

<sup>103</sup> "Junfu guibai" [Kowtowing uniforms], in *Beijing qianshuo manbao* [Illustrated elementary introduction to Beijing] no. 891: 1.

ill-fitting uniforms, and implicitly, ill-fitting military identities, could also be a cause for visual humor or mockery, as in a cartoon showing two generic soldiers, one large, one small, the tall soldier trying to button up a shirt that is too small for him while the short soldier gazes with dismay at shirtsleeves that overflow his arms.<sup>104</sup> It was not sufficient that a uniform fit the soldier, but necessary that the soldier fit the uniform in which he was outfitted, and this was the task that the Northeast Military Academy set out to accomplish with mixed results.

Many of the men, especially in the early years of the school, were already serving in the Northeast Army, and were not fresh recruits or new soldiers. They were expected to combine practical with technical skills and improve upon their battle-readiness, and it was expected that the cadets continue their service with the Northeast Army after graduation. Select graduates returned to the school in order to teach, such as Deng Yuzhuo, a member of the eighth graduating class (November 1928)<sup>105</sup> of the Northeast Military Academy who was ordered along with fourteen others to return to the school to serve in February 5, 1931, and Jie Ruchuan, a graduate of the twenty-first graduating class (entering the school in 1907 and graduating in 1909) of the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in Tokyo (*Ri[ben lujun] shiguan xuexiao* [i.e. the Rikugun shikan gakko]) who was joined by 21 others to be posted to the school on February 23 of the same year.<sup>106</sup>

Like officers and graduates who returned to the school, some cadets were acquainted with military life prior to beginning their studies in the Northeast Military Academy. In contrast to simply serving as officers and soldiers in the Northeast Army, their time at the school combined both physical drills and exercises with academic study, with variations in the program of study

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<sup>104</sup> "Faxia lai de junfu" [Hand-me-down uniforms], in *Xin sheng* [New voice] 9, no. 89 (1930): 76.

<sup>105</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 909.

<sup>106</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "Key extracts and summaries of orders in February," *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy business report), 1931.



depending on whether the cadet was in a special force, higher-level research group. In addition to general training, more specialized programs were available depending on whether the cadet was in the infantry, artillery, cavalry, or in military engineering. All the cadets' lives at the school were highly regimented, with everything from the times they ate, slept, and went to training or classes regulated by rules and schedules. When they entered the school, cadets were issued a handbook of the rules and regulations that would structure their time at the school, class schedules, documents for displaying the cadet's name and information.<sup>107</sup> They would wear the same uniforms, have their hair cut in the same way, become familiar with the rules of the school and the army. As cadets, they would eat, sleep, take classes and train in a manner ascribed to them, with little say in the matter and with the expectation that they would obey, mindful of the hierarchy of military ranks and the importance of being on time, the ability to absorb and utilize new information and improve upon the old, and above all, obedience to the rules and to superiors.

Most of the cadets followed the rules and obeyed instructions in their pursuit of higher military education. For some others, the rigid structure of daily activity provided ample space for various kinds of conflicts, ones which illustrate the values of the institution and the expectations of instructors, some of whom voiced their dissatisfaction with the level of learning and military fitness displayed by the cadets, and the need for improvement.<sup>108</sup> Records of merits and demerits at the school show an overarching concern with preserving hierarchy and the importance of regulating the time of the cadets. The conflicts and even violence that were generated when top-down expectations at the school were not met by the cadets also suggest a concern with discouraging certain kinds of behavior while promoting others.

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<sup>107</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC10 2134 000370-000372, *Dongbei jiangwutang xueyuansheng shoubu shiyang tu* [Northeast Military Academy handbook style sheet].

<sup>108</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, *Minguo ziliao* 918 (May), 62-63.

As a part of this effort, the school actively worked to eliminate any disorderliness of the bodies and comportment of the cadets. The school worked to monitor the cadets in all aspects of their lives while they were at the school, shaping their patterns of basic biological functions and interpersonal interactions. When the cadets did not conform, whether willfully, by accident, or by inattention and neglect, representatives of the authority of the school, in the person of instructors and superior officers, forcefully intervened, demonstrating the power the institution of the school and the military had over the lives of individual cadets. The cadets, however, were not simply passive recipients of top-down direction, praise, censure, or punishment. The actions that incurred these reprimands, in particular those that telegraph the existence of power struggles and interpersonal conflicts, indicate that cadets were active participants in the culture being built at the Northeast Military Academy, albeit ones in a position of disadvantage in terms of the hierarchy of military organization. As members of the school, elites of Northeast Army, and current or future officers who would be put in charge of conscripted or enlisted troops, or return to serve in a teaching capacity later, the cadets had the potential to maintain or even change that culture.

Regulating the cadets' behavior was certainly one of the items on the agenda of the Northeast Military Academy. Repeated notices to strictly enforce and punish infractions involving food and drugs among cadets were sent out. Infractions such as failing to have the proper attire or equipment was also noted and punished.<sup>109</sup> Punishments ranged from light detention (*qingjinbi*), standing at attention for a length, or being hit with a stick, the number of blows determined by the severity of the infraction. In the records of the Northeast Military Academy, the reasons or motivations behind the actions leading up to or comprising the infraction are not enumerated, such as in the case of a cadet burning his handbook, which

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<sup>109</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (March).

resulted in light detention for a week. Whether the burning of the book was by accident or intention, the record does not say. Although they generally follow a pattern corresponding to the type of infraction, at times, the reprimands and punishments appear somewhat arbitrary. Exceeding the limit for the number of times a cadet could request leave resulted in 10 blows, but another cadet with the same infraction received 20, suggesting that the punishment may have been dependent on additional factors, or even perhaps left up to the discretion of individual instructors. If the judgment of instructors or commanding officers came into play in the assigning of punishments, this would have required additional heedfulness on the cadets' part, with individual personalities, idiosyncrasies, and even biases of higher-ups influencing the penalties given.

Such demerits and infractions recorded by the authorities at the school cover a wide range of activities, from the seemingly innocuous to the potentially serious. Tardiness of various kinds was noted often, the most common type being cadets returning late from an official break, with times ranging from 3 and 5 up to 30 minutes. In some cases, tardiness was punished with 5 blows. Also noted in the official record were cases where cadets were late variously to lectures, exercises, and assemblies. For the life of cadets at the school, adhering to a given schedule and acting in a punctual manner seems to have been a basic expectation. A growing emphasis on a linear view of time in service of legitimizing political action has been observed in the writings of Republican intellectuals,<sup>110</sup> and being able to precisely measure time became increasingly important to elites in Chinese metropolises like the newly rising city of Nantong. The consequences of failing to adhere to the new standard of clock time for civilians could also be

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<sup>110</sup> Luke S. K. Kwong, "The Rise of the Linear Perspective of History and Time in Late Qing China, c.1860-1911," in *Past & Present*, no. 173 (November 2001): 162.

harsh, with tardiness being potentially grounds for loss of wages or dismissal from one's job.<sup>111</sup>

In the military setting, the training of cadets, from the view of the school, had to be precise – the training was not only a matter of shaping individual bodies and ingraining them with physical attributes, but also a matter of instilling them with a sense of correct and incorrect ways of gauging time.

Being late was cause for harsh punishments, but punishments for absenteeism were also harsh. Not being present at all for roll call caused one cadet to be punished with 2 blows. As with the case with tardiness, the cadets were expected to be present and in accordance with a temporal regime imposed from the outside. Moreover, the time of the cadets itself was to be regimented and subdivided into precise components for sleeping, eating, training, being in class, and deviations from the order imposed by the school were to be rectified.<sup>112</sup> Even a single cadet out of line would disrupt the uniformity and synchronicity that the school attempted to establish in the lives of the cadets. This standardized time would be enforced by the school authorities, sometimes by the use of physical coercion and violent force.

The cadets were expected to pay close attention to military regulations and protocols, but also to regulate their own habit and behaviors. Basic functions such as sleeping and eating also caused friction between instructors and cadets. Issues related to food seem to have caused some cadets grief, as one discovered when he was punished with 5 blows for leaving food behind

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<sup>111</sup> Qin Shao, "Space, Time, and Politics in Early Twentieth Century Nantong," in *Modern China* 23, no. 1 (January 1997): 115-116.

<sup>112</sup> Since the publication of the influential work by David S. Landes, *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983) a great deal of research and analysis has been conducted into the importance of the introduction of clock time and increasingly precise measurements of time to human societies. While the spatial transformation of urban China has been discussed by numerous scholars, relatively little has been written on temporality and temporal transformation in the field of modern Chinese history, while popular works discussing China tend to frame the issue as Europe's adoption of clock time and China's lack thereof. A key work looking at the impact of clock time in an institutional setting in urban Republican China is Wen-hsin Yeh, "Corporate Space, Communal Time: Everyday Life in Shanghai's Bank of China," in *American Historical Review* 100, no. 1 (February 1995): 97-122.

(*paofan*) during mealtime. In an opposite situation, another cadet was reprimanded for secretly sneaking into the mess hall, presumably in search of something to eat. In one case, a cadet was punished for falsely claiming a higher rank to try to request higher pay and a larger share of rations—this also suggests that those with a higher rank in the school may have enjoyed greater material privileges than those of a lower rank. At the Northeast Military Academy, food, a basic human necessity, occupied a position of great interest and conflict for some of the cadets and the instructors who enforced school rules regarding it.

A common occurrence among the demerits recorded by the school, perhaps due to physical fatigue from training, studying, or a combination of both, falling asleep during mealtime at the mess hall was cause for punishment, as was falling asleep during lectures or class. In most cases, cadets caught sleeping outside of designated times were forced to stand at attention (*lizheng*) for unspecified or specified amounts of time, such as for the entire remainder of the class period.<sup>113</sup> Whether punishment served as a deterrent to behavior disapproved of by the school cannot be known, but punishment as a real consequence for not adhering to expectations would have been clear to the cadets. Some, if not all, of the reprimands would have been public, serving as a reminder to the other cadets to be vigilant in checking their own behavior. Failure to conform to expectations would result in physical discomfort or pain, as well as public indignity or humiliation.

Inattention to one's uniform, immediate environs, or possessions could also be a cause for punishment. A cadet whose uniform was not in order<sup>114</sup> was reprimanded, and other cases included disorderly lining up at roll calls or during drills, or failing to fall in line properly, instances of which would have been determined by the instructor at his discretion. A cadet with

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<sup>113</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (March); 918 (May).

<sup>114</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (May).

his uniform not in order was assigned two days of hard labor (*kuyi*), which, on the surface, is a sustained activity requiring a more than usual effort from the individual rather than punishments like being hit, which must be passively borne. On the other hand, any pain or discomfort from being hit may function as a lingering reminder of punishment, its causes, and its agents. Corporal punishment and labor as a method of transforming individual bodies were used to discipline bodies in late imperial and Republican China, and the late Qing the Republican period was a time when ideas about crime, punishment, culpability and rehabilitation in China were being influenced in multiple ways and undergoing a transformation of its own, as scholars have shown.<sup>115</sup> It was also a time of changing ideas about how to manage society, with a level of attention paid on regulating individual bodies that was greater than ever before. Individuals, more than any other social entity, were seen by authorities as requiring control and the most significant means by which the rest of society could be made to function properly. Ironically, at the Northeast Military Academy, the regulation of individual bodies using punishments was in the service of creating an officer corps that would be distinguished across the board by their collective adherence to rules, dependability in service, and obedience to superiors.

A cadet whose books were not taken care of or arranged per regulations was assigned one day of hard labor. His punishment suggests that books were valued, most obviously because as a valued object, they were the vehicle for delivering important information to the learner. At the same time that the books were a symbol of the learning being carried out at the school, it is the fact that they were not treated with the proper respect for the rules of the school that the cadet was punished. Any cadet who was found to be violating this order would be an invitation for a reprimand from on high. One cadet whose clothes rack was found to be a mess was forbidden

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<sup>115</sup> See Frank Dikötter, *Crime, Punishment and the Prison in Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), and for a comprehensive overview of the late Qing to the twentieth century, see Klaus Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China: A History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

from leaving the barracks for a week. What the object was mattered, as suggested by the higher level of punishment for the books left carelessly about, but perhaps more important was the state in which the objects existed within. From the school's perspective, disorganized or neglected objects were symptomatic of the disorder that it was attempting to eliminate in its cadets by regulating every aspect of their lives and making them conform to its standards. The various material objects in the cadets' possession were not truly their own, but a part of the institution which had to be respected. A group of cadets who were found secretively moving their luggage were forbidden from leaving the barracks for 1 week. Any unauthorized movement of individual cadets or their belongings were violations of military discipline and worthy of reprimand.

Interpersonal conflicts related to the giving of commands also vexed instructors and troubled the cadets who did not wish to comply with the orders given to them. One cadet was reprimanded for not following the orders of the instructor during equestrian exercises. In many cases, cadets was noted down for not performing routinely assigned tasks in an orderly manner, with some being forbidden from leaving the barracks for two weeks at a time. Not completing assigned duties was also seen as a problem, as was the neglecting of assigned duties. One cadet, after being found sleeping in the dorms during class time, was assigned three days of hard labor—in his case, the severity of the punishment appears to have been connected with the perceived dereliction of his duties more than the issue of sleeping outside of a designated time, as cadets who fell asleep during lectures did not receive as harsh of a punishment. Other cadets were punished for passive cases of insubordination, such as being deliberately stubborn or being slow to follow orders. Lying to or trying to deceive (*qipian*) a senior officer caused a cadet to be punished with 3 blows, but insulting the squad leader appears to have been treated much more seriously with the offending cadet receiving 10 blows. While the school imposed a rigid

hierarchical system on the cadets, and managed their time with an eye on punctuality, a subjective element still existed in the evaluation of individual cadets.

Indeed, rules and regulations may serve as a guide, but perception and individual judgment plays a significant role in determining what is insubordination. Maintaining discipline at the Northeast Military Academy was not a precise science. Some cadets were punished for infractions that appear vague, but were nevertheless seen as being of a disruptive nature to the order being constructed at the school. These include neglecting protocol and violating military discipline (*weifan junji*), a broad enough category to encompass any number of perceived procedural, social, or behavioral transgressions against military order. Although the precise rules that they were breaking were not recorded, there were numerous cases of cadets failing to observe regulations (*bushou guiding*), resulting in 2 blows in each case.

Quarreling with the instructors (*koujue*) was heavily frowned upon, and not following regulations and quibbling about position during exercises and drills was cause for a cadet to be made to stand at attention. Punishments for fighting varied. For engaging in a fight for personal reasons (*sidou*), two cadets were punished with 5 blows of the rod for the incident. Their names were cited for the same offense on the same day, indicating that they fought each other and received the same punishment. In a separate incident, two other cadets were also punished with 5 blows for fighting with each other. The cadets were not only expected to respect authority, but also to respect the discipline being imposed from above, which included refraining from engaging in personal grudges. The maintenance of discipline covered even seemingly trivial matters – a certain level of decorum had to be observed by the cadets, causing those caught making noise and engaging in unruly behavior in the dormitories to be punished by 3 blows,<sup>116</sup> while others caught joking and playing around in the drill/exercise grounds received 5 blows

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<sup>116</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (May).



each.<sup>117</sup> The entrance and use of this space, dedicated to the physical training of the cadets, required matching behavior.<sup>118</sup> Records of the Northeast Military Academy also contain admonitions for cadets not to be rowdy (*renao*) as well as mentions of specific infractions. Some cadets were marked for good behavior, but more were marked for behavior perceived as unfitting of the institution. Examples include not wearing uniforms or insignia correctly, failing inspections, and incorrectly reporting the name of the officer on duty.

The learning of military etiquette, sometimes enforced by physical coercion and violence, encompassed not only cadets' physical appearance and bearing, but also their mental attitudes and relationship to their surroundings. Shaping the cadets in body, mind, and soul into modern soldiers was one of the priorities of the Northeast Military Academy, and that entailed preciseness in all respects—of the regulation of attire, behavior, social interaction, and even time and space. The movement of cadets through time and space had to be controlled, and violations of rules governing where and when cadets could and could not go punished harshly, as one cadet found out when he received 10 blows for leaving the school grounds without authorization.<sup>119</sup> Unregulated movement of cadets may have been a problem for the school authorities, as suggested by an order for all students to require special gate passes to go out of school.<sup>120</sup> Both time and space were strictly regulated by the Northeast Military Academy, which also produced several types of bureaucratic documents for officers who wished to request leave or time off, the structure of each document depending on the amount of time that was being requested as well as by reason for the request.<sup>121</sup> A recurring feature throughout the operation of the school, the

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<sup>117</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (March).

<sup>118</sup> For a case study of how new spaces spurred the shaping of new standards of behavior during the Republican period, see Zhiwei Xiao, "Movie House Etiquette Reform in Early-Twentieth-Century China," in *Modern China* 32, no. 4 (October 2006): 513-536.

<sup>119</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (March).

<sup>120</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (February).

<sup>121</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (February).

bureaucratic ordering of members' movements through time and space promised that, under ideal conditions, the school could know and predict the exact position of each cadet and officer without an additional expenditure of energy. In practice, the cadets had to be strictly controlled, sometimes with resort to officially sanctioned violence.

The school highlighted certain habits as being worthy of particular attention. Smoking was a habit that seems to have aggravated the school's authorities. Punishments could vary, as one with cadet who was forbidden from leaving the barracks for one week for smoking, whereas another cadet caught smoking was given 2 weeks. Another cadet who had been smoking in the mess hall was punished with 2 days of hard labor. Other cadets received 5 and 10 blows for the offense of smoking. As will be explored in more detail in chapter 4, the act of smoking was seen as a violation of military discipline, but time and place mattered in this case as well. The numerous instances of cadets being reprimanded or punished for this infraction suggest that the problem, at least from the school's point of view, was not isolated. As will be discussed later, smoking in particular constituted a complicated issue for the authorities of the Northeast Military Academy, an undesirable habit from their view that nonetheless exerted a strong pull on both civilians and people in the military during the Republican period.

Most of the infractions recorded by the Northeast Military Academy were these types of violations of discipline, but in one unique case, a cadet was dismissed from the school and his rank removed (*chechai*) for leaving the barracks without permission for a variety of unspecified activities referred to as habits, or less complementarily, addictions (*shihao*) – perhaps including habits that were even less savory than smoking.<sup>122</sup> In his case, both the violation of the disciplinary and physical boundaries of the school along with his unchecked engagement with activities not sanctioned by the school's authorities may have contributed to his dismissal from

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<sup>122</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (March).

service. The regulation of the space of the school was also important to the authorities, as can be seen in a lieutenant being refused entry to the school because of an unspecified unlawful act that he had committed.<sup>123</sup> The physical boundaries of the school, like the physical form of the individual cadet, had to be delineated, defined, and secured against outside intrusion, lest it be exposed to disorder. Related to the regulation of space was the regulation of time, as the emphasis on punctuality and preciseness suggests.

Maintaining proper decorum and maintaining hygiene also appears to have been a concern of the school, as seen in the marking down of a cadet who was sentenced to 3 blows for arbitrarily urinating or defecating outside of designated latrines.<sup>124</sup> The monitoring of intimate bodily functions was part and parcel of the task of regulating and shaping cadets' bodies, behaviors, and attitudes. Military medical practitioners and policymakers of the Republican period, like their civilian counterparts, had an uphill battle when it came to tackling illnesses,<sup>125</sup> but just as big of a challenge was the issue of the fitness of the soldiers. Factors such as illness further hampered the school's pursuit of building strong bodies for the military and the nation. Those recorded officially by the school include numerous instances of respiratory disease (*huxikubing*), unspecified types of debilitating disease (weakness) (*quanshenbing*), contagious disease (*chuanranbing*), and eye disease (*yanbing*).<sup>126</sup>

While the list of infractions and unwanted behaviors is long, some behaviors, habits, and activities were recognized as being conducive to the educational and disciplinary mission of the Northeast Military Academy. A comparatively shorter list of merits list several cadets who were

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<sup>123</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (March), 50.

<sup>124</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (March).

<sup>125</sup> For a brief overview of the development of military medicine in China concentrating on the late 1920s and the 1930s, see John R. Watt, "Part I: Constructing a Modern Military Healthcare System: Army Medical Services up to 1937," in *Saving Lives in Wartime China: How Medical Reformers Built Modern Healthcare Systems Amid War and Epidemics, 1928-1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 116-117. The challenge of creating bodies fit for modern military service was not only restricted to China, as Sabine Früstück has shown for the case of the army in imperial Japan.

<sup>126</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (February).

commended for enthusiastically performing their assigned duties, in contrast to several whose movements were restricted for five days for being "sluggish" or slacking off (*xiedai*) at their tasks. Other cadets were commended for being alert and quick of movement when gathering for assembly, while others were praised for performing well in tests and being prepared for lectures.<sup>127</sup> Excelling at one's studies was valued and recognized, and several groups among the Northeast Military Academy cadets received additional training and pursued a more intense program of study, such as cadets engaged in higher level research and practice of military arts. They studied subjects like international law, combat arts (*zhanshu*) naval science, Japanese and Russian military history, European military history, field training, chemistry, and horsemanship.<sup>128</sup>

Along with physical and military training, some cadets, such as those who were receiving training to become military police, received more specialized instruction, participated in events and activities that took them outside of the school,<sup>129</sup> and were tested in a number of academic areas. These included articles of political and revolutionary thought like the Three Principles of the People developed by Sun Yat-sen and advocated for national self-determination and democracy for China. For graduation, the cadets were tested and ranked on a wide variety of topics like military science, inspection methods (*jun jiancha xue*), criminal law, international criminal justice studies (*guoji jingcha xue*), foreign language (Japanese and Russian, with more cadets testing in Japanese<sup>130</sup>), martial law (*jiuji fa*), investigative methods (*zhentan xue*), code violations (*weijingfafa*), mapmaking (*cetu xue*), and military organization (*junzhi*). In the area of

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<sup>127</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (May).

<sup>128</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (February).

<sup>129</sup> "Dongbei jiangwutang gaodeng junxue yanjiu ban canguan haijun zhilüe" [Report on the Northeast Military Academy's higher research team's Navy visit], in *Hai shi* [Naval affairs] 3, no. 2: 26.

<sup>130</sup> Zhang Meiping, ed., *Wan Qing waiyu jiaoxue yanjiu* [Studies on foreign language education in the late Qing] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011).

practical skills, the cadets were tested on calisthenics, fencing, horsemanship, martial arts, grappling (*guanjiao*), and techniques for arresting and restraining people (*busheng*).<sup>131</sup>

However, not all cadets performed equally well—in fact, the graduation exams of the cadets training to become military police show a wide gap between the scores of cadets ranked at the top, who scored in the top twentieth percentile, and the bottom, who scored in the fiftieth percentile and lower. There appears to have been a wide range of different ability levels in the 184 graduating cadets when it came to academic studies, but in terms of physical ability, the difference between the top performing military police cadets and the lower performing cadets appear to have been narrower, with lower performing cadets scoring in the seventieth percentile range for the class.<sup>132</sup> Language ability was also a feature worthy of note, as in the exam record of the 1931 graduating class where high test scores in foreign language contributed to several cadets' high overall ranking.<sup>133</sup> Recording the test scores of cadets upon their exit from the school is suggestive of an interest in tracking the academic performance of cadets over time, and as declared in the prefaces of the graduation albums, the men of the Northeast Military Academy took pride in being men of learning. The school took care to clarify what constituted the correct kind of learning, asserting that "All people do wrong, just as they are able to speak, and only those who study can not do wrong. Those who study and who do wrong are those not having gained enlightenment through learning."<sup>134</sup> In other words, there is a good kind of learning that leads the learner away from negative paths and be moral, and a bad kind of learning that, while termed learning on the surface, that does not lead to the practice of being good. Implicit in this

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<sup>131</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 917, *Dongbei jiangwutang fushe xianbing jiaolianchu buchongban di shiyi qi xuebing biye kaoshi chengji biao* [Northeast Military Academy Police Academy Supplemental Class Graduation Exam Records] (July 3, 1931).

<sup>132</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 917, *Dongbei jiangwutang fushe xianbing jiaolianchu buchongban di shiyi qi xuebing biye kaoshi chengji biao* [Northeast Military Academy Police Academy Supplemental Class Graduation Exam Records] (July 3, 1931).

<sup>133</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao, *Dongsansheng xianbing xuetang*.

<sup>134</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, Minguo ziliao 918 (March), 4.

message is the idea that the kind of education being provided at the school is the former, the kind that will steer cadets toward service to the army and the country. The cadets who fail to perform in a morally praiseworthy manner despite having learned, are those who have not achieved a deeper understanding of the purpose of education, to create moral individuals.

By situating themselves among the educated and staking out a morally positive position for the education being offered at the school, the men of the Northeast Military Academy positioned themselves as elites vis-à-vis not only their military achievements, but also their educational background. Because the graduates were soldiers who trained their bodies and studied martial values and military knowledge, it may be that civilian elites with a grounding in classical Confucian education and engaged in a course of study for success in the old exam system would have found their claim preposterous. And yet, in the Republican period, these men's claim to educated elite status would have been in line with the increasing value put on technical knowledge and Western learning. The men of the Northeast Military Academy engaged in a culture of calling upon those engaged in higher education to lead the country that was so pervasive during the late Qing and Republican periods.

Calls for the young and the capable to lead by example and save the nation could be found in other corners of northeast China patronized by Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Xueliang, such as in the publications of Northeastern University (Dongbei Daxue). In non-military venues such as the pages of university publications, students penned essays that enumerated the responsibilities of those in higher education. Not only would they ensure China's future, but also act as a bridge between China's past and its present. For one student, when "Looking far and wide from the present to the past and looking east to west from China to foreign countries," it seemed to him that "people have always focused their hopes upon the bodies of the youth." With

this in mind, he writes that "One can well imagine the importance of the capacity of the youth and the undertakings borne by the shoulders of the youth."<sup>135</sup> Stressing the continuity of the present with the venerable past, the student emphasizes the can-do spirit and ability of young people and their importance to the Chinese nation, going so far as to say that without them, society and culture have no hope for change. Raising the question of specifically the responsibility or duty of the youth of northeast China, he identifies the myriad factors that have put the country in a state of disorder, likening the youth as a lone boat adrift in a chaotic sea of trouble.<sup>136</sup> The belief and investment in the potential of youth and education was not limited to higher education or merely rhetorical. As indicated by the participation of rural stakeholders, state-led school building and education programs of the late Qing and Republican periods reached many corners of the country and would not have been successful to such an extent without considerable commitment, cost, and effort on the part of local elites and their communities.<sup>137</sup> The men of the Northeast Military Academy counted themselves young and the educated, a group that was popularly imagined as the pivot upon which the nation's fate rested.

However, though the values of the school, as espoused in commemorative cultural productions such as its graduation albums, were those of learned enlightenment, fraternity, equality, and shared sacrifice, during the course of their training the cadets at the school were confronted with the behavioral and social demands of military hierarchy, an unequal distribution

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<sup>135</sup> Liu Dongbo, "Jinhou Dongbei qingnian zhi zeren (Zhengwen) [The duty of the youth of the Northeast from now on {Solicited article}], in *Dongbei daxue zhoukan* [Northeast University Weekly], no. 62 (1929).

<sup>136</sup> Interestingly, although the school, founded in 1923, grew under the patronage of Zhang Xueliang in the late 1920s, often found in the pages of the *Northeast University Weekly* is an identification of military competition and warlords as one of the causes of China's unrest.

<sup>137</sup> See Elizabeth VanderVen, "Village-State Cooperation: Modern Community Schools and Their Funding, Haicheng County, Fengtian, 1905-1931," in *Modern China* 31, no. 2 (April 2005): 204-235. See also documents related to the Manchuria Eight Banners Elementary School, Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC10 23205, and Wang Fenglei, "Fengtian Baqi man meng wen zhongxuetang chutan" [A first look at the Manchu and Mongolian Eight Banners Middle Schools in Fengtian], in *Nei Menggu shifan daxue xuebao* [Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University] 39, no. 1 (January 2010): 119-125.

of power, and interpersonal conflicts. The gap between stated ideals and apparent reality in the halls and training grounds of the Northeast Military Academy is reminiscent of the clashes going on in the political realm in Republican China, where as David Strand has pointed out, longstanding divisions and hierarchies clashed with powerful calls for equal representation and appeals to a unified nation where all citizens mattered no matter what their age, gender, or social class.<sup>138</sup> When failing to fulfill the demands of military discipline, the cadets of the Northeast Military Academy could find themselves on the receiving end of violence, but in their role as officers, could also later occupy positions from which to mete out violence as they saw fit. As both potential subjects and objects of violence, the cadets were part of a complex institutional project to instill within them the virtue of obedience to martial order. For the Northeast Military Academy and its administrators and instructors, the attempt to mold the men entering the school into modern military men was met by the challenge of some the very men they were trying to shape, who contravened the structure being imposed upon them in favor of their own impulses, priorities, and motivations.

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<sup>138</sup> David Strand, *An Unfinished Republic: Leading by Word and Deed in Modern China* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2011), 1-2.



## CHAPTER 4

### Consumption and Production of Goods and Men

The Northeast Military Academy was much more than a place to train officers; it was an institution with many attendant parts that was a consumer of goods such as tea, lamp oil, and paper, as well as services, employing carpenters and repairmen to keep the school in shape. It was a complex bureaucratic organism, integrated into the command structure of the Northeast Army at the same time that it ran procedures and executed functions unique to its own educational needs. As conceived by the administrators and the students and instructors, the men at the school made up the physical and spiritual core of the institution. However, as this chapter will show, the day-to-day lifeblood of the institution was composed of heterogeneous stuff. The movement and utilization of these objects have left traces in the budgetary and financial inventories of the Northeast Military Academy. The footprints that some these materials left behind can be discerned outright; others, more shadowy substances, have left a fainter impression in the school's documentary strata. This chapter will explore some of these traces within the context of the Northeast Military Academy and also into the businesses and industries of Manchuria. In doing so, this chapter will show that while certainly elevated in comparison to the consumption of ordinary Chinese, and in some contemporary observers' eyes, downright profligate, the level of consumption of these men was extraordinary and ordinary at the same time.

By analyzing financial documents related to the operation of the Northeast Military Academy in the late 1920s and early 1930s, as well as records of other military teaching institutions associated with the Northeast Army, this chapter builds upon the previous chapter

with the goal of portraying it as a living, breathing entity within the context of consumption in the late Qing and Republican periods as well as within the changing patterns of production and consumption in Manchuria during the early twentieth century. Studies of consumption in China tend to be neatly compartmentalized into separate time periods<sup>139</sup> and while this chapter does not bridge different eras, it offers a look at consumption in the "periphery," so to speak, of Chinese studies which have tended to focus on the coastal treaty port areas to the south, at the same time that it is a look at consumption of a "center," a regionally important institution that trained and housed the elite officer corps of the Northeast Army. As this chapter will argue, these men lived on the cutting edge of China's modern material culture and constituted a body of consumers *par excellence* by virtue of their privileged position of power vis-à-vis civilian Chinese society. Because they were elite soldiers, and thanks to their membership in the school, their access to material goods and services was broader than ordinary civilians or rank-and-file soldiers. A close analysis of the school's consumption patterns of several types of materials reveal fascinating continuities with the past while highlighting the contingent social, economic, and political formations that shaped the material goods that constituted the everyday world of the Northeast Military Academy and affiliated military institutions.

Over the course of the Qing period, as more and more Han Chinese migrated from North China into Manchuria despite court policies that sought to keep it preserved as a pristine Manchu homeland,<sup>140</sup> Manchuria developed into a vibrant, complex regional economy. Agriculture had

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<sup>139</sup> As Carol Benedict succinctly sums up in her introduction to her wide-ranging study of tobacco consumption in China, studies on consumption in the current literature can be sorted into three general categories: consumption and the formation of taste in elite circles in the Jiangnan region in the late Ming and the high Qing, emerging modern and mass forms of consumption centered around Republican Shanghai, and the rise of consumption with the opening up of the economy in post-Mao China after 1978. See *Golden Silk Smoke: A History of Tobacco in China, 1550-2010*. (Los Angeles; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

<sup>140</sup> Thomas R. Gottschang and Diana Lary, *Swallows and Settlers: The Great Migration from North China to Manchuria* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2000); James Reardon-Anderson, *Reluctant Pioneers: China's Expansion Northward, 1644-1937* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

always been the centerpiece of this economy in the imperial period, and Manchuria's place as a producer and exporter of key crops such as soya, used widely for oil and fertilizer, had been well established in the late imperial period. It was the arrival of the rail to Manchuria under the aegis of Russia, then Japan, that intensified the economic development of the region, and the industrial, commercial, and agricultural development of Manchuria's abundant natural resources took off dramatically in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, especially along the corridors of influence along the railroads being newly built by Russian, Japanese and Chinese business and political interests.

In Liaoning Province, some of the most intense industrial development involved coal and oil. This industry gained steam in the 1920s and expanded and diversified in the 1930s into steel and chemical manufacturing under the direction of the South Manchurian Railway (SMR), a Japanese semi-governmental agency closely associated with the Kwantung (Guandong) Army. It was further developed between 1932, the formal establishment of the Manzhouguo regime, and 1945, the end of that short-lived state.<sup>141</sup> In early twentieth century Manchuria, urban areas sprang up around the railroads while the pre-existing cities traversed by the railroads underwent massive construction and population booms, and it was in the midst of this backdrop of political and economic change that the Northeast Military Academy conducted its affairs and built up its officer corps. The Northeast Army of Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Xueliang were acknowledged to be one of the most well funded regional military organizations in China, and the elder Zhang was

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<sup>141</sup> Japan was the largest foreign investor in Manchuria from 1931-1936, outstripping England and Russia. In 1931, Japan's total investment, through the SMR, is estimated to have been around \$850 million, above England at \$569 million and Russia at \$295 million. See Limin Teh, "From Colonial Company to Industrial City: The South Manchurian Railway Company in Fushun, China," in *Company Towns: Labor, Space, and Power Relations Across Time and Continents*, eds. Marcelo J. Borges and Susana B. Torres (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 72-73. The SMR was by far the biggest recipient of government largess in the immediate aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War, for example receiving 78% of the total investment of the Japan Industrial Bank (Nihon Kōgyo Ginkō) in the years 1905-1914. See Natsume Sōseki, trans. Inger Sigrun Brodey and Ikuo Tsunematsu, *Rediscovering Natsume Sōseki: Celebrating the Centenary of Sōseki's Arrival in England 1900-1902: With the First English Translation of Travels in Manchuria and Korea* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2000), 17.

especially deft at leveraging different parties to ensure his position as the pre-eminent military leader in northeast China.<sup>142</sup>

It is a truism that standing armies are expensive to maintain. The costs, not just economic, of maintaining a large fighting force, can be difficult for states to deal with, or even detrimental to the smooth functioning of a government. And yet, the need to consolidate control in the face of the last remaining outposts of Ming resistance, the territorial ambitions of early Qing emperors, the many internal rebellions that erupted during the Qing, including the devastating Taiping Rebellion (some would say the Taiping Civil War),<sup>143</sup> and increasing pressure from foreign powers contributed to a sustained development of the military during the Qing. The military apparatuses of the Qing empire consumed between a fourth and a fifth of the state's revenue, this for a population of military personnel that was less than 2% of the total population of the empire.<sup>144</sup> The Qing system, which was organized into hereditary forces of the eight banners and the Green Standard Army, bears little resemblance to the Northeast Army or other twentieth-century warlord armies, organized along bureaucratic and professional lines, or even the modernizing Self-Strengthening armies of the late nineteenth century reformers Li Hongzhang and Zeng Guofan. However, in terms of resources, Chinese armies continued the trend of being top consumers. While organizationally late imperial and modern Chinese armies are quite different, the strong argument for viewing the late imperial Qing military as a "hybrid institution that combined a range of military, social, and economic, and political functions" that changed over time resonates with the warlord army's multifaceted role in Republican politics and

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<sup>142</sup> Gavin McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911-1928: China, Japan, and the Manchurian Idea* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1977).

<sup>143</sup> For instance, see the newest entry into the debate on whether the Taiping should be considered a violent internal uprising or a struggle between two forces for political legitimacy, Stephen R. Platt's recently published *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

<sup>144</sup> Mark Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 311.

foreign relations. The Northeast Army was a complex bureaucracy, and one of the things that kept this bureaucracy going was paper.

At the institutional level, the Northeast Military Academy unsurprisingly consumed a large amount and variety of paper products. Paper was a fairly expensive product, though prices depended greatly on the type, quality, and origin of the paper. The Northeast Military Academy spent a total of 276 yuan in the production of materials including paper, writing supplies, books, and printing related to Japanese language study in February 1925,<sup>145</sup> and 122 yuan per month on writing supplies and stationary (*wenju*) in the first half of the year. The school generated a great deal of official paperwork, neatly divided into hierarchical categories: *chengwen* (memorial or petition submitted to a superior), *chengbao* (report submitted to a superior), *gonghan* (official letter), *tongling* (circular or general order), *xunling* (instructions or directives), *mingling* (order or command), *zhiling* (instructions or directions), *pishi* (memo from a superior to a subordinate), *daidian* (a type of shortly worded official document), *dianbao* (telegram), and *tongzhi* (notice). These documents were used to delineate the chain of command and emphasized soldiers' respective positions within the army hierarchy by requiring individuals to unequivocally establish their status relative to the receiver. The production of these communiqués required the document to be placed into pre-existing functional categories that were ranked in terms of importance. The type of paper the school consumed in the pursuit of its daily activities was just as varied and hierarchical, ranging from imported paper for instructors' use to low-grade newsprint that went into the creation of institutional ephemera.

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<sup>145</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 10 32538, 003356-003367.

The school's print shop regularly produced materials that would be used by the students and instructors, using a variety of paper types.<sup>146</sup> A common type of paper stock that went into printing reports and maps was *maobianzhi*, a writing paper made from bamboo. This type of paper appears to have been available in several grades. For instance, the Northeast Military Academy used a type of "high quality" *maobianzhi* for file folders or dossiers (*juanzong*)<sup>147</sup> and a white-colored type for curriculum vitae (*luli*). This bamboo-based paper was used extensively and often in combination with a type of paper canvas, *bupi*, which went into the making of covers. A small portion of the paper that the print shop used appears to have been of foreign manufacture, although what type of paper this might have been is unclear. "English paper" (*yingwen zhi*), for example, was used to make lined or gridded paper (*gaozhi*) for the use of foreign instructors,<sup>148</sup> and the school also had on hand material used for bookbinding and making dust covers, for example for books of teaching materials.

The diverse and highly specialized array of printed materials produced by the school offers a glimpse into the day-to-day activities of the students and instructors. Paper was integral to the education of the students on the most basic level, providing a platform for getting information to them as well as a way of evaluating their understanding of material and tracking their progress. The print shop produced tools that the students would need to study, digest, and successfully deploy the knowledge being taught in the classroom. Some of the materials used by

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<sup>146</sup> Information on how printing was undertaken is limited, but the job of managing the print materials for the school appears to have been compensated on a comparable basis to other white-collar type work. A print technician employed by the school in the mid-1920s earned 17 yuan per month, while clerks at the school earned between 10 and 22 yuan per month. However, staff instructors made far more, 80 yuan per month. Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 10 2144, 32538, "Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang yusuan ce" [Budget of the Northeast Military Academy] (1925).

<sup>147</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "Er yue fen yinshuasuo chu pin ji cailiao xiaohao" (Tables of figures for print shop output and consumption of materials for the month of February) in *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy Business Report] (1931), 39.

<sup>148</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "Er yue fen yinshuasuo chu pin ji cailiao xiaohao" (Tables of figures for print shop output and consumption of materials for the month of February) in *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy Business Report] (1931), 42.

students were maps used for assignments or exercises in military tactics and notebooks made of the standard bamboo-based paper. The maps were produced using bamboo paper or *liushi zhi*, a traditional bookmaking paper, and were highly varied and specialized in the type of visual knowledge that they represented. They seem to have been primarily intended as study materials, for example, maps or figures for illustrating general field fortifications and field fortifications used by Japanese and Russian troops as well as Chinese naval operations.<sup>149</sup>

Paper served as a conduit for communication and was even an essential pre-requisite for certain intended hierarchical social interactions within the organization. The print shop produced papers for letters, usually out of bamboo paper, and envelopes out of *niupizhi*, a type of brown wrapping paper or "kraft" paper.<sup>150</sup> Booklets that served as gate passes (*cemen*),<sup>151</sup> for example, were printed by the school, most likely as a device to regulate the movements of the students. The passes would need to be presented at the gates before a student could enter or leave the school grounds, although it is impossible to know how well this policy was enforced and how effective the booklets may have been. The school also would have distributed handbooks to students and materials for evaluating students' moral conduct (*xueyuansheng caoxing kaoji bu*)<sup>152</sup> to the instructors, to guide students in the correct behaviors befitting their status as members of the Northeast Military Academy. Other parts of the inventories of the Northeast Military Academy further suggest that regulating behavior was one of the school's ongoing concerns. The

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<sup>149</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "San yue fen yinshuasuo chu pin ji cailiao xiaohao" (Tables of figures for print shop output and consumption of materials for the month of March) in *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy Business Report] (1931), 46-47.

<sup>150</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "San yue fen yinshuasuo chu pin ji cailiao xiaohao" (Tables of figures for print shop output and consumption of materials for the month of March) in *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy Business Report] (1931), 44.

<sup>151</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "Er yue fen yinshuasuo chu pin ji cailiao xiaohao" (Tables of figures for print shop output and consumption of materials for the month of February) in *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy Business Report] (1931), 41.

<sup>152</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "Er yue fen yinshuasuo chu pin ji cailiao xiaohao" (Tables of figures for print shop output and consumption of materials for the month of February) in *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy Business Report] (1931), 38.

school printed 800 handbooks titled "Rules and regulations on Service" (*Fuwu guize*) and 800 copies (single pages) of condensed rules and regulations,<sup>153</sup> both on newsprint, which were most likely intended to have been distributed.

The importance placed on hierarchy is also evident in the inventories. Reports to superiors required a special form, *chengbao zhi*, as did recordkeeping on the documents that were sent out from the school's offices (*fawenbu*).<sup>154</sup> The print shop even produced materials for registering mail addresses, ensuring that lines of communication connecting the school and its members to the outside world would operate smoothly. The print shop was responsible for printing reports of various activities, producing for instance 150 copies of a record of staff officers' training trips. Producing copies of a record of a different trip taken by students and instructors studying fortifications to Shanhaiguan required 4,500 pages (*ye*) of newsprint, while reports for a different unspecified staff officers' trip consumed 21,000 pages of the same paper type. In addition to being used in the production of reports of teaching activities, paper was essential to the regulation and flow of knowledge throughout the institution in the form of teaching materials.

Textbook and instructional materials, all printed on low-quality newsprint paper (*baozhi*), featured titles on a variety of topics. The print shop printed titles addressing training fundamentals, such as "Basic Military Tactics," "The Art of War in the Past," "Military Systems of Various Countries," and "Military System Studies." The school also printed works concerned with infrastructure and skills bearing titles like "Communication Studies" and "Fortifications" alongside technical titles such as "Armored Vehicle Operations and Combat Methods,"

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<sup>153</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "San yue fen yinshuasuo chu pin ji cailiao xiaohao" (Tables of figures for print shop output and consumption of materials for the month of March) in *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy Business Report] (1931), 41.

<sup>154</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "Er yue fen yinshuasuo chu pin ji cailiao xiaohao" (Tables of figures for print shop output and consumption of materials for the month of February) in *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy Business Report] (1931), 39.



"Implementation of Spring Warfare," and "Mobilization Studies." In addition, the school printed titles with a broader strategic outlook, such as "Research on the Chinese Navy's Operational Strength," "The History of War in Japan and Russia," "The History of War in Europe," and "Rail Transport."<sup>155</sup> The differences in the number of copies printed for these titles suggest that some of the works, like those delving into the international history of war, were meant for a select group of students while others, like the titles on basic tactics, were intended for a more general curriculum. For example, one printing of "Military Systems of Various Countries" used up 16,250 pages of newsprint, while printing "The History of War in Japan and Russia" and "The History of War in Europe," used up 600 and 240 pages of newsprint respectively, suggesting that a much lower number of copies for these two titles were produced. In the day-to-day lives of students and instructors at the Northeast Military Academy, paper was an essential vehicle for imparting knowledge and supplementing face-to-face classroom and field instruction.

Paper formed a discursive interface for the students and instructors at the school, facilitating basic teaching, training, and learning processes even as the documentary forms that paper took prescribed the ways in which knowledge transfer took place. Function and format were intrinsically linked and affixed to a constellation of hierarchical social relationships, of superiors to subordinates and instructors to students. At the same time that it served the functional needs of the school, the record of paper consumption of the Northeast Military Academy attests to the voracious appetite of complex bureaucratic organizations for communication mediums.<sup>156</sup> Refracted through the chain of production that delivered paper into

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<sup>155</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "Er yue fen yinshuasuo chu pin ji cailiao xiaohao" (Tables of figures for print shop output and consumption of materials for the month of February) in *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* (Northeast Military Academy Business Report] (1931), 43-44.

<sup>156</sup> Paper, books, and notebooks accounted for about 11.4% of the Northeast Army's Survey Bureau, responsible for drafting documents such as maps, in 1914, and pen and ink took up the bulk of the budget, but the office also allocated 16.8% of its budget for printing costs. Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 32538, 003345, "Dongsansheng

the hands of military personnel, the consumption level of this elite cohort represented in paper is staggering. In a single month, the school could go through tens of thousands of pieces of paper in conducting its everyday business.

Where might have this paper come from, and under what kinds of circumstances might it have been made? Some of the paper may have been brand new, but it is possible that the school re-used the paper at its disposal. It is known that paper circulated in diverse ways during the Republican period. Workers in Beijing, for example, would collect cigarettes thrown away in theaters to sell to businesses that would re-roll and reuse the paper and other materials.<sup>157</sup> When supplies grew scarce during wartime, recycling was undoubtedly one method by which materials were utilized to their maximum potential. Some of the paper used by the school may have been imported from outside of Manchuria. Well-established papermaking areas in places such as Sichuan increased its general export of paper from 6 metric tons in 1891 to 1116 metric tons in 1931, and increased exports to Manchuria, especially of paper money used in various kinds of ceremonies.<sup>158</sup>

While the highly compartmentalized, bureaucratic, and specialized consumption of paper by the Northeast Military Academy has the features of a modern military institution, the actual paper used by the school may not have been such a modern product, so to speak. Although the invention and making of paper had a long and venerable history in the country of its invention, the mechanized production of paper in China was a phenomenon of the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Up to the early 1930s, most major mechanized paper production in China

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lujun celiang ju zhong hua minguo san nian yi yue fen zhi chu jisuan shu" [Calculations of January 1914 paper output for the Northeast Army survey corps].

<sup>157</sup> Benedict, 170.

<sup>158</sup> Jacob Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Shoots: The Social History of a Community of Handicraft Papermakers in Rural Sichuan, 1920-2000* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 109. For information on the practice of burning paper money and the ritual use of paper offerings, Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. 5: Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Part 1: Paper and Printing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 102-109.

went on in and around the coastal industrial centers Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang, manual papermaking still holding sway in much of the rest of the country. Although the scale of production possible through mechanization had the potential to eclipse manual paper production, handmade paper continued to command a large if gradually decreasing market share in the early twentieth century. Estimates of how much effort manual papermaking required vary significantly, but looking at just workshop-level manpower based on data collected on traditional paper making processes in the 1950s, Jacob Eyferth calculates that 10,000 sheets of paper would be the equivalent of 280 days of work at the workshop level employing several full-time workers whose caloric intake reflects the strenuous, physically taxing nature of manual papermaking.<sup>159</sup> If it was labor- and time-intensive handmade paper that constituted the bulk of the paper used in official publications and communications by the Northeast Military Academy, newsprint, then the school was consuming a great deal of manpower and energy through just paper alone. The high volume of bamboo-based paper found in the records of the Northeast Military Academy may suggest that into the 1930s handmade paper may have still been an important source and that industrial papermaking processes had not yet overtaken the traditional papermaking industry in the region. Bamboo fibers, because they cannot be ground into a pulp like softwood and do not respond well to inexpensive sulfite-based processes, resisted being incorporated into industrial production well into the early twentieth century.<sup>160</sup>

Despite the resiliency of traditional papermaking in the Republican era, Northeast China's potential for paper-making did not escape notice, one researcher framing the development of the paper industry in the northeast both a way to satisfy the rising domestic demand for paper by other industries like publishing and a way to lessen China's dependence on foreign suppliers, that

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<sup>159</sup> Eyferth, 27-28.

<sup>160</sup> Eyferth, 112.

is, a matter of national self-sufficiency.<sup>161</sup> Papermaking, along with other industries, was also seen by other Chinese leaders as an important area for development, as in Sichuan in the mid-1930s after the rise of warlord Liu Xiang into power, as well as under Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) during the Nanjing Decade (1927-1937), in ways that elevated mechanical, industrial forms of production above "traditional" forms, which elites characterized as one of the things holding China back.<sup>162</sup> The assessment of Manchurian elites of local papermaking in the beginning of the 1930s followed a similar pattern of privileging urban and mechanized production while simultaneously downgrading the effectiveness of rural and manual labor in the industry. Their calls to modernize papermaking echoed top-down efforts to transform craft practices elsewhere, such as eighteenth century France, where a French state with a reformist bent in the last years of the Old Regime, contending with the rising pace of industrialization, led a process of "deskilling" in the paper industry that caused conflicts between practitioners of old techniques and new industries and was resisted by craftspeople and workers.<sup>163</sup>

Manchuria, with its relatively abundant arboreal resources, may have presented an attractive venue for exploring softwood for making paper using mechanized, large-scale processes. Writers on Manchuria often noted the richness of its forests and mentioned silviculture, among them Japanese authors, dedicated scientific inquiries by Japanese researchers into the region's woodland resources began in earnest in the early to mid 1930s. Talk of establishing industrial paper mills were starting in the beginning of the 1930s among the region's

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<sup>161</sup> Tang Lingge, "Dongsansheng ying she zaozhichang zhi yijian ji qihua shu" [A suggestion and prospectus on how the Three Northeastern Provinces should establish paper mills] in *Guoli zhongyang yanjiuyuan yuanwu yuekan* (Central Academy Fellows' monthly) 1, no. 5-6 (1929): 14; 16. This article was also republished under the same title in *Nong kuang yuekan* [Agriculture and Mining Monthly] (1929), 69-82.

<sup>162</sup> Eyferth, 111.

<sup>163</sup> Leonard N. Rosenband, *Papermaking in Eighteenth-Century France: Management, Labor, and Revolution at the Mongolfer Mill 1761-1805* (Baltimore, Md.; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

Chinese elites. The newsprint and other types of paper used by the school in the 1920s, then, may still have been relatively inexpensive and abundant handmade paper rather than machine-made.

In 1930, work on a paper mill in the northeastern outskirts of Shenyang began under the direction of Zhang Zhiliang (1878-1947), a leading businessman who had worked closely with Zhang Zuolin.<sup>164</sup> The chair of the preparatory committee for the paper mill, Jin Hanjin, traveled from Shenyang to Shanghai to discuss the plan with potential backers and the newest methods for manufacturing paper.<sup>165</sup> Industrial paper manufacturing for materials such as newsprint was explicitly joined with the idea of paper as a foundation for culture. Jin, in the company of other local notables, also traveled to Huadian County (in Liaoning Province) and adjacent areas to locate an ideal site for the paper mill. The group decided that the factory should be near the Laowu River, with a hydropower station being established at a distance of 20 *li* (approximately 10 km or 6.7 miles) from the site. They deemed the woods around the site satisfactory for the making of newsprint, and furthermore, chose a location in close proximity to the Shenhai railway line for ease of transport. The optimal conditions in the area, which included access to clean water, coal, quicklime, and sulfur, made the site an excellent place to build a paper making factory, one that "lacked nothing." Zhang Huilin, satisfied with the report of the preliminary committee, provided the capital for the project.<sup>166</sup>

The company office was set up in Shenyang, just outside the northern gates to the city, and headed by Zhang, with Jin acting as the director. The necessary know-how and personnel for the construction of the factory and the dam to help provide power came from partners such as the Tianjin Huabei Water Conservancy Committee, which provided survey engineers, and the Jingou

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<sup>164</sup> "Dongbei zaozhichang jiang chuxian" [Northeast Paper Mill to appear], in *Dongsangsheng guan yinhao jingjie yuekan* (Three Provinces Official Private Bank finance monthly) 2, no. 12 (1930): 214.

<sup>165</sup> "Dongbei zaozhichang quexun" [Report on the Northeast Paper Mill] in *Gongshang ban yuekan* (Industry and commerce bi-weekly) 3, no. 7 (1931): 86.

<sup>166</sup> "Dongbei zaozhichang quexun" [Report on the Northeast Paper Mill] in *Gongshang ban yuekan* (Industry and commerce bi-weekly) 3, no. 7 (1931): 86.

Coal Company, which lent drillers to the project; drilling was still going on at the time of the report, with all the necessary machinery set to be bought when these preliminary preparations were completed. The report on the progress of the paper mill struck a optimistic tone, confidently asserting that when it came to this venture, "the advantages are already many and the profit to be obtained will certainly be great."<sup>167</sup>

The completion of the paper mill was seen as drawing together the pre-existing resources of the Manchurian countryside, ideal in its physical, geographical, and chemical composition, with the modern communication and cultural needs, signified by machine-made paper. Emphasized as the primary product of the paper factory, newsprint, was a carrier of news and intelligence, and a medium through which modern technologies and skills would be brought to bear in the shaping of the region. Also emphasized was the technical knowledge and engineering aspects of creating the factory, rather than the processes of papermaking. This positive view of the potential of industrialized production was widespread among the elite of this period, yet was not borne out by the actual papermaking practices at the time, which still entailed a heavy input of human labor, one that the planners of the paper mill in Huadian County failed to acknowledge. A late 1920s assessment of the first paper mill in Beijing, established in 1921 with an initial capital investment of 30,000 yuan, elicited a similar expression of optimism regarding the transformation that technology and industry had wrought, although implicitly showing how much of the papermaking processes in factories of this period did not scale up without an attendant increase in human labor. Although described as having eclipsed local paper shops and paper makers in nearby markets such as Tianjin, the mechanical paper-making process glowingly described as closely following foreign papermaking processes, still employed a large number of

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<sup>167</sup> "Dongbei zaozhichang quexun" [Report on the Northeast Paper Mill] in *Gongshang ban yuekan* (Industry and commerce bi-weekly) 3, no. 7 (1931): 87.

workers, both men and women, who worked full days manipulating steamers and stone rollers for breaking down fibers among other laborious tasks.<sup>168</sup>

Another category of goods that is represented in the records of the Northeast Military Academy is clothing. While the school also had in its inventory riding gear, such as saddles, bridles, saddle blankets, horse blankets, mobile horse troughs, and feed bags made out of cloth, as might be expected, the vast majority of the inventory of the school consisted of uniforms. In addition to the basic uniform pants, jackets, and shirts that would have been worn by all of the cadets, more specialized items, such as hats or caps, rain gear, shoes and boots, and outerwear such as coats of various kinds and styles also make an appearance. The harsh winter weather of Northeast China can be felt in the lists of items designed for the cold, such as leather coats or cloaks, double-layered uniforms, pant liners, winter hats, leg warmers, and felt socks. These articles of clothing and accessories signified that their wearer was a member of the Northeast Army and the Northeast Military Academy, marking them visibly modern in terms of dress and making them easily identifiable as officers as well as soldiers. In these uniforms and gear, the men of the Northeast Military Academy made up a prominent feature of the sartorial landscape of Manchuria, which as Duan Yan has argued, was undergoing a process of diversification, especially from the 1910s onward.<sup>169</sup> The cadets and instructors contributed to the increased visibility of western-style dress in Republican China, a signifier of gendered modernity that as Louise Edwards has pointed out, was the cause of ire for some, and new modes of expression for others, in particular urban Chinese women.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> "Beijing chuqi jiqi zaozhichang qingxiang" [The state of the first mechanical paper mill in Beijing], *Zhong Wai jingji zhoukan* (Sino-Foreign Financial Weekly), no. 195 (1927): 38-41.

<sup>169</sup> Duan Yan, *Dongbei diqu shehui fengsu bianqian* [Changes in the social customs of Northeast China] (Changchun: Dongbei shifan daxue wenku, 2009), 53-59. Duan also finds a burgeoning interest in western-style clothing as well as increased age differentiation in clothing.

<sup>170</sup> Louise Edwards, "Policing the Modern Woman in Republican China," in *Modern China* 26, no. 2 (April 2000): 115-147.

When it came to other aspects of modern material life, the men of the Northeast Military Academy, as elite officers, were privileged in their consumption. One area where this was evident was food and reserve supplies of grain, during a period when famine, starvation, and widespread economic disruptions were common throughout the country, disrupting and devastating the lives of millions. The school's supplies included a range of cereals for the consumption of humans and animals: husked rice, wheat flour, husked sorghum, millet or rice straw, and soybean cake. The school possessed sufficient utensils for consuming these products; in the inventories can be found kettles and canteens, food hampers, and lunch tins. As soldiers, the men of the Northeast Military Academy were constantly on the move. They may have been outfitted on their travels with items like backpacks, tents, cloth water pails or buckets, and portable cooking pots. Not all students received significant stipends; a small number of students enrolled in special training classes in 1925 received a monthly stipend of 2 yuan a month, while a handful of students in advanced classes received 1 yuan 5 jiao.<sup>171</sup> A small figure compared to the salaries of top instructors at the school, or even the salaries of workmen, this was nonetheless not an insignificant sum in the mid 1920s, particularly when factoring in the fact that room and board, as well as uniforms, would have been covered by the school. It is possible that 1 yuan per month may have stretched quite far for elite military school students who lived up, or rather down, to the stereotypical negative reputation of soldiers in Manchuria. As a group, soldiers were notorious for disdaining to pay for the goods and services rendered onto them, and as elite officers and officers-to-be, the instructors and cadets of the Northeast Military Army would have been even more privileged in their dealings than even ordinary troops. Moreover, as will be discussed later in this chapter, students may have found other ways of supplementing their low or

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<sup>171</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 10 2144, 32538 "Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang yusuan ce" [Budget of the Northeast Military Academy] (1925).



even non-existent income in various ways that did not meet with the approval of the Northeast Military Academy's higher-ups.

In terms of material goods, the Northeast Military Academy was a high-volume consumer, but still of fairly ordinary, everyday objects, such as clothing, paper, and food. One kind of extra-ordinary consumption exists in the area of energy and modern communication, specifically, electricity, the telephone, and the telegram. They were restricted to urbanized areas and to institutions, businesses, and individuals with the access to not simply money, but also the established grid, which was geographically limited in its scope and reach. However, in the mid 1920s, in terms of total expenditure, electricity still constituted a small share of the school's budget, setting aside 0.5% of its office operating budget for electricity while the bulk of the budget went toward paper, printing costs, and writing implements.<sup>172</sup> Nevertheless, the Northeast Military Academy was well situated to benefit from its privileged access to energy and new types of communication technology. Access to electric light no doubt extended the possible work hours of soldiers engaged in bureaucratic tasks in the offices of the school. While the exact consumption levels of the school cannot be determined, the budgets set aside for these expenses indicate that the school's access to these potentially productivity-boosting goods was well established.<sup>173</sup> In addition, the Northeast Military Academy was a consumer of services, employing workers to maintain the institution in various aspects. Monthly wages for workers employed by the school in the 1910s varied depending on the type of work and skill required for the job. The 25 common laborers or porters (*fuyi*) that the school employed in 1913 each received 5 *liang* per month, the same as grooms retained to look after the horses. The head

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<sup>172</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 10 2144, 32538, 003380-003391 "Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang yusuan ce" [Budget of the Northeast Military Academy] (1925).

<sup>173</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 10 32537, 003336 "Dongsansheng lujun jiangwutang yusuan ce" [Budget of the Northeast Military Academy] (July 1925).

groom in charge of the horses received 6 *liang* per month, whereas a soldier who served as a bugler would receive 7 *liang* per month.<sup>174</sup>

While the budgets and inventories offer many interesting glimpses into the activities and priorities of the Northeast Military Academy one type of consumption that stands out in its invisibility in the records is that of leisure goods. Although the northeastern provinces consumed only a fraction of the cigarettes smoked in China by the 1930s,<sup>175</sup> it is likely that at least some of the students and instructors smoked tobacco or even perhaps more potent substances. The administration, for instance, found it necessary to send out an order in mid-February of 1931 reminding members that smoking and gambling were strictly prohibited and would be met with punishment.<sup>176</sup> The appeal of smoking, in the face of such sanctions, may have included its ability to foster sociability. It may also be attributed to the cultural paradoxes wrapped up in the act of smoking itself that has been noted by historians of not only China but also other markets where tobacco began to be absorbed into local patterns of consumption and production.<sup>177</sup> Carol Benedict, in her wide-ranging study of how tobacco became indigenized in the case of China, argues that looking at smoking offers one way of bridging consumption in late imperial and modern China, part of a worldwide network of tobacco production and trade that stretches back

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<sup>174</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 10 32537, 003337 "Lujun bu suo guan Fengtian jiangwutang banli Zhonghua minguo er niandu guojia suichu yusuan fence suichu jing chang men"

<sup>175</sup> Although this data only addresses sales of Shanghai-made cigarettes in 1931 and 1932, Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang provinces combined only accounted for less than 2% of the total number of cigarettes. See data from Yang Guo'an, "Qingdai yancao ye shuyao" [Tobacco in the Qing], in *Wen Shi* (Literature and History) 25: 489, cited in Benedict, 155.

<sup>176</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, "Key extracts and summaries of orders in February," *Dongbei jiangwutang yewu huibao* [Northeast Military Academy business report] (1931).

<sup>177</sup> For an instructive comparative case to the adoption and adaption of tobacco in China in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in particular the parallel tracks of tobacco production found in both urban and rural areas, see Iu. P. Bokarev, "Tobacco Production in Russia: The Transition to Communism," in *Tobacco in Russian History and Culture: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, eds. Matthew P. Romaniello and Tricia Starks (New York; London: Routledge, 2009), 148-157.

to the sixteenth century that other scholars have discussed.<sup>178</sup> Benedict points out that tobacco products and smoking were intimately connected to the socioeconomic position and gender of the smoker. On the one hand, certain kinds of smoking, which included imbibing more expensive factory-made cigarettes, carried with it an air of exclusivity and modernity. Smoking expensive cigarettes was urban and urbane as opposed to the older form of smoking tobacco using water pipes; being privileged enough to entertain smoking in this way was one marker of "the really elite" status of a soldier and his dependents to one contemporary observer.<sup>179</sup> On the other hand, smoking and addiction to tobacco could be seen as signs of moral decay, as Benedict argues in her reading of the works of the writer Lao She, who specialized in panoramic satires of the ills of China's urban society.<sup>180</sup> A similar negative view of smoking as being a sign of, or even promoting, moral degeneracy may have prompted the Northeast Military Academy's administrators to decide that smoking, along with gambling, were not behaviors they wished to indulge in their organization.

In spite of such condemnation, the soldiers of the Northeast Military Academy may have smoked for a number of mutually complementary reasons: for the simple pleasure of smoking tobacco, to be sociable, and to visually assert the modernity of their masculine identity.<sup>181</sup> While Benedict does not specifically mention soldiers among those who adopted smoking as a signifier of their Westernized, modern, and masculine identities,<sup>182</sup> the projection of smoking as a

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<sup>178</sup> Timothy Brook, "Smoking in Imperial China," in *Smoke: A Global History of Smoking*, eds. Sander L. Gilman and Zhou Xun (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 84-91.

<sup>179</sup> Sidney Gamble, *Peking: A Social Survey* (New York: George H. Doran, 1921), 332, cited in Benedict, 170.

<sup>180</sup> Benedict, 187. Arguments against the pernicious effects of smoking was widespread, sparking conflict between the expanding markets that fed the appeal of smoking as a virile, cosmopolitan aspect of modern life against concerns over health and moral decay associated with the practice of smoking; see also Tricia Starks, "Papirosy, Smoking, and the Anti-Cigarette Movement," in *Tobacco in Russian History and Culture: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, eds. Matthew Romaniello and Starks: 132-147 (New York; London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>181</sup> While this topic has not garnered much scholarly attention in the field of Chinese studies as of yet, the best historical work on smoking and sociability is by Matthew Hilton, writing on Britain in *Smoking in British Popular Culture, 1800-2000: Perfect Pleasure* (Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).

<sup>182</sup> Benedict, 148.

particularly *masculine* and virile practice, especially vis-à-vis mass marketing that used sexualized images of women,<sup>183</sup> cemented the cigarette's suitability for the discerning male hand. As Zhou Xun argues for late nineteenth and early twentieth century China, smoking was not simply an indicator of economic position, but one of "taste" that was socially constructed and defined.<sup>184</sup> The masculinization of cigarette smoking supplanted previous types of tobacco consumption, such as smoking using water pipes, that were acceptable to enjoy by both men and women, although this message was "decidedly mixed" in the 1930s, with women's smoking signifying both modern, urban, sexual glamour as well as women's moral bankruptcy and the breakdown of social mores.<sup>185</sup>

In this sense, the "meaning-making potential of consumption" of certain objects was highly gendered, intersecting with concerns of social status and identity-making, leisure, taste, and aesthetics.<sup>186</sup> Zhou Xun, like Benedict, argues that the patterns of consumption of tobacco in China – or of other addictive substances, such as opium – were not merely driven by economic issues but by matters of taste as constructed and defined in social contexts.<sup>187</sup> Uniforms and visually and socially habituated practices like smoking expressed, comprised, and communicated soldiers' identities as modern men and material men. By smoking, military men were participating in a globalizing culture of tobacco<sup>188</sup> that carried multiple meanings encoded in the

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<sup>183</sup> For comparison of similar marketing patterns, see Sally West, "Smokescreens: Tobacco Manufacturers' Projections of Class and Gender in Late Imperial Russian Advertising" in *Tobacco in Russian History and Culture: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, eds. Matthew P. Romaniello and Tricia Starks: 102-119 (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>184</sup> Zhou Xun, "Smoking in Modern China," in *Smoking: A Global History of Smoking*, eds Sander L. Gilman and Zhou (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 160-171.

<sup>185</sup> Benedict, 232. For a detailed look at the de-feminization of smoking in the twentieth century, see Benedict's ninth chapter, "New Women, Modern Girls, and the Decline of Female Smoking, 1900-1976," 199-239.

<sup>186</sup> Beth Fowkes Tobin, "Introduction: Consumption as a Gendered Social Practice," in *Material Women, 1750-1950: Consuming Desires and Collecting Practices*, ed. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Ashgate, 2009), 1, 7-8.

<sup>187</sup> See Zhou Xun, "Smoking in Modern China."

<sup>188</sup> For one illustration of the global historical scope of tobacco with a Chinese flavor, see John B. Ravenal, *Xu Bing: Tobacco Project, Duke/Shanghai/Virginia, 1999-2011* (Richmond, Va.: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2011); for

aesthetics and even politics of the act, as when boycotts against foreign-made products roared through Chinese cities.

Contradictory meanings ascribed to smoking, then, may have been a source of the Northeast Military Academy higher-ups' disapproval, but what may have been just as important was smoking's potential for facilitating the wrong kind of sociability. The issue of discipline may have been on their minds as well, judging by the order given only four days prior to the reminder on smoking and gambling, requiring all students to be issued a special gate pass (*menpiao*) if they wished to exit the school grounds. It is possible that in the case of the Northeast Military Academy, it may have been the association with gambling, a kind of social activity incompatible with the cultivation of reliable, healthy, professional soldiers, and related to this, the potential dissipation of discipline, that was the primary concern, not merely an objection to smoking on its own merit.

The consumption of the soldiers of the Northeast Military Academy does not constitute a "revolution" in consumption as has been convincingly argued for post-war, post-Mao China.<sup>189</sup> The economic ups and downs of the Republican period meant that upswings in consumption affected minute portions of the country, while conditions stagnated or even deteriorated for the vast majority of the population. Moreover, the consumption of goods and services by the men of the Northeast Military Academy were decidedly antithetical to mass consumerism. However, they were part and parcel of the material culture of Republican China. While the meanings vested in the material reality of these men were exclusive, hierarchical, and privileged, their

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an excellent overview of cigarette production and business competition in late Qing and Republican China, see Sherman Cochran, *Big Business in China: Sino-Foreign Rivalry in the Cigarette Industry, 1890-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

<sup>189</sup> Deborah S. Davis, "Introduction: A Revolution in Consumption," in *The Consumer Revolution in China Urban China* ed. Davis (Los Angeles; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 1-22.

consumption of goods and services was deeply embedded and informed by the changing world around them.

## CHAPTER 5

### Training Trips and Soldiers in Motion

The terrain of northeast China in the early twentieth century was fraught with multiple competing territorial claims from both within China and without. Railways, most importantly the Japanese-controlled South Manchurian Railway (SMR), threaded the land with corridors of foreign influence; although geographically narrow, their economic and industrializing effect was potent. The psychological and conceptual effect of the railways on the people it carried and the areas it traversed may have been even more dramatic and transient. Whether by train, beast of burden, or even on foot, travelers, businessmen, journalists, soldiers, revolutionaries, farmers and workers from East Asia and beyond made their way to and through Manchuria, representing a range of motives and activities that have long enchanted as well as frustrated scholars who seek to study this region. Manchuria was understood to be vast, full of potential and danger, and depending on the period, occupied or hemmed in by the shifting antagonisms and alliances of imperial Russia, imperial Japan, warlord armies, the Beiyang militarists, Nationalist Chinese forces led by Chiang Kai-shek, the Soviet Union, and Chinese Communist army. For many, it was a frontier, and for the Northeast Military Academy, a place simultaneously containing the potential of both victory and defeat.

The soldier-students of the Northeast Military Academy, in their efforts to shape themselves into more fit, modern, and professional military men, navigated a terrain that was at the center of multiple conflicts and constantly, treacherously shifting beneath their feet. In 1930 and 1931, students and instructors of the Northeast Military Academy in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, and at its branch school located in Heilongjiang Province to the north set out on

several weeks-long journeys, stopping at varied locations in northeast China. This chapter attempts to show that the training trips that these men undertook were one way by which they traveled toward their goal. Their trips to major sites in northeast China over well-traversed paths overlapped, but did not necessarily intersect, those of the many other types of travelers who navigated the region through new modes of travel like the rail. The movements of these men through northeast China, accessible only as terse traces in the historical record, offer a glimpse into the activities of the instructors and cadets of the Northeast Military Academy as their studies, training, and the organizational priorities of the Northeast Army took them outside of the walls of the school and into the multi-layered cultural, social, and ethnic terrain of early twentieth century Manchuria.

Individuals and groups who traveled to and within Manchuria brought expectations shaped by the images and narratives that different types of media about the region, in the form of newspaper accounts, travelogues, and photographs, and the men of the Northeast Military Academy comprised just one of this array of people of many different ethnicities, nationalities, and loyalties. Manchuria existed in multiple imaginations, and it was against a backdrop of diverse expectations and experiences of travel that the men of the Northeast Military Academy moved on training trips designed to increase their military knowledge and fighting readiness. At first glance the purpose of these trips appear to be simple: to provide opportunities for the students and their instructors to put the skills they had been learning in a classroom setting to practical use through military drills and related exercises out in the field. The trips do not seem to have been very noteworthy—at least, so far I have not been able to find extensive mention of 1930 military activities that match these dates in contemporary observers' reports such as those from foreign consuls in the region, who kept close tabs on developments in Manchuria,



suggesting that the trips may actually have been a routine activity.<sup>190</sup> The prominence of defensive positions such as Shanhaiguan in the itinerary, the mix of travel by train on known routes and travel on horseback, and the care that instructors took to prepare for the trips suggest that gaining deeper knowledge of the terrain was an important aspect of the training trips.

However, the mid-1920s triumphs and setbacks of the Northeast Army at Shanhaiguan, a prominent destination in the school's late 1920s training trips, may have figured into these trips' focus on fortifications and other defenses. The Northeast Army and the Northeast Military Academy in the late 1920s experienced a spectacular rupture of its internal structure with the 1928 assassination of Zhang Zuolin by members of the Japanese Guandong (also known as Kwantung) Army. The train explosion on the main line that connected Beijing to Shenyang, the capital of the northeastern province of Liaoning, shook all of Manchuria and reverberated throughout East Asia. For the Northeast Army, the explosion's immediate consequences were dire. It destabilized the tenuous alliance between Northeast military forces and Japan, which through the Guandong Army had supported Zhang as a bulwark against competing Chinese forces and a vanguard figure for Japan's expansion into the rest of China even while viewing his loyalty with deep suspicion. The explosion that took Zhang's life and that of personnel accompanying him on his trip back from Beijing instantaneously erased top figures in the Northeast Army's line of command, necessitating the remaining Chinese and Japanese players to make new calculations.

In the mid 1920s, the 1930s, and into the 1940s, Manchuria was once again seen as a frontier to be conquered, and warlord forces fought over its control, and later, the Nationalists (KMT or GMD) and Communists (CCP), who emerged from the era of warlords as the major

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<sup>190</sup> Similar trips were noted a couple of years earlier, such as in a report published in a national military publication, see "Ba yue jiu ri Fengjun xiang Shanhaiguan yidong" [The Fengtian {Northeast} Army headed toward Shanhaiguan on August 9] in *Junshi zashi* [Military Affairs], no. 4 (1928).

powers vying for control of the entire country, briefly joined forces to engage in a northward military campaign. Pushing the Japanese forces in Manchuria out was a major goal of the different Chinese factions, an effort that ended with Japan's defeat at the end of World War II that was immediately followed by a decisive period of civil war that consumed the whole of China. By the early 1930s, tensions were very high. Therefore, the 1920s and 1930s encompassed a series of difficult moment for Zhang's Northeast forces. Taking place only a couple of years after violent disruptions of its institutional life such as the second Fengtian-Zhili war, the training trips undertaken by the members of the Northeast Military Academy telegraphed an abiding concern with organizational fitness. That fitness was still suspect, hampered by a persistent, widespread belief in Chinese society at large and international observers that Chinese soldiers in general were weak, ineffectual fighters when it came to waging modern war.<sup>191</sup> The men of the Northeast Military Academy were moving against this backdrop as well, and yet, while purposeful, their movement through the rapidly shifting, multivalent spaces of Manchuria does not smoothly fit into the category of travel. Moreover, the itineraries used to record their movements do not fit the genre of travel narrative.

Travel writing, Carl Thompson suggests in his overview of the literary practice and genre, is the consciously shaped product of an encounter, one that invites or provokes an accounting of similarity and difference.<sup>192</sup> Xiaofei Tian, in her comparative study of medieval and nineteenth century travel narratives in China, posits that the detecting the subject experiencing the travel is essential to understanding travel narratives, helping us to locate that specific subject's point of view somewhere between the physicality of the self and that self's

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<sup>191</sup> Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924-1925* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 53.

<sup>192</sup> Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (New York; London: Routledge, 2011), 10.

perception of the phenomenal world.<sup>193</sup> The itineraries of the training trips do not contain a narrative point of view from which to observe the trajectories that the men took or the changing terrain, and do not contain the voices of the soldiers. In other words, the itineraries are travel, but not travel writing; they contain no narrative devices and have no distinct point of view or 'narrator' who is telling us about these trips.

The trips, in terms of both space and place, are not quite travel and partially *tabula rasa*, but contain intriguing spaces with which to imagine travel in Manchuria. To many people who lived and traveled there, Manchuria was a land of potential, and these multiple imaginary Manchurias shaped, I would argue, not only their conception of the space but also contoured their actions. The instructors and students of the Northeast Military Academy, in traversing this space, also shaped it as well. Continuing with this dissertation's theme of building an informed simulacrum of the past around fragmentary historical sources that emphasizes their materiality, this chapter features as its centerpiece a set of training trip itineraries for a group of Northeast Military Academy students and instructors. The fragmentary nature of the itineraries limits their potential to reveal features of the past experiences of these soldiers. At the same time, they offer useful spaces in which to imagine historical experiences that intersected that of these soldiers. The training trips, while very much military in form and purpose, offer a non-stationary conceptual space primed with the logistical, operational, and strategic concerns of the Northeast Army and interspersed with meaningful gaps for re-imagining the multidimensionality of travel in Manchuria. To reconstruct this training trip through the eyes of its participants and contour the rapidly shifting political terrain of Northeast China in the early twentieth century, the chapter

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<sup>193</sup> See Chapter 1 of Xiaofei Tian, *Visionary Journeys: Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth Century China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011). For more on the interface of the subject and travel in Asia, see also Joshua A. Fogel, ed., *Traditions of East Asian Travel* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006) and Emma Jinhua Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonialist Travel Writing and Pictures, 1685-1895* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004).

draws from not only documents of the Northeast Military Academy and the Northeast Army but also contemporary non-military accounts of the specific types of travel the soldiers engaged in to suggest historically plausible, parallel, and alternate terrains. Through literatures and records of other types of travel in Manchuria during this period, the chapter will show that the training trips of the Northeast Military Academy in the early 1930s, and military activities in general, constitute a valuable and underutilized vantage point for doing history. In doing so, this chapter engages with some of the historiographical and conceptual challenges posed by both the fragmentary nature of the itineraries as well as the limits of the analytic structure used to deal with the various kinds of lacunae in the source base.

The itineraries, which have been jotted down in an inelegant hand, list locations and dates with a few additional notes appended. In the archive, they exist alongside a scarce few telegrams and official communications explaining what these trips were about. The itineraries themselves are very bare bones, and while they help to sketch out where the students and instructors were going and approximately when, are simple and limited in terms of information. Hierarchy can be seen in the trips, as in the fact that instructors rode in first class on the trip taken by the Northeast Military Academy's mapping school, while cadets took third class seats.<sup>194</sup> However, they certainly do not provide a record of the soldiers' own voices about what they experienced, much less thought, about the trips. Written by possibly a single individual, the itineraries represent the record of a collective action with near-perfect anonymity. The itineraries, as records of things that happened, simply appear to connect a series of geographical and temporal dots without revealing what the connecting lines contain or mean. However, they still provide some interesting information about the Northeast Military Academy and the Northeast Army at the institutional level.

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<sup>194</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC10 2145, 32541.

According to one of the handwritten itineraries for a trip taken by the second and third entering classes of the Northeast Military Academy's advanced research class,<sup>195</sup> a group of students of the research class, along with their instructors, set out on a weeks-long trip in the fall of 1930. Before setting out, from October 28 to November 12, the instructors prepared for their upcoming training trip by carrying out research ahead of time on the locations that they would be visiting. The itinerary indicates that they were scheduled to make a number of very short stays at various locations across Liaoning Province, in Jin, Suizhong, and other counties south of the provincial capital of Shenyang.<sup>196</sup> While Liaoning, along with the other two provinces that made up Manchuria, Jilin and Heilongjiang, was a province under the control of the Northeast Army, parts of the province, particularly to the south, was also host to key parts of the Japanese overseas imperial infrastructure in China, namely in the form of railways, businesses, residences, factories and mines, especially the colliery at Fushun, which as Limin Teh argues, was testament to the Japanese state's ability to shape parts of the Manchurian landscape, and where it exercised extraterritorial rights stipulated in the 1905 Portsmouth Treaty.<sup>197</sup> The railroads cut across and connected economically and socially disparate spaces; the SMR rail was a "colonial device," to borrow from Marcelo Borges and Susana Torres' conceptualization of company towns as agents of imperial power, but one that was tuned to the needs of the Japanese colonial state in its

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<sup>195</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 10 21788, 003072-003075.

<sup>196</sup> For simplicity of reading, Shenyang will be used throughout this chapter, but the city was known by many different names during the late Qing and Republican periods. It was known by its Manchu name, Mukden, which appears in many English-language publications of the time (it can also be found in a variant form, Moukden, for example, in both English and French sources), and from the seventeenth century was also called Shengjing. Fengtian/Fengtien and Fengtian City also refers to it. During the first decades of the twentieth century it underwent great expansion, and one of the most important, well-funded, and productive artilleries in China at the time was located there along with experimental agricultural stations, modern hotels, and Western-style buildings particularly around the Shenyang train station, while the city's majority Chinese population lived mainly around and outside the old walled city. Today, this provincial capital is the largest city in Northeast China with a population of roughly five and three-quarters million.

<sup>197</sup> Limin Teh argues that these pockets of space carved out of the Manchurian countryside were further differentiated spatially by the need to organize and direct labor forces. See "From Colonial Company Town to Industrial City: The South Manchurian Railway Company in Fushun, China," 83.

expansionist and modernizing efforts, not simply a "Europeanizing device."<sup>198</sup> Above all, the railroads were a visual symbol of modernity as well as a reminder to the denizens of Manchuria that China was not fully sovereign. Utilizing the rail, both a space and a place, and other forms of transportation, the trips covered ground which had been both advantageous and potentially disastrous for the fate of the Northeast Army forces only a handful of years prior, which will be addressed later in the chapter.

These trips were composed of several different groups of advanced students and instructors and took place in the fall/early winter of 1930. Between October 28th to November 12th, instructors who taught tactics had already visited several of the locations in counties that bordered Shenyang county that they would be visiting with their students for the purposes of scoping out local conditions. On the trip itself, they, along with students, carried out tactics training and live exercises on an outing that lasted approximately a week, from October 13 to October 20. Instructors in charge of teaching techniques related to creating permanent fortifications prepared for a different upcoming trip from November 13 to 19, and then from Shenyang, traveled south to Shanhaiguan (Shanghai Pass), a distance of about 400 km (a little less than 250 miles) from November 20 to November 26 to carry out preparations for their upcoming trip with their students. In a separate trip that lasted from November 21 to December 5, students and staff officers traveled to these same areas, repeatedly visiting Shanhaiguan, a key strategic pass located at the mountainous sea-adjacent section of the border of Liaoning and Hebei provinces.

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<sup>198</sup> Marcelo J. Borges and Susana B. Torres, "Company Towns: Concepts, Historiography, and Approaches," in *Company Towns: Labor, Space, and Power Relations Across Time and Continents*, eds. Borges and Torres (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1.

Located 260 miles east of Beijing, Shanhaiguan was a complex structure of gates, walled areas, and temples, including a section of the wall that met the sea.<sup>199</sup> A key land route ran through the area that connected Manchuria to North China, and the most famous spots in the complex the meeting of land and sea, was known by the name "Old Dragon Head" (*laolongtu*). Historically noteworthy and strategically important, the pass was fortified with walls dating to the Ming dynasty, and the founder of the Manchu Qing dynasty, Nurhaci, and his men passed through Shanhaiguan on their way as they alternately battled, absorbed, and received the surrenders of Ming forces. In the 1920s, Shanhaiguan would become a key strategic point for the armies of Zhang Zuolin and his rival warlords in the Zhili clique, and the site of numerous military engagements between these two sides.

Shanhaiguan was a well-traversed geographical site and its importance was well known. Civilian Chinese travelers to the area in the 1910s and 1920s looked favorably upon the many historical connections inscribed into the geography. Describing his trip to Shanhaiguan for the benefit of middle-class and elite readers, one traveler vividly conveyed in brief notes the feeling of the slippery stone roads on his way and the pleasant sight of lotus flowers blooming everywhere, emphasizing the strange unworldly feeling of his surroundings,<sup>200</sup> while other travelers, writing for fellow university students, recounted their travels by furnishing them with recollections and literary allusions.<sup>201</sup> For one writer, the train-sickness that he always endures becomes an impetus to take out a pen and recollect what happened on his trip and perhaps reduce the ill feeling thereby. The opportunity to participate in a meeting of the Beidai River Men and

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<sup>199</sup> A photographic image of the impressive gate complex from two decades prior can be found in *Zhongguo xinbao* [New China news] no. 8 (1907): 3.

<sup>200</sup> Zhang Yuanqi, "Zhong jiu ri su Shanhaiguan," in *Dongfang zazhi* [Far Eastern Miscellany] 14, no. 6 (1917).

<sup>201</sup> Li Xiaomi, "Beidaihe dao Shanhaiguan [From Beidai River to Shanhaiguan]," in *Qinghua zhoukan* [Tsinghua Weekly], no. 261 (1922): 38-44; Yu Jianzhang, "Diaocha lu-Tangshan Huangdao Shanhaiguan---dai dizhi luxing ji [Survey of Tangshan, Huangdao, [and] Shanhaiguan: [a] geographical travel record]," in *Beijing Daxue rikan* [Beijing University Daily], no. 1374 (1923): 12-13; no. 1375 (1923): 8-9, and no. 1376: 4-5 (1923).

Women Students' Religious Association allows Li Xiaomi to spend a week in late August in the area, and he describes the pleasantness of the seaside Beidai train station. Although Li's train to Shanhaiguan unexpectedly ran late, he and his fellow travelers were still able to take in the sights, including the famous mountains around the pass, although Li notes that the gates at Shanhaiguan do not have the majesty of Xizhimen, one of the gates in the old city wall of Beijing. He remarks upon the fact that Shanhaiguan is the easternmost end of the Great Wall, and its significance in marking this boundary of China proper.<sup>202</sup> The trip around Shanhaiguan, skirting nearby temples, seems to have been an established itinerary; writing for fellow Beijing University students, Yu Jianzhang recalled his trip to Shanhaiguan with other third-year students in the September of 1923. For Yu, the trip was a way of taking himself back into the world of antiquity (*gujie*), and the physical features of Shanhaiguan, which he considers representative of the geography of China's north, helps connect his self to the history inscribed in the land.<sup>203</sup> His first-hand experience of this geography also becomes an opportunity to test his academic knowledge of geographical features for his own benefit and that of his audience of fellow students.<sup>204</sup> Accompanied by drawings explaining the geography of the area in scientific terms, Yu's account was a survey of space as well as time through the lens of his own personal know-how, informed by history and received tradition on the one hand and shaped by Western-style learning on the other.

The training trips that took place in late autumn/early winter and the weather may not have been as kind to the students and instructors of the Northeast Military Academy, unlike the summer/early fall trips taken by university students. Still, although the region experiences harsh winters and stifling hot summers, the southern and coastal location of Shanhaiguan may have

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<sup>202</sup> Li, 41.

<sup>203</sup> Yu, *Beijing Daxue rikan*, no. 1374: 12.

<sup>204</sup> Yu, *Beijing Daxue rikan*, no. 1375: 8.



mitigated any ill weather that the cadets and instructors may have encountered. The weather could, however, remain a factor in the planning and execution of the training trips. Indeed, in one of the trips, some of the preparatory work meant to be carried out during the trip was done indoors due to bad weather.<sup>205</sup> Situated at a latitude of about 42 degrees north, Shenyang, the city where the school was located, endures quite cold winters with heavy snows and razor-sharp icy winds; conditions are somewhat fairer further south, but average temperature throughout the Province in wintertime goes well below freezing, making October the very end of the ideal season to carry out long-distance trips. There may have been other challenges. The students and instructors were led by the head educator of the advanced research class, Li Duanhao. In a telegram sent on November 3rd to the headquarters of the Northeast Army, Li requested that instructions be given to the local governments of the counties that would be visiting to provide assistance, in order to "protect the students and to avoid anything untoward happening to them."<sup>206</sup> It is difficult to say for certain if this request was routine or one made in anticipation of trouble, but considering the dates of this trip, the general unrest in the region in late 1930 may have been a factor in Li's communication with Northeast Army headquarters. At the time, tensions were very high between Chinese forces and Japanese troops stationed in southern Manchuria. The areas along the province's major railway, the pre-eminent South Manchurian Railway, built and controlled by Japan, held extensive Japanese businesses and interests along its tracks, perhaps inviting extra caution on the part of the organizers of the trips.

Indeed, the railway figured prominently in all of the trips, serving as one of two main transportation methods taken by the instructors and students. Although the itineraries do not offer details of the train portions of the training trips, the pace at which the cadets traveled and train

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<sup>205</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 10 2020 21788, 003076-002778.

<sup>206</sup> Liaoning Provincial Archives, JC 10, 21788, "*Dongbei Liaoning jun siling bu gongshu dian wei jiangwutang*" [Telegram regarding the Military Academy from the Northeast Army Commanding Office].

travel-related materials from this period may help fill in some of the gaps. Contemporary accounts of travel along the SMR lines provide some estimates as to how long the trips of the Northeast Military Academy groups may have taken. One traveler taking the train around Manchuria in 1928 reported that a journey of 150 miles on the Harbin-Changchun line on the SMR<sup>207</sup> took about 7 hours to complete, Changchun to the provincial capital of Jilin (72 miles [117 km]) took approximately 4.5 hours, and Changchun to Shenyang (180 miles [290 km]) took about 9 hours.<sup>208</sup> Based on these numbers, it seems safe to say that during the period when the trips were taken, barring bad weather, accidents, or mechanical malfunction, the soldiers' trains would have moved through Manchuria at a speed between 15 to 20 miles per hour. Movement in the cities may not always have been smooth; according to a travel guide published by the South Manchurian Railway, in the 1910s, the streets of Shenyang were "notoriously bad," and while the city's infrastructure may have had improved by the late 1920s, the development of the city would have meant that the mix of passengers, all carrying bags of varying size, porters with their loads, mule-drawn carts, rickshaws, and European-style carriages and cars for hire to ferry travelers to hotels near the station may have been even more hectic.<sup>209</sup>

On the trip that lasted from October 11 to 20, the students and instructors first spent several days in Shenyang and the area around Shishan Station and Daling River, then from October 16 to 18, traveled south by horseback to Jin county. The purpose of the trip, according to the itinerary, was to carry out a practicum for military exercises, but the itinerary does not provide additional information on what kind of exercises these may have been. In a separate trip centered on Shanhaiguan that lasted from November 21 to December 5, students and instructors

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<sup>207</sup> This was a stretch of track that had formerly been part of the Russian-controlled Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) before it was ceded to Japan as part of the concessions given up by Russia after its disastrous defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. However, into the 1920s trains with all-Russian staff continued to operate, particularly on the line between Changchun and Harbin.

<sup>208</sup> Fogel, ed., 104; 105; 115.

<sup>209</sup> *Guide to Eastern Asia (Vol. 1) Manchuria and Chōsen* (Tokyo: South Manchurian Railway Company, 1913), 88.

spent the first three days on patrols on horseback in the area, then traveled a short distance to Beidai River by train for more exercises on horseback. From here, on November 26, they took the train to Anshan, a city about 66 miles south of Shenyang with nothing worthy of note in official SMR guidebooks except a saddle-shaped hill after which the town is named, but also a Japanese garrison and a police station.<sup>210</sup> The soldiers then traveled to the Changli county seat and remained there for six days with the battalion posted there, leaving on December 4 for Shanhaiguan, resuming exercises on horseback the next day, when the itinerary ends.

While this trip was going on, engineering instructors were preparing for their upcoming trip during the days between November 13 and November 19. Then from November 20 to November 26th, the instructors undertook a trip by both train and on horseback to survey the terrain between Shanhaiguan and Shuiping. Similarly, personnel in charge of establishing and maintaining permanent fortification and defenses, which may have had the same members as the November trip, embarked on another trip from December 6 to December 13—this trip was longer distance as well as more compressed, taking the soldiers from Shenyang to Shanhaiguan in one day, with November 7 to 11 being spent in Shanhaiguan for training, then returning to Shenyang over the course of two days, November 12 and 13. Because the route from Shenyang to Shanhaiguan was on one of the SMR's main lines, the 250 mile journey would have been a fairly straightforward one if it had been one with no stops along the way, most likely taking somewhere between 12.5 to 17 hours, one-way.

The trains exerted a hold on the imagination of the time in East Asia as well. South of Liaoning in Korea, formally colonized by Japan since 1910, in materials promoting tourism and in films, trains were visualized as a not merely a method of transportation from one point to

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<sup>210</sup> Imperial Japanese Government Railways, *An Official Guide to Eastern Asia: Transcontinental Connections between Europe and Asia Vol. 1 Manchuria & Chōsen* (Tokyo: The Imperial Japanese Government Railways, 1913), 123.

another, but a space of intrigue and potential danger as written about in novels and newspaper accounts and even in popular films.<sup>211</sup> Contemporary travelers describe them as alternately hot, crowded, and chaotic, as in the third class compartments, or airy and elegant, as in the exclusive first class compartments. Depending on which train a traveler boarded, he or she may have heard Chinese, Russian, Japanese, English, Korean, or a type of pidgin that mixed elements of these local languages. Not only in Manchuria, but elsewhere in the world, the rail facilitated nation or empire-building. Key figures in Russia, for example, held concerns that mirrored Chinese' elites hopes for the economic necessity and even politically revolutionary potential of railroads; this potential was recognized by ministers in Bolshevik Russia like Leonid Krasin (the 1920s head of the People's Commissariat of Trade and Industry), who described the development of rail as "a matter of life and death,"<sup>212</sup> an essential component of national self-determination.

Beyond simply connecting different places, trains in Manchuria were mobile spaces of business, political intrigue, and both fantasy and reality. In his pioneering work on the transformative effect of rail, its "motive effect," Wolfgang Schivelbusch has written of the massive re-ordering of space and time—and human relation to both facets of lived reality—that

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<sup>211</sup> For an interesting example of the steam-powered train as a harbinger of danger to the Japanese empire as well as a physical signifier of its dominance over its overseas domain, see *Kungyong yŏlch'a* [Military Train], 1938 (67 min.) (1930-yŏndae Chosŏn yŏnghwa moŭm [videorecording]: palguldoen kwagŏ, tu pŏnchae [Collection of Chosun films from the 1930s: The past unearthed, the second encounter], Seoul: Han'guk Yŏngsang Charyowŏn; T'aewŏn Ent'ŏt'einmŏnt'ŭ, 2008. A simple story of love and espionage, the movie features a Korean train conductor whose loyalty to the Japanese empire averts a Korean nationalist bombing plot.

<sup>212</sup> Anthony Heywood, *Modernizing Lenin's Russia: Economic Reconstructions, Foreign Trade and the Railways* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 58. Krasin might have added that the railway was also major factor in economic and political competition—for an analysis of how the rail intensified tensions between the China and Soviet Russia, see Felix Patrikeef, "Railway as Political Catalyst: The CER and the 1929 Sino-Soviet Conflict," in *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China: An International History*, eds. Bruce A. Elleman and Stephen Kotkin (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2010), 81-102. For an urban case study of the impact of rail and its effect on the Chinese and Russian political calculus in northern Manchuria, see Blaine R. Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer: Manchuria's Russians under Chinese Rule, 1918-29* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

occurred with the introduction of the railway in the nineteenth century.<sup>213</sup> He argues that the shortening of distances and time traveled that railways allowed a conceptual shrinkage of geography in people's imaginations, a fundamental change, but one that both "diminished *and* expanded" space.<sup>214</sup> The shift in modes of transportation challenged human perception of time and space in contradictory ways, in addition to greatly facilitating and accelerating the processes of capitalization and industrialization into more and more remote parts of the world. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the railway in China was still in its nascent stage, and in a pattern that would continue for decades, was controlled by foreign interests. The rail was tied to the exercise of national sovereignty, and railways like the SMR a reminder that China was not in control of its own destiny.

At the level of individual users of the railway in China, the material challenges of travel by train may have been the issue on the forefront of their minds. For the soldiers, the trains may have simply served a mundane purpose of getting them from one point to another. It should be noted that the rail in Manchuria did not reach everywhere, and travel and even warfare in the region remained a mix of modern transportation technology and age-old methods. Some parts of the trips were undertaken by either horse-drawn carts or on horseback, and equestrian exercises were carried out during several stops along the route. If these had been ordinary soldiers, it is likely that some of their movement would have been on foot, but considering that these were officers on a tight schedule, their mode of transportation may have been more comfortable, with trains facilitating their movement through Liaoning Province. According to the itinerary, the students and instructors usually spent a day in each location, staying the night before setting out

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<sup>213</sup> See especially the chapter "Railroad Space and Railroad Time" in Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>214</sup> Schivelbusch, 35.

on their way once more and covering a great deal of distance. In several locations like Shanhaiguan they spent extra days, presumably carrying out more extensive exercises and drills. At the same time, while geographically limited, the SMR railway was a physical sign of the Japanese presence in Manchuria. This presence was narrowly concentrated along the towns and industrial areas developed next to the railroad; however, as possibly frequent travelers on the SMR trains, the officers of the Northeast Military Academy may have been more acutely aware of the nature of the space in which they traveled. Moreover, the soldiers, whether Chinese or Japanese, were part of the landscape created by the railways by virtue of their privileged position vis-à-vis the civilian population. They were an unavoidable and inextricable part of Manchurian train travel, visible to travelers at every point on the lines, at every station; a visitor to Manchuria in 1930, who was otherwise sympathetic and admiring of Shenyang, noted that wherever there were people, there soldiers were; he expressed disappointment at the shabby-looking uniforms and "silly" appearance of a Chinese patrol.<sup>215</sup>

The bare-bones itineraries of the trips that exist in the archives do not offer much else in the way of information, but there are some aspects that we may reasonably consider to have been part of the trip. Although the members of the Northeast Military Academy, as active duty soldiers or officers, they would have been likely given precedence on the trains. They may not have endeared themselves to their fellow passengers. Chinese soldiers had a poor reputation, and warlord soldiers' reputation fared the worst. While indisputably the preeminent military force in Manchuria, the Northeast Army was still considered a regional force whose legitimacy was suspect, as were other regional armies during the fractious Republican period. Soldiers made frequent appearances as alternately villainous or buffoonish characters in Chinese short stories

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<sup>215</sup> Ch'oe Sam-nyong and Hō Kyōng-jin p'yōn, eds., *Manju kihanengmun* [Accounts of Travel to Manchuria] (Seoul: Pogosa, 2010), 244.

and novels, a characterization that was reflected in non-fiction accounts as well. Writers among the early generation of modern-trained military men (in Japan) like Cai E passionately defended the importance of the military and soldiers; the forcefulness of this voice was reacting to the great reluctance of Chinese elites to abandon the superiority of traditional letters and the deep belief in Chinese society at large that went, "good iron is not made into nails and good men are not made into soldiers." In the popular imagination, and often in reality, Chinese soldiers straddled the line between a legitimate force and outlaws, which Diana Lary has explained so eloquently in her work on soldiers and bandits during the Republican period.<sup>216</sup>

For some travelers along the Manchurian railway, the train compartment as a space of heightened anxiety or even danger as noted by late nineteenth century travelers,<sup>217</sup> found its expression in the figure of the soldier. It should be noted, however, that a deep suspicion and wariness about soldiers was not confined to Chinese forces. The celebrated feminist novelist and poet Yosano Akiko had the chance to travel to Manchuria in 1928 around the time of the assassination of the leader of the Northeastern forces, Zhang Zuolin, by the Guandong Army.<sup>218</sup> On a trip in the spring and summer of 1928 sponsored and paid for by the *Asahi shimbun*, a Japanese newspaper, for which she would write a serialized account of her travels, Yosano wrote vividly of the "menacing spectacle" of Japanese officers coming and going around the main train station in Shenyang.<sup>219</sup> Traveling in the midst of the immediate unrest following Zhang Zuolin's assassination, she recorded some of her impressions of Chinese soldiers as well:

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<sup>216</sup> Diana Lary, *Warlord Soldiers: Chinese Common Soldiers* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>217</sup> See "The Compartment" in Schivelbusch, 77-88.

<sup>218</sup> The warlord Zhang Zuolin, the de facto ruler of northeast China, in fact, was assassinated on a train when agents of the Guandong Army detonated explosives hidden in his train car.

<sup>219</sup> Fogel, ed. p. 56. Korean travelers also commented on the ubiquity of Chinese soldiers and guards along the places traveled by the railway, see Ch'oe Sam-nyong and Hŏ Kyŏng-jin p'yŏn, eds., *Manju kihanmun* [Accounts of Travel to Manchuria] (Seoul: Pogosa, 2010), 214.

We boarded again as nonpaying passengers, under the armed guard of Chinese officers and soldiers. They took seats in our compartment, chatting aimably though rudely and snacking all the while. Numerous armed Chinese soldiers and patrols were guarding every station en route. In addition to the four of us [Yosano, her husband, and two other Japanese travelers], there was only one other Japanese passenger, all the rest on board being Chinese. I saw among them several Manchu men and women and Mongolian men in Han Chinese dress. Compared to the peace of mind we had enjoyed on board trains until the previous day when all of the station attendants, guard troops, and patrols had been Japanese, the spectacle surrounding us now suddenly changed, and I felt a certain unease and marvel as though we had been chased into a world of people we did not know.<sup>220</sup>

This passage is useful insofar as it provides a casual and fairly neutral snapshot of Chinese soldiers in Manchuria, but interestingly, it is not only the soldiers that unsettled the writer. Yosano and her companions, as Japanese travelers in China during a time of unrest, may have felt their discomfort at the military and Chinese soldiers more acutely due to their identity. In Yosano's account, the space enclosed by the train car is strange and mercurial, Japanese one day and quite the opposite the next, multilingual and ethnically diverse. The changing of this space can be sudden and unpredictable, requiring an adjustment of one's expectations and attitude in response to the train compartment as an inherently unstable space. It can invite anxiety, or more benignly, curiosity as in the case of Yi Donhwa, a Korean writer and editor of a reformist magazine in Seoul, traveling on the train in 1926, who finds himself asking a Japanese passenger

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<sup>220</sup> Fogel, ed., 61.



to teach him a few Chinese words after nearly missing his train because he could not ask for directions from the local Chinese passers-by.<sup>221</sup>

Of course, Japanese writers could be quite harsh about Chinese soldiers. In a trip about two decades earlier (1909), also sponsored by the South Manchurian Railway, the famous Japanese novelist Natsume Soseki (1867-1909) wrote disparagingly of the Chinese characters he encountered on his trip, in one episode highlighting the disheveled appearance of the soldiers by comparing them to coolies (stereotypical uneducated laborers) in physique and stature.<sup>222</sup>

Whereas many Western travelers to the region wrote, often in very romantic tones, of the mounted bandits that roamed the plains, some Korean travelers were often much harsher; Yi Donhwa published an account of his 1926 travels. In it he condemned the "tyranny" of violent soldiers,<sup>223</sup> and after speaking with Koreans living in the Manchuria, claimed that "what's scary to Koreans is not bandits (*mazei*) but the military authorities (*guanjun*). At the same time, he distinguished between good soldiers and bad, lamenting that "the authorities are not the just and righteous soldiers of old."<sup>224</sup> It should be noted that the reason so many Koreans traveled to Manchuria was not only that this was something they could do in the identity of subjects of the Japanese empire, but also because Manchuria was still not yet Japan, and could be imagined as a refuge or alternative homeland or even a consolation—some writers expressed the sentiment that at least Seoul was more advanced than Shenyang, a sorry sight.

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<sup>221</sup> Ch'oe Sam-nyong and Hō Kyōng-jin p'yōn, eds., *Manju kihaengmun* [Accounts of Travel to Manchuria] (Seoul: Pogosa, 2010), 214.

<sup>222</sup> Fogel, ed., pp. 65-66. Well-heeled luminaries of the world of Japanese *belles lettres* such as Tayama Katei (1871-1930), who visited in 1923, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965), and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927) were among those who spent time in Manchuria. For a comprehensive account of Japanese intellectuals and writers who visited the region in the 1910s, 20s, and 30s, see Joshua A. Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China, 1862-1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996) and *Japanese Travelogues of China in the 1920s: The Accounts of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

<sup>223</sup> Fogel, ed., 177.

<sup>224</sup> Fogel, ed., 180.

The city, especially around the area surrounding the train stations, would certainly have been a cacophony of sights and sounds from travelers of different ethnicities and multiple types of vehicles, some automated and others driven by human or animal power, with the train concentrating the city's activities and people. On the trip that took place in October, students and instructors first boarded a train in Shenyang at Shishan Station, which would have been full of people and the sounds of trains, whistles of steam from the engines, and the shouts and cries of workers loading and unloading goods and passengers embarking and disembarking to and from the cars. Departing from Shenyang, the soldiers first traveled to Daling River, a small waterway which runs a fairly straight north-to-south course. From the marshes there, they continued on horseback, making several overnight stops, eventually making their way to Qili River. From Qili River, they then traveled to Jin county by train. The pace of a fifteen-day trip taken over the course of late November and early December was similarly swift, with a mix of horses and trains used as transportation.

While on the trains, especially as a group, the members of the Northeast Military Academy, may have been viewed with wariness by the other passengers. Train stations and train cars were places where people of different ethnicities and/or nationalities and backgrounds could come to a degree of forced closeness that was uncomfortable for some, but also intriguing and worthwhile at the same time to others. Kim Hong Il, a soldier active in the Korean independence movement who graduated from a Chinese military academy in the south, the Lujun jiangwutang (the Army School) writing in a serialized Korean newspaper account in 1925 about talking with some Chinese passengers on a recent trip by rail through Manchuria, related that Chinese soldiers often fraudulently requisitioned or outright seized horses from the local populace and furthermore, had the reputation using horses so hard that they only lasted a single tour of duty.

Chinese soldiers were apparently notorious for not compensating the people they were ostensibly protecting.<sup>225</sup> If travel on horseback was a significant component of the trips, as they appear to have been, making up more than half the itinerary of the trips, the transit and arrival of the Northeast Military Academy students and instructors could have been regarded in a very negative light by the local population, dredging up old but necessarily silent grievances or creating resentment and trepidation.<sup>226</sup>

On the surface, these trips were intended, according to the archival documents as a skills-building exercise. It is possible that they also functioned as a show of force. In the itineraries and army records, they are referred to as *yanxi*, a display or performance, a military review. If it is indeed the case that the trips were treated as a type of display, the reception of the trips would have been mixed. Intriguingly, the locations that appear on the itinerary also suggests that the trips may not have been only a show of force, but an acknowledgment on a deeper level of potential and real weaknesses that had to be addressed.

Occurring in a space and time that was not quite peacetime nor war, but a mixture of both, the trips in some ways trace military engagements that one scholar, Arthur Waldron, has described as perhaps one of the most important struggles for China—the 1924-1925 war, on the heels of another conflict only a couple years prior, between the Northeast Army and its allies and a rival warlord faction in North China, the Zhili clique. Shanhaiguan and the surrounding areas was the site of an important series of battles in late September and October 1924 where Northeast Army forces, while in some ways evenly matched and at key points numerically superior, were almost defeated. Rather than a journey of exploration, it may have been

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<sup>225</sup> Ch'oe Sam-nyong and Hō Kyōng-jin p'yōn, eds., *Manju kihanmun* [Accounts of Travel to Manchuria] (Seoul: Pogosa, 2010), p. 325.

<sup>226</sup> The reputation of Chinese soldiers was generally poor, as many contemporary observers and subsequent scholars have noted.

simultaneously one in anticipation of future conflict and a reflection on a previous conflict. The 1924-1925 conflict, known as the Second Fengtian-Zhili War, was one of the most important wars fought between rival Chinese forces during the Republican period. The Zhili forces, led by the warlord Wu Peifu, were able to bottleneck Zhang Zuolin's Northeast forces, and despite intensive fighting between Zhang's 5th Army and Wu's men (numbering approximately 120,000), the two sides remained at a stalemate during the first week of October.

Within a week, the fighting had shifted to the nearby Dashi and Sha rivers, and by October 15, the fighting involved more than 70,000 men on the Northeast side and 60,000 on the Zhili side. The intense fighting continued until the end of October, when Wu Peifu, pressing a possibly decisive advantage, had to suddenly abandon his campaign thanks to the betrayal of his erstwhile ally, warlord Feng Yuxiang, back in Beijing. Taking place by land, sea, and air, this was a major series of protracted battles upon which the long-term fate of each army rested. The forces of Zhang Zuolin had much to thank Feng Yuxiang for. A "World War I"-style war, the fighting was characterized by partial breakthroughs that left the seemingly winning side unable to defend its new position, transportation challenges that left each sides' forces stretched thin, and wide swatches of territory that, once gained, were marred by lack of adequate coverage. Rail in the area was not standardized, for example, the transport line running parallel to the Dashi and Sha rivers was a narrow guage line normally used for hauling coal to the nearby village of Shimenzhai.<sup>227</sup> In the aftermath of the war, contemporary observers also reported on the attention paid to Shanhaiguan by northeastern forces.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the war and its effects and consequences, see Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924-1925* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For more detail on the Shanhaiguan campaign, which I have only briefly outlined here, see pages 102-118. For a discussion of of Feng Yuxiang's coup d'état, see chapters 9 and 10.

<sup>228</sup> "Zhang Zuolin xiang yao zhongqu Shanhaiguan [Zhang Zuolin intends to capture Shanhaiguan again]," in *Nongmin* [Farmer's Daily], no. 31 (1926): 4.

One of the trips was undertaken by students who were learning about the building of permanent fortifications and related engineering tasks and their instructors. This concern with defense, insofar as it can be deduced from the itineraries and their travelers largely composed of instructors and advanced training classes of the Northeast Military Academy, suggests that the near-defeats that the Northeast Military suffered in late 1924 and early 1925 in Shanhaiguan and surrounding areas had left a deep impression, and felt a need to be prepared for possible future engagements. For the soldiers at the Northeast Military Academy, then, the terrain covered by this trip and their destinations would not have been the kind of empty space that Japanese colonialists envisioned, a land of adventure and romance imagined by travelers from many different countries, or the space for political hopes and dreams and disappointments for Korean nationalists. It was contested terrain, to be sure, but one that followed the needs and limits of military logistics, for waging and winning battles and securing resources, supply lines, and territory. The political and imaginative terrains of Manchuria as it stood by the 1930s intersected and inflected each other in multiple ways for the cadets and officers of the Northeast Military Academy. These men were highly mobile, and in the trips, used this mobility to attempt to improve upon and bolster the integrity of the institution and its future. A mode of knowledge production more than they were travel, insofar as the itineraries are concerned, the training trips of the Northeast Military Academy engaged the school's cadets and instructors on a mission to better understand, verify, and defend their place in Manchuria in relation to the many types of movement and positions being staked around them.

## CONCLUSION

Although long settled, northeast China retained a reputation both at home and abroad for lawlessness and untold opportunities going into the twentieth century, and the political uncertainty and increased military competition of early twentieth century China only added to this image. The Northeast Army, led by Zhang Zuolin, Zhang Xueliang, and the elite officers trained at the Northeast Military Academy, attempted to bring a measure of order to the northeast and extend that control to the rest of China through military means. The fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 ushered in the rise of numerous regional military leaders who vied for control of the country, and in northeast China, the forces of the Northeast Army came to power in fits and starts during the Republican period, alternately aided and foiled by Japanese and Chinese rivals and allies alike. The Northeast Military Academy, the major training institution for the Northeast Army, played a key role in the development of the military power of these warlords. Engaged in the task of turning out trained officers, the Northeast Military Academy attempted to create modern military men who would not only lead the forces of the Northeast Army into victory across the rest of China, but become exemplary leaders as well. The Northeast Military Academy was occupied with not simply building strong individuals who could shoulder this task, but a collective body that could persevere in the face of potentially deadly challenges and go on to withstand the passing of time. The building of this multidimensional body was a means, not an end, to the matter of the survival of the organization and the preservation and expansion of the organization's ability to exercise power and influence over China and determine the direction that it would take.

For the extent of their combined impact on the course of Chinese politics and history in the twentieth century, ordinary soldiers of the Republican period have left behind few traces in archival records relative to many other groups. Whereas the elite military men that made up the officer corps of the Northeast Army can be discerned in more detail than the common soldiers of the time, they remain elusive, and this dissertation has sought to flesh out their time at the Northeast Military Academy through the documentary traces they have left behind. The professionalization of different groups in Republican China and the increase in professional organizations is a fascinating story,<sup>229</sup> and the ways in which a group of military men were shaped into a professional corps of officers is one important part of this phenomenon. The members of the Northeast Military Academy employed various methods to become modern military men, a task that some administrators and instructors saw as an uphill battle, and a process that some cadets found challenging to internalize in the way that the school wished.

This institution, located at the periphery of a China that was in flux, was nonetheless a part of broader changes during this period. Like other Republican-era institutions, the Northeast Military Academy was a site where ideas, personnel, and broader cultural flows came together and emerged in different and even new configurations.<sup>230</sup> The culture of the school was shaped from directives from above, and yet manifested in the individuals who practiced it every day. While governed by regulations and received traditions, a successful military culture, like successful military institutions, outlast the individuals who practice it, and yet cannot but be

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<sup>229</sup> See Yin Xu and Xiaoqun Xu, "Becoming Professional: Chinese Accountants in Early Twentieth Century Shanghai," in *The Accounting Historians Journal* 30, no. 1 (June 2003): 129-153, and Zuoyue Wang, "Saving China through Science: The Science Society of China, Scientific Nationalism, and Civil Society in Republican China," in *Osiris*, 2nd Series, 17 (2002): 291-322.

<sup>230</sup> Among others, Republican educational institutions, and schools founded by or affiliated with missionary organizations in particular, have received a great deal of scholarly attention for the rich archival sources they provide and their impact in the elite circles of late twentieth century China. For example, see works on the Yenching University in *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 14, Special Volume—Yenching University and Sino-American Interactions, 1919–1952 (2007).

changed as it is practiced. And yet, the visual and material culture of the Northeast Military Academy found its most complete and coherent representation in the school's graduation albums, works create for the purpose of preserving individual members and affix to them a set of meanings and values that would not change.

The school was highly concerned with the image it projected, and in many respects the graduation albums provide an ideal canvas for demonstrate the visual and spiritual unity of the collective body of graduating cadets alongside their instructors and administrators of the school. At the same time, in their preservation of individual identities in the photographic portraits and multiple voices in the form of the prefaces, the albums elude a stability of meaning. The single, unified collective portrait that the Northeast Military School tries to provide depends on the articulation of individual faces, names, and the evocation of the individual experiences that these images encapsulate. In the albums, one cannot exist without the other, and yet it is by the very inclusion of the individual components that prevents the collective identity being produced from being constant. Far from being the immutable record of an institution and a repository of unchanging memories, the albums contain within themselves the ingredients for its own destabilization. The potential for complication and opportunities to mine even more meaning is great. Given their centrality to practices of surveillance and the exercise of colonial power, photography and photographic portraits occupy an uneasy place in the historiographies of Asia. As artifacts created by a Chinese institution for its own particular aims,, in the context of a not-wholly-sovereign and yet not-exactly-colonized Republican China, the graduation albums of the Northeast Military Academy has the potential to complicate ongoing discussions of agency in photography in Asia.



The prefaces of the graduation albums, too, containing the Northeast Military Academy's aspirations for relevance in matters of the nation and the state, have much to offer. The prefaces, in concert with the images of those who trained and graduated from the school together, strongly claim a place for these men among the learned. They assert the morality of the project in which the men are engaged, arguing that the cultivation of military knowledge and practices are necessary to save China. In these textual framing devices for the albums, the graduates of the Northeast Military Academy, as members of a select group, are portrayed as exemplars and leaders not only for China's present but for its future. The bonds of brotherhood that the prefaces describe establish the graduating officers of the school as one united body that not even death may tear apart. Memory held in the collective and instituted in the albums is prescribed as the remedy for the inevitable disappearance of each and every last individual component of the cohort from the world of the living. In their capacity as members of a collective body, all the men will be remembered and thereby shall live on. However, even they convey this encouraging message, the prefaces also reveal much about the insecurities and worries of the Northeast Military Academy in the process.

Part of this worry was centered on the cadets themselves, and was most visible during those times when the habits and values that the school attempted to instill within the cadets did not take. Establishing and maintaining military discipline among its members was not always a smooth process, as records of merits and demerits of the cadets suggest. One of the values that the Northeast Military Academy tried to impress upon its cadets was obedience to not only instructors and superiors but also the order that the school was trying to achieve. Tardiness and absenteeism were not tolerated, and timeliness was one major aspect of the disciplining of the cadets, who were expected to strictly adhere to schedules imposed upon them for training and

classes. The students' everyday habits and also had to follow this order, which necessitated that cadets allow the school to dictate the parameters of basic human functions such as sleeping and eating. Any sleep that did not fall under the parameters of what was allowed in designated times in designated spaces such as the barracks, for instance, would be cause for punishment. In addition, cadets' personal affects had to reflect military discipline, meaning that cadets had to make sure that even the ways their books were kept and arranged had to be a certain way. The school policed its physical boundaries, for example issuing gate passes for students and restricting the number of times and length of time they could leave the school grounds, striving for total control over the lives of the cadets with less than perfect results.

The body of the cadet was the site for the application of military discipline, which encompassed every aspect of their physical bodies and their lives while they were at the school. For these cadets, the consequences for violating order at the Northeast Military Academy could be harsh, involving physical violence and coercive methods in addition to verbal reprimands. They could have their freedom of movement be severely restricted, be beaten or humiliated, or forced to perform physical labor. The cadets, however, were not simply passive recipients of the military culture being created at the school, but individuals expected to internalize it fully and become an active agent in perpetuating it. As they assumed positions of authority and power as elite officers in the Northeast Army, the cadets, as officers, would become the regulators and arbiters of military discipline for their subordinates. The boundaries of military discipline must be affirmed by the individuals who occupy the ranks of military hierarchy in order to be sustained, and requires the participation of all levels of the hierarchy, not only those ensconced at the top. The education that the school provided was intended to continue the life of the organization, with the training of modern military officers as the key for its future.

The Northeast Military Academy, however, was not only a place for the creation of officers, but a site for the consumption of different kinds of materials as well. The school carried out both the processes of production and consumption, as indicated in its use of paper. A carrier of information, paper was vital to the running of the school, becoming the foundation for conveying different kinds of military knowledge. Paper also flowed through the bureaucratic veins of the school in the form of documents and records, facilitating the movement of people and objects and ensuring the school's smooth operation. As the material basis for books and manuals that the cadets and instructors used for training, classes, and studying, paper was indispensable to the schools' aim of creating modern officers suitable for leading troops for the Northeast Army at a time when military might was seen as the decisive factor in determining China's future.

In addition to paper, the school was also the site of the consumption of clothing, food, and the labor and services of various kinds of workmen. Thanks to the western-style military uniforms that they wore, the sartorial affect of the men of the Northeast Military Academy was decidedly modern. The men embodied martial values and strength, enhanced by the visual effect of uniforms that boasted tailored, close-fitting silhouettes and insignia. Uniformed images of modern military men, circulating in the popular mass media, made up a part of a wide array of clothing available during the Republican period. In contrast to the loose, flowing robes of the late imperial era, the western-style uniform signified modernity. The men of the Northeast Military School also consumed leisure products that telegraphed modernity such as tobacco, most likely in the form of the cigarettes that were being both imported from abroad and produced domestically in ever greater numbers in the twentieth century. As markers of sophistication and manly vigor, the appeal of smoking was tempered by its association with vulgarity, and from the

perspective of the school's authorities, smoking posed a disciplinary conundrum, as indicated by its efforts to curb the practice among its cadets.

Maintaining discipline was only one of the issues that the Northeast Military Academy faced in trying to prepare its members for service outside of the walls of the school. The space beyond the school that the cadets and instructors navigated was also woven through with contradictions and tensions. Rival forces engaged the Northeast Army on numerous occasions over the 1920s, necessitating constant recalculations and reassessments of its capabilities and command over resources such as the region's infrastructure. By the Republican period, the rail helped to create some of the urban landscape of Manchuria and made the region one of the most industrialized parts of the country. The deepening and broadening of transportation infrastructure in the region improved communications and increased the integration of its internal trade with external trade. However, it was a conduit for not necessarily peace, but violence and unrest, especially when it was co-opted for military use by both Chinese and Japanese forces. The railways, spurring economic growth that benefited some and created opportunities for others, also exposed and connected people in less positive ways, furthering the extractive goals of those in power and allowing bureaucratic states to reach increasingly individuated subjects. As in other parts of the world outside the borders of late Qing and Republican China, the building of the rail could serve as part of colonial projects to discipline landscapes and establish an infrastructure geared toward extracting resources from colonial hinterlands and make them more accessible. They could facilitate not only the peaceful movement of people and goods, but the movement of troops and supplies for war, as the men of the Northeast Army discovered.

Control over the railways played a key role in military control over the region, and like other players in the region, took advantage of the transformative power of the railways being

built in northeast China. The multiple training trips taken by members of the Northeast Military Academy, partly by rail, suggest that the men were aware that knowledge of the terrain was necessary for military success, and took steps to hone their understanding of regional transportation. On these trips, the cadets and instructors crossed paths with travelers whose different conceptions of Manchuria overlapped and intersected with that of others, the soldiers' included. The effects of wars reverberated outside of the military sphere, to gather in the liminal space of the train in Manchuria among the many different groups – of different national origins, ethnicities, and goals – who traveled the region. The movement of the men of the Northeast Military Academy, in comparison, is fragmented. Rather than narrative, what they have left behind are the bare outlines of movement. In the absence their direct voices, their agency in carrying out these trips are subsumed within the institutional and organizational goal suggested by the trips.

As military elites, the cadets, instructors, and administrators of the Northeast Military Academy enjoyed a great deal of power and prestige, and took part in a broader trend in the growth of military institutions and militarism, as well as the infiltration of military culture into civilian life. The school intended to train and socialize these men in to be leaders and imagined for them a future when military officers would play an active part in shaping the direction that the country would take. The hopes and dreams for a unified and strong Chinese nation, so commonly found among reformers and intellectuals in the Republican period, was also inflected in the lives of these men as seen through the lens of the institution that trained them. As individuals and as part of the collective in which they claimed an everlasting membership, the men of the Northeast Military Academy. Strength alone would not be enough; the training and knowledge imparted by the school housed in sound bodies and minds, was the key to controlling

their own destinies, that of the men under their command, and that of the nation. As military men, they embodied one of many possible physical links between a modern body politic and a strong nation, at a time of ongoing changes in the conception of what a soldier should be and what he should aspire toward in society. As far as it was from the mainstream of elite discourses about the nation, the Northeast Military Academy provides a glimpse at the influence of formal military education in the Republican period on a regionally prominent military group and how it viewed itself as an group. The Northeast Military Academy was most successful in creating an institutional identity through the act of commemoration, and yet even here, that collective identity was not wholly cohesive, subject to the inherent instabilities of memory. Wars, changes in regimes, and the passing of time ended the ambitions of the Northeast Army, and yet, the Northeast Military Academy remains a fascinating site for exploring the formation of individual, group, and institutional identity in Republican China and the search for a Chinese modernity.

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