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Mapping China under Japanese Occupation: Spatial Configurations of State Power during Wartime, 1937–45¹

David Serfass

Introduction

The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) had a tremendous impact on the spatial configuration of state power in China, whether by forcing the transfer by China's Nationalist government of its capital from Nanjing to Chongqing or in the creation by Japan of a new state apparatus in occupied areas of China. In the meantime, China's landscape underwent profound changes, from the massive Yellow River flood of 1938 to the transformation of the border regions as a result of the moving of the government administration westwards, followed by the movement of millions of refugees. In the same way, the size and configuration of China's territory had a significant influence on how the Japanese 'occupation state' took shape, and this process affected, in turn, the way in which China's political landscape was perceived. The occupation forces were gradually organized according to different areas, with each of them sponsoring local pro-Japanese governments. This political configuration of the occupation state was then justified by China's spatial configuration through a rhetoric that rationalized China's political disunity as a consequence of its geography.²

In keeping with the themes of this volume, this chapter seeks to explore how the Japanese occupation of China resulted in not just actual changes to the landscape of China itself, but also to new ways of administering, imagining and mapping occupied China. Drawing on both Japanese and Chinese archival sources from the occupation period, as well as the literature on 'mapping' in wartime Asia, I will show how the Japanese occupation did not lead to a monolithic view of what a wartime and postwar China would look like spatially, but to competing 'maps' of

China that reflected different visions. The chapter makes the case that our understanding of the occupation state can benefit if we take into account the spatiality of state power and the ways in which conflicting political strategies translated into different topographies of the state apparatus. After a preliminary discussion of the occupation state, this chapter focuses on three stages in the remapping of China under Japanese occupation. The first part presents a late 1938 Japanese memorandum promoting the ‘Confederate States of China’, which includes an allegorical sketch of China as a potato plant. The second section addresses the spatial aspect of ‘*huandu*’ (‘return to/of the capital’) – this being one of the main slogans of the collaborationist regime led by Wang Jingwei. It shows that the location of the capital was not only an issue regarding the fierce competition between Beijing and Nanjing, but also between major cities in each province to become the seat of respective provincial governments under occupation. The third part examines the circumstances in which the collaborationist reorganized national government (RNG) decided to create a brand new province in China – Huaihai Province – as part of a larger plan aimed at redrawing China’s administrative map in order to reduce the size of China’s provinces.

The occupation state in wartime China

To manage the large population and territory they encountered in China, the Japanese authorities had to set up new military and civilian agencies, as well as local governments, with the help of Chinese collaborators. This myriad of organizations, both Japanese and Chinese, formed an occupation state whose bureaucratic integration and territorial extent evolved throughout the war. From 1938 on, the state-building process strove to integrate these organizations behind the façade of a ‘new central government in China’ (*Shina shin chūo seifu*), the definition of which changed over time. In autumn 1937, the future Chinese government had been defined as an extension of the provisional government (*linshi zhengfu*) of the Republic of China (PGROC) established in Beijing on 14 December 1937 (Daihōnei rikugun sanbōbu dainibu 1937: 6914–15). However, as the occupied zone expanded with the capture of Shanghai and Nanjing at the end of 1937, followed by Guangzhou and Wuhan in October 1938, a multipolar polity progressively took shape in China. This translated into the establishment of the reformed government (*weixin zhengfu*) of the Republic of China (RGROC) in Nanjing on 28 March 1938, as well as local regimes in Guangzhou and Wuhan. From mid-1938, a new definition of the future Chinese government

emerged – a confederation of autonomous local regimes. At the time, a Chinese confederation appeared as the best possible compromise between the need for Japan's Cabinet to come up with a solution for the Chinese 'quagmire' and the refusal of the Japanese authorities 'on the ground' to give up their control over Chinese local regimes. The first step in this state-building project was the creation of the United Council (*Lianhe weiyuanhui*), established in September 1938 when the PGROC and RGROC were supposed to implement the *bunji gassaku* (cooperation between separate polities) policy (Boyle 1972: 119–22). In early 1939, this project almost materialized into a 'Confederal Republic of China'. This failed, however, in part because of the contradictions that existed between Japanese and Chinese local authorities in Beijing and Nanjing, but also because of the emergence of a new figure in occupied China – Wang Jingwei.

Before defecting from Chongqing in December 1938, Wang Jingwei had been the second most senior leader in China's Nationalist government after Chiang Kai-shek. He owed this position to his prestigious career. Regarded as a national hero after his failed attempt to assassinate the Qing regent in 1910, Wang had become one of the closest associates of Sun Yat-sen (the nominal founder of the Chinese Republic). After Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925, Wang competed with Chiang for the Nationalist leadership, but accepted to form an alliance with Chiang in the aftermath of Japan's invasion of Manchuria in late 1931. As premier of the Nanjing government between 1932 and 1935, Wang embodied the Nationalist Party's (KMT) unpopular policy towards Japanese encroachments. Badly wounded in an assassination attempt on 1 November 1935, Wang was then marginalized by Chiang Kai-shek.

Even though the Japanese expected Wang to join its future confederal state in occupied China as a local actor, Wang demanded that a government modelled after the KMT party-state be established in Nanjing. The Wang group described this legal restoration of the pre-war Nationalist government in its former capital of Nanjing as a '*huandu*'. Such a *huandu* to Nanjing had already become a tradition for the KMT ever since Sun Yat-sen had decided in January 1912 to establish his short-lived presidency of the Republic of China in Nanjing. Chiang Kai-shek did the same on 18 April 1927 to assert his legitimacy against internal rivals. A lesser known *huandu* took place on 1 December 1932 after China's Nationalist government 'returned' from Luoyang – a city it had temporarily moved to in order to take refuge during Japan's attack on Shanghai that year (Musgrove 2013: 23–54, 248; Wu 1999).

Eventually, Wang Jingwei's RNG was inaugurated on 30 March 1940, and was fully recognized by Japan on 30 November 1940. It was designed by Wang

Jingwei's group as the exact opposite of the confederal model that had been envisioned by the Japanese (Martin 2015). Whereas earlier collaborators had been recruited from amongst former (and disgruntled) officials who had been ousted from power by the KMT in 1928, Wang Jingwei claimed to represent the 'orthodox' KMT (in opposition to both Chiang Kai-shek's regime in Chongqing *and* to Chinese collaborators already in place). Opposing Chiang Kai-shek's united front with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its alliance with the Soviet Union, Wang Jingwei wanted to pursue the pre-war policies of the KMT through his wartime regime, and to achieve national unification against internal and external threats (such as communism, which he saw as more dangerous than the Japanese invasion). Within the occupied zone, Wang's centralization project aimed at wresting power from pre-existing collaborationist authorities.

Therefore, from 1940 onwards, the state-building process in occupied China can be summed up as a conflict between, on the one hand, Nanjing's efforts to restore a central political system modelled after the pre-war KMT party-state and, on the other, the centrifugal resistance opposed to this project by older local governments attached to the confederal status quo (especially occupied Beijing and Wuhan).

While previous research has examined many aspects of this process, little is known about how it resulted in successive and often conflicting conceptions of China's administrative map. The notion of 'mapping' is used here in the sense of defining the spatial configuration of the occupation state, actual maps being only one medium for doing so. In fact, historians working on state-building in occupied China will struggle to find *any* relevant maps produced by Chinese collaborationist regimes. To be sure, Japan produced many maps of China during the war – distribution maps of local resources, persuasive maps for propaganda purposes and even board-game maps. However, it seems that the Japanese did not publish any administrative map or 'map-as-logo' of the RNG (in contrast to other areas controlled by the Japanese, such as Manchuria). Meanwhile, Wang Jingwei's government, unlike other modern states, did not use a nationwide map to assert its sovereignty. There was a very good reason for this, since doing so would only have emphasized the obvious gap between the official map of the Republic of China (that is, the state which the Wang regime pretended to represent), and the reality of China's compromised sovereignty under Japanese occupation.³ Indeed, most of China's national territory was beyond the reach of Wang's regime, either because it was outside the occupied zone, or because Japan had cut off large parts of it, whether *de jure* (e.g. Manchukuo and Mengjiang)⁴ or *de facto* (e.g. north China). Even territories supposedly controlled by Nanjing –

rural areas near the capital of Nanjing itself – remained largely autonomous. The Wang regime was well aware of this discrepancy. For example, the regime struggled in 1940 to find anyone to fill the seat of head of its Frontier Regions Committee (*Bianjiang weiyuanhui*); the joke at the time went that the ‘frontier regions’ this committee was to be in charge of were not places such as Tibet or Xinjiang, but the city gates of Nanjing (Jin [1964] 1986: 119).

Nonetheless, the Wang Jingwei regime did try to maintain the fiction that it had inherited the pre-war Chinese state’s administrative map at the provincial level, despite the obvious gap between each province’s legal frontier and the reality of Nanjing’s limited authority. To reconcile this orthodox map with administrative efficiency, the RNG resorted to temporarily remapping its provinces into smaller areas, as in the case of the ‘pacification zones’ during the Rural Pacification (*qingxiang*) campaigns (1941–3). However, in December 1943, it decided to divide the existing provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui into seven smaller provinces, thus renouncing the orthodox map of China that had existed before the Japanese invasion, as well as the legitimacy attached to it.

This lack of maps produced at the time might explain the quasi absence of maps in contemporary studies on the subject. The only general maps of the collaborationist governments established by the Japanese occupation forces in China appear to be those contained in the *Historical Atlas of China’s War of Resistance Against Japan* (*Zhongguo kang-Ri zhanzheng shi dituji*) (Wu 1995: 145, 147, 179). Even though such maps are useful, they are problematic because they give the impression that state power was homogeneous over a clearly delimited zone (whereas, in fact, it was quite the opposite). Of course, the difficulty in representing space and time in a single map is not unique to occupied China. However, it is certainly more difficult in the case of a collaborationist regime such as the RNG because of the blurred nature of sovereignty in this particular context.

China as potato plant: Japanese plans for a confederal polity

The notion of a ‘new central government in China’ was first publicly endorsed by Japan’s Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro in his infamous speech on 16 January 1938, in which he declared that ‘the Imperial Government would no longer deal with the KMT government and instead anticipate[d] the establishment of a new Chinese government worthy of true cooperative relations with the Empire’ (quoted in Hotta 2007: 162). From mid-1938 to mid-1939, Japan’s efforts to

Department of the Central China Expeditionary Army, that is, the section in charge of recruiting Chinese collaborators and setting up pro-Japanese regimes in the Lower Yangtze Delta.⁵ The confederal definition of China was advocated in Tokyo, where the Cabinet needed to come up with results; it was also advocated in the Lower Yangtze Delta, where local Japanese authorities saw it as a means to limit Beijing's hegemony over the occupation state.

The first part of the memorandum aims at proving the superiority of the confederal model over the federal one. The word 'confederation' (*hōren*) is defined in contrast with its opposite, 'federation' (*renpō*). According to Tōwaki's definition, a confederation is a union actively decided by the involved political entities, whereas a federation is passively endured (Tōwaki 1938: 199). Tōwaki's insistence on opposing the two notions stemmed from the confusion that existed at the time, especially among Japanese, as shown by an editorial in the *Asahi shinbun* comparing the future Chinese confederal government to the United States of America – a federal polity (*Asahi* 1938).

To make this opposition even clearer and to promote the confederal model rather than the federal one, Tōwaki resorted to a botanical allegory (see Figure 5.1). He compared the confederal model to a potato plant and the federal model to a loofah plant. The Japanese word for the loofah is '*hechima*', which sounds the same as the Japanese word for 'useless' – a clear indication of Tōwaki's preference. In the first case, the potato stem (representing the central government) grows out from the tubers (local governments), whereas, in the second case, all the loofah pods (local governments) are produced from the same stem (representing the central government). Unlike loofah pods, whose survival depends on the stem that links them together, potatoes are self-supporting: if one of them is pulled up or eaten by worms, other potatoes are not affected, and the plant can continue to grow. As for the distribution of power and resources, the potato plant constitutes a balanced organism in which the above-ground stem provides underground tubers with oxygen and nitrogen, while the tubers keep the plant hydrated. In contrast, the loofah's stem monopolizes all the vital functions of the plant. Tōwaki proceeded to apply this allegory to China's case:

In fact, the Chinese state was originally organized following the confederal system. Ever since the Manchurian Incident, some people have gone so far as to assert that 'China is not a state'. Although, on many points, China cannot be considered a state, it can be seen as one as long as we admit the neologism 'confederal state'.

This passage is remarkable because it explicitly links state-building in Japanese-occupied China to a Meiji-era theory according to which, unlike Japan and the Western powers, China was believed to be unable to reach the nation-state stage of political development. In other words, political disunity in China was not a temporary result of post-imperial disintegration. Rather, disunity was seen by some Japanese theorists as ‘natural’ in China, whereas state centralization could only be temporary. This Japanese ‘China is not a state’ discourse (*Chūgoku hikokuron*) can be traced back to the ‘History of the East’ school (*Tōyōshi*), established by Shiratori Kurakichi in 1894, which directly participated in Japan’s imperial endeavours in China (Hakada 1962: 42). In 1918, when Japan’s dominance over China was reinforced at the end of the First World War, the Japanese nationalist Uchida Ryōhei was among the first to assert that ‘China is not a state’ (Miwa 1990: 135 sq.). As the only east Asian nation-state, Japan had the duty to reshape the region to maintain peace and prosperity. This discourse was used to justify violations of China’s sovereignty.⁶ While Tōwaki approved of this discourse for the most part, he used the confederal model to reconcile this conception of China with Japan’s current project, expressed by Konoe on 16 January 1938, for a new central government in occupied China.

In terms of space, this discourse reflected a certain vision of China’s geography. This was the idea that China’s territory is so large that, since the beginning of China’s long history, Chinese people have formed several local societies different from each other. Therefore, the institutions most suitable in such a political landscape are autonomous local governments:

In a country as large as China, this kind of organization is natural. Since each region, whether it be the north, the centre, the south, the southwest or the northwest, has very different religions, morals, customs, habits and living standards, it seems obvious that, though they share the same interest, each of these economically independent regions develops its own autonomous government.

Tōwaki 1938: 202–3

The confederation project that Tōwaki promoted would enable China to achieve a revolution in both senses of the term – bringing China back to the golden age of local autonomy while transforming the country into a real democracy (as opposed to Chiang Kai-shek’s oppressive centralism). Despite its numerous allusions to China’s federalist movement (*liansheng zizhi yundong*), Tōwaki’s rhetoric cannot hide the fact that his purpose was in direct opposition to Chinese federalists’ agenda. Chinese federalists had long wanted to overcome China’s lack

of national consciousness, echoed in Liang Qichao's famous metaphor of the 'loose sheet of sand' (*yi pan sansha*), by turning provinces into autonomous powers to build a strong and democratic Chinese nation-state (Duara 1995: 177). The territorial contours of the future autonomous regimes in Tōwaki's confederal system had little to do with this agenda. Indeed, his 'potato map' follows the spheres of influence of Japan's occupying armies, rather than local particularisms, which had ended up fitting into provincial frontiers. To be sure, some of Tōwaki's potatoes bear the name of particular provinces (e.g. Sichuan or Gansu), but they only exist in draft form, in anticipation of Japan's further expansion westward (something which did not happen). The potatoes depicting existing governments appear as an *ex post* justification of Japan's arbitrary remapping of occupied China.

Although the Japanese press announced in February 1939 that the Confederal Republic of China was soon to be established (*Asahi* 1939), this never came into existence. Nevertheless, Tōwaki's vision of China's political landscape had a lasting influence on the formation of the occupation state in the following years. Indeed, occupied China's political organization remained a *de facto* confederation of autonomous local regimes for the remainder of the war, especially as far as the Beijing government was concerned.

Opposed to this configuration, the Wang Jingwei group endeavoured, from 1940 onwards, to reinforce the centralization of the occupation state, at least on paper. This policy had many consequences for the political landscape, one of which was to transform the hierarchy within the occupation state. Indeed, an administrative map does not pertain simply to internal and external boundaries, but also to administrative centres of different importance. In the same way that Beijing and Nanjing (that is, both local Japanese authorities and their Chinese collaborators) had competed during the first months of the war to become the capital of the occupation state, the centralization at the provincial level awakened already existing rivalries between major cities in each province to become the seat of the provincial government. This was particularly the case in China's Lower Yangtze Delta.

'Return to the capitals': contested provincial centres

The 'territorial core' of the Wang Jingwei regime included the area inherited from the RGROC (including the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui) as well as the city of Guangzhou (and a few districts around it). Despite being the most

distant provincial capital from Nanjing, Guangzhou was probably the place in which the Wang Jingwei group had the most influence (Yick 2014). This paradox is explained by Wang's connections to his native province (Guangdong), which allowed him to supplant local collaborators who did not have enough time to consolidate their power before Wang's return to Guangzhou in July 1939. Moreover, Guangzhou was less a priority for Japan than north China, where the Wang group never succeeded in expanding its authority.

The Nanjing government's reorganization (*gaizu*) in March 1940, which marked the restoration of the pre-war state organization in application of the *huandu* principle, was also progressively enforced at the local level. Provincial and district governments changed their names and their organization. As for the political and administrative personnel, many Chinese administrators who had been appointed by the Japanese during the first two years of the occupation maintained their posts. This was the case with the governor of Anhui, Ni Daolang, who had acceded to this position in July 1938 (Xu 2005: 271–2).

If the orthodox map had been restored as it was supposed to have been following the *huandu*, the city of Anqing should have been re-established as the capital of Anhui Province (see Figure 5.2). Anqing had been the capital of Anhui between 1760 and 1914 (except during the Taiping Rebellion), as well as during the 'Nanjing decade' (1929–38) under Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government (Zhang 2008). However, in 1938, the RGROC decided to make the city of Wuhu, which was closer to Nanjing, the capital of Anhui Province. Ni Daolang, the provincial governor at the time, had already established an administration in the city of Bengbu, in the northern part of the province, and refused to leave that city (Shen 1986: 90). He had good reasons for this: Ni Daolang had been raised by his uncle, the warlord Ni Sichong (1868–1924), who had been appointed military governor of Anhui Province in 1913. Ni Sichong had his power base in Bengbu, and Ni Daolang inherited such power there after his uncle's death.

In 1940, the reorganization of the occupation state raised hopes among Anhui elites that the newly created RNG might move the provincial capital away from the Huai Valley. Two interest groups appeared at the time to press their case to the Wang government. The first of these was the Anhui Native Place Association at Residence in Nanjing (*Anhui lüjìng tongxianghui*), which had been founded in 1927. This organization lobbied for the provincial capital of Anhui to be moved to Wuhu. However, an organization calling itself the 'Group in Favour of the Transfer of Anhui's Capital' (*Anhui qiansheng qingyuan tuan*) pressed for Anqing to become the provincial capital of Anhui again. Both groups petitioned Wang Jingwei in the weeks following the inauguration of the new government in 1940.

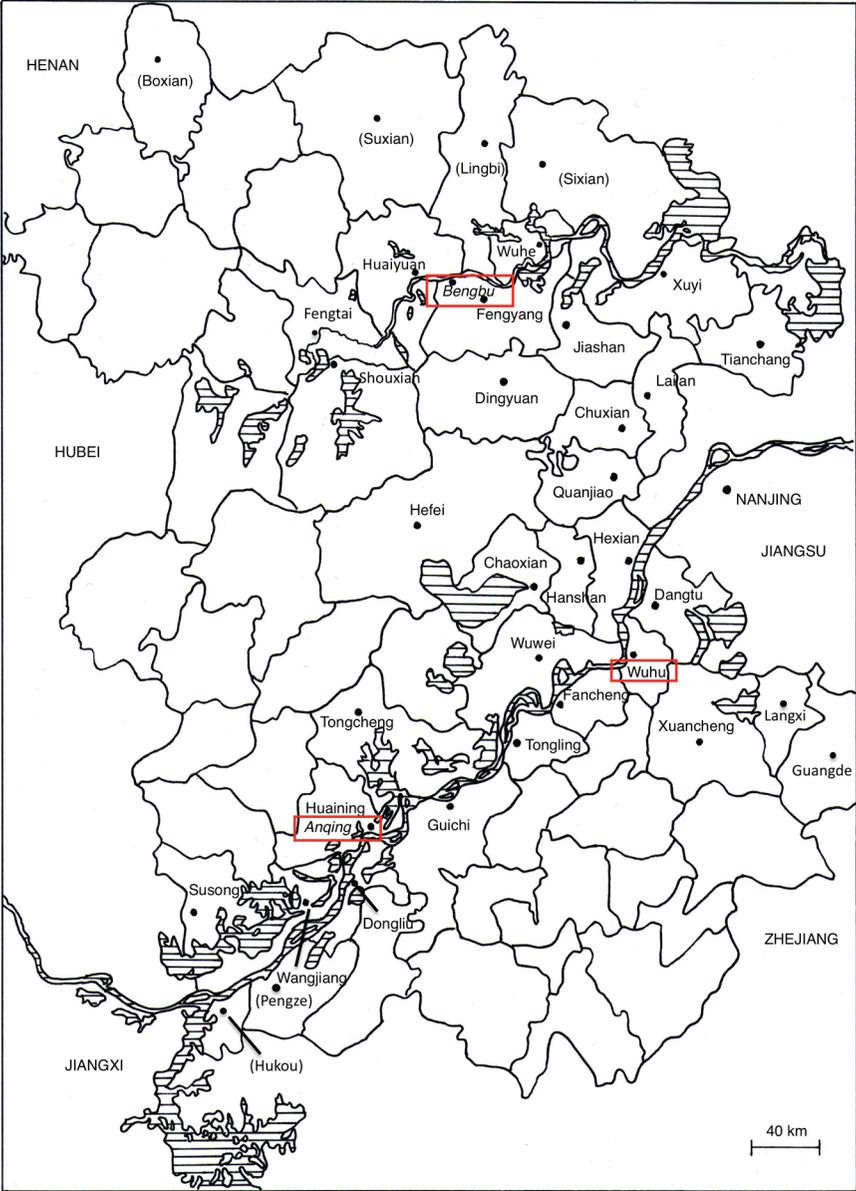


Figure 5.2 Map of districts in Anhui Province controlled by the RNG, with the names of the three contending provincial capitals framed. Map by the author (based on Liu Cheng 2016 and Yu et al. 2006: 1502–3).

The first group in favour of Wuhu complained that the Bengbu administration favoured the northern part of the province and argued that Anqing would not be a good choice because of the war. Wuhu's supporters, however, described their favoured city as an evident choice because of its centrality in the political, economic, military and cultural spheres for the province (*Neizheng* no. 2, May 1940: 56, reprinted in Guojia tushuguan 2012). Meanwhile, the group in favour of Anqing, which seems to have been related to the local chamber of commerce, sent a letter accusing Ni Daolang of corruption (Wang 1995: 162).

Wang Jingwei's Ministry of the Interior eventually pronounced itself in favour of Anqing being made capital of Anhui Province, writing that the '*huandu* principle' should also apply to the local administration, and that Bengbu had only been a 'temporary expedient'. However, as in 1938, Ni Daolang did his best to stay in Bengbu, fearing he would lose his local support if he left. To buy time, Ni sent a team in Anqing to survey a potential transfer of the capital. Its conclusions were, of course, against such a transfer. It presented Anqing as being too close to the Yangtze River and surrounded by cramped walls. According to this report, more than half of the administrative buildings had been destroyed at the beginning of the war and it was difficult to access the city since the river traffic on the Yangtze had not been fully restored yet. As for Wuhu, despite being economically developed, its location made it unfit to govern the province. In the end, the Nanjing government planned to reassess a potential transfer to Anqing in the future, but never did. Anhui's capital stayed in Bengbu until the end of the war (Wang 1995: 162).

A similar debate developed under the RNG about the location of the wartime capital of Jiangsu Province. This was triggered in July 1940 by a petition sent to the Ministry of the Interior by a group calling itself the 'Committee of Zhenjiang Various Circles to Promote the Return of the Provincial Government to Zhenjiang' (*Zhenjiang gejie shengfu huan Zhen cujin weiyuanhui*) asking for the transfer of Jiangsu's capital from the city of Suzhou to the city of Zhenjiang (*Neizheng* no. 4, July 1940: 53–4, reprinted in Guojia tushuguan 2012). This debate about Jiangsu's administrative centre was an old one. It had originated in the division of Jiangnan into several provinces by the newly established Qing Dynasty in 1661. At that time, it was decided to split the office of Jiangsu's financial commissioner (*buzheng shisi*), which was the second most powerful official in a province, into two – the 'right commissioner' would be in charge of the western part of the province and based in Jiangning (now Nanjing), while the 'left commissioner' would be in charge of the eastern part of the province and based in the city of Suzhou. This division persisted through the circuit system

(*dao*), which was an intermediary level between the provincial government and the district governments. In 1908, during the New Policies (*Xinzheng*) period, Chinese authorities launched a centralization policy in favour of Jiangning. However, the 1911 Revolution revived the dispute between Suzhou and Jiangning over the location of the provincial capital of Jiangsu.

Suzhou was chosen as provincial capital between 1912 and 1913, before the Jiangsu government was transferred to Nanjing, through until the installation of China's Nationalist government in 1927 (Ji 2017). In 1928, the KMT's Central Committee voted to transfer the provincial capital out of Nanjing. The city of Zhenjiang was chosen because of its location in the geographic centre of the province (but relatively close to Nanjing). Another reason was that Sun Yat-sen had praised Zhenjiang in his *Plan of National Construction (Jianguo fanglüe)* (Tian 2014: 47–8).

Zhenjiang greatly benefited from its administrative role in the pre-war years, but the city was deeply affected by the Japanese invasion of 1937 (Brook 2005). The Japanese chose to establish Jiangsu's capital in Suzhou, which experienced demographic and economic growth, partly because of the concentration of bureaucratic personnel in the city. In addition to the district and municipal levels already located in Suzhou before the war, the city hosted the provincial level's personnel as well as the massive bureaucracy that the RNG needed to prosecute the Rural Pacification campaigns (to eradicate armed resistance in the countryside) from July 1941 onwards (Wu 2017).

As had been the case in Anhui Province, public figures from Zhenjiang hoped that the *huandu* of the Wang regime would also apply to their city in Jiangsu Province. In a petition, they urged the central government to respect the *fatong* (the legitimate transmission of authority) and stressed the fact that Suzhou's location, far from the centre of the province, was causing harm to Jiangsu. As it had done in the case of Anhui Province, the RNG's Ministry of the Interior dodged the issue by saying that it was in favour of the return of the Jiangsu's provincial capital to Zhenjiang, but that the current situation made this transfer difficult (*Neizheng* no. 4, July 1940: 53, reprinted in Guojia tushuguan).

The debates over the location of provincial capitals in Anhui and Jiangsu suggest that the occupation period should not necessarily be studied separately from the rest of the Republican period or even from earlier periods in Chinese history. To be sure, the spatial configuration of local administrations under the RNG reproduced systems that already existed during the first two years of occupation. Just as in Major Tōwaki's potatoes, such existing configurations

stemmed partly from the institutional structure of the occupying forces. Indeed, Special Service Agencies (Tokumu kikan) had been established in both Bengbu and Suzhou at the beginning of occupation, which helped them become provincial capitals in the collaborationist regimes (Brook 2005: 60). However, this was not the only explanation, as shown by the fact that a Japanese Special Service Agency was also established in Anqing. These “organizational residues” of past landscapes’ (Mostern 2018: 466) had a longer history. In the case of Anhui, this political landscape centred on Bengbu dated back to the warlord period; in Jiangsu, it resulted from an internal competition between cities that was almost as old as the province itself.

These debates over the location of provincial capitals were very much linked to the spatial configuration of these provinces, especially in the case of Anhui. The ‘de facto’ map of Anhui under the RNG formed a strip of districts along the Yangtze and the Huai Rivers, as well as along the main railway lines (such as the Tianjin-Pukou and the Nanjing-Wuhu lines, as well as the Huainan line, which crossed the eastern part of the province from north to south). This lack of territorial coherence in land actually controlled by Nanjing in each province led the Wang regime to reconsider the necessity of maintaining the administrative map of China that it had inherited from the pre-war KMT.

Redrawing the map of China: Huaihai Province

This brings us to another major issue in the spatial history of Japanese-occupied China – scale. To paraphrase Harald Baldersheim and Lawrence E. Rose (2010: 2), the occupation state, as with any other state, sought ‘to achieve a better fit between the scale of governance and the scale of problems.’⁷ In wartime China, administrative efficiency depended on very basic needs, namely the capacity of the central government to control local society in order to maintain order and collect taxes. Small provinces were better suited to such needs.⁸ In contrast, a highly centralized and comparatively efficient government during peacetime can benefit from decentralization and larger provinces in terms of administrative efficiency, as is currently the case in a country such as France.

The problem is that, as previously noted regarding Anhui Province and Jiangsu Province, administrative maps are often less the result of rational reforms than their social context. Moreover, not only do maps result from their social context, they also (to a certain extent) produce it. Indeed, regional identities tend to fit into administrative boundaries. Hence, reforms of administrative maps in

the name of efficiency often trigger opposition in the name of traditions, as was the case in France in 2016 when the number of *régions* was reduced from twenty-seven to eighteen (Fourcin 2016). To be sure, such opposition to state reforms are less of a problem in non-democratic states like Japanese-occupied China. Nonetheless, administrative maps cannot be modified easily – even in societies under military occupation.

As Ruth Mostern (2018: 463) rightly contends: ‘since the capacity to govern people and control resources is a consequence of the ability to delimit territory, internal and external boundaries are not just lines on a map. They are the ideological basis of state power.’ In the case of the Wang Jingwei regime, the administrative map itself was an important symbol of state ideology. Just as the Wang group had fought to restore the name ‘national government’ (*guomin zhengfu*) and retain use of the Chinese national flag (with both being crucial symbols to restore the legitimacy of this regime), the orthodox map had to be maintained. It could not be redrawn without contradicting the very principles of the *huandu* (i.e. a ‘return’ of the old pre-war KMT party-state) and, thus, further weakening the legitimacy of the Wang regime.

In this regard, the situation in China proper differed from that in other parts of Japanese-occupied China, such as Manchuria, where the occupation state’s ideology was not based on the notion of a *huandu*, but on the invention of a new state combining imperial Manchu symbols and those extolling a pan-Asianist Utopia. For this reason, modifying the administrative map was less of a problem there than it was in the Lower Yangtze Delta. Indeed, Japanese authorities in Manchuria kept redrawing provincial boundaries. From four provinces before the invasion, Manchuria was first divided into ten provinces in 1934 and then as many as nineteenth in 1941 (Li 2012: 121–2).

For its part, the Wang Jingwei regime tried for a time to maintain the fiction that it had inherited the pre-war Nationalist government’s administrative map, at least at the provincial level, despite the obvious gap between each province’s legal frontiers and the reality of Nanjing’s limited authority. This gap was nowhere more obvious than in Jiangxi, where only ten of eighty-four districts fell within the occupied zone (*Guomin zhengfu gongbao* no. 539, 20 September 1943: 17, reprinted in *Zhongguo di’er lishi dang’anguan* 1991). The RNG decided nonetheless to create a provincial government in Jiangxi. The process was launched in February 1941, but only materialized in June 1943, despite many petitions sent to Nanjing by local elites. This delay was caused by the Japanese local authorities in Wuhan who had never really relinquished their plan for a regional autonomous government in central China modelled after the PGROC

in Beijing. For this reason, the Hubei provincial government controlled most of Jiangxi's ten districts until 1943 (Chen 2005: 189–203).

To reconcile this orthodox map with administrative efficiency, the Wang regime resorted to temporarily remapping its provinces into smaller areas, as in the case of the 'pacification zones' during the Rural Pacification campaigns between 1941 and 1943 (Serfass 2016). These campaigns were directly inspired by Chiang Kai-shek's anti-communist campaigns in the early 1930s, which had also led to the creation of smaller temporary administrative areas – namely an intermediary level between the provincial government and districts governments, often called 'administrative oversight districts' (*xingzheng ducha qu*). As China's pre-war Nationalist government had done, the RNG presented such redrawing of the administrative map as a temporary measure, as it went against the two-level (provincial and district) map that had been defined by Sun Yat-sen (Fitzgerald 2002: 22–4).

However, in December 1943, the Wang regime decided to permanently modify the size of China's provinces. In other words, Nanjing was now ready to discard the orthodox map and the legitimacy attached to it for the sake of administrative efficiency. The Central Political Committee passed a plan for the 'adjustment of the local administrative organization' (*difang xingzheng jigou tiaozheng yuanze*) (Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'anguan 2002: 178). It stated that the size of the provinces should be reduced, so that each province would include between fifteen and twenty-five districts. This policy would be first tested in the Lower Yangtze Delta through the implementation of a 'Plan for the Division of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui Provinces' (*Su-Zhe-Wan fensheng jihua dagang*), which fundamentally redrew east China's administrative map (see Table 5.1).

According to this plan, the three provinces would be divided into seven provinces. Jiangsu would be split into three provinces: the name Jiangsu was to be used for the areas previously referred to as Sunan ('southern Jiangsu'; that is, districts located on the south bank of the Yangtze River), while, on the north bank of the Yangtze, Suzhong (central Jiangsu) and Subei (northern Jiangsu) would become two provinces called Jiangbei and Huaibei, respectively. This reorganization reflected a long-term problem in Jiangsu – the difficult integration of northern Jiangsu into a provincial administration centred around southern Jiangsu.

As for Anhui Province, the lack of territorial coherence mentioned earlier in this chapter was to be resolved by splitting the province into two: the southern half, along the Yangtze River, would retain the name 'Anhui' and would take the city of Wuhu as its capital; the northern half, along the Huai River, would be

Table 5.1 Plan for the division of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui Provinces

Name of the province	Area	Capital
Jiangsu	Jiangsu districts south to the Yangtze	Wuxian (Suzhou)
Jiangbei	Jiangsu districts north to the Yangtze	Jiangdu (Yangzhou)
Huaibei	Suhuai Special Zone	Xuzhou
Huainan	Northern Anhui districts	Bengbu
Anhui	Southern Anhui districts	Wuhu
Zhejiang	Western Zhejiang districts	Hangzhou
Guiji	Ningshao districts (Ningbo, Shaoxing, Taizhou) and Jinhua	Yinxian (Ningbo)
Shanghai	Unchanged	Shanghai
Nanjing	Addition of Jiangning districts (to be considered)	Nanjing

Source: 'Su-Zhe-Wan fensheng jihua dagang' (Plan for the division of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui Provinces), Central Political Committee, Session no. 130, 2 December 1943 (Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'anguan 2002: 279).

named 'Huainan', and take Bengbu as its capital. Zhejiang was also to be divided between the districts close to Jiangsu, which would form a smaller Zhejiang Province with Hangzhou as its capital, and the eastern part of the province, south to Hangzhou Bay, which would take the port city of Ningbo as its capital.

These new provinces were partly modelled after the *dao* (circuits), the intermediary level between the province and the districts in the Beiyang period's (1916–28) administrative map (Shanghai shangwu yinshuguan 1922). In the case of the new Guiji Province in what had been eastern Zhejiang, even the same name was used.

This plan was in line with the general tendency to reduce the size of China's provinces throughout the Republican period. Kang Youwei's suggestion in the aftermath of China's defeat against Japan in 1895 that the centuries-old administrative map should be redrawn was partly heard by Republican reformers (Guomin zhengfu 1941: 516). Indeed, while there were twenty-three provinces in 1912, there were forty-eight province-level administrative units in 1947, including thirty provinces (Hua 2002: 31–2). However, the pre-war Nationalist government envisioned a more radical remapping of China. As early as 1930, KMT technocrats such as C.C. Wu (Wu Chaoshu) and Chen Lifu had raised the issue during a meeting of the Central Executive Committee (Guomin zhengfu 1941: 520). Like many other KMT policies, their 'Plan for Reducing the Size of

the Provinces' was shelved during the Nanjing decade before resurfacing again in the 1939–41 period (Guomin zhengfu 1940). At the time, a division of China's map into sixty-four provinces was drafted (Guomin zhengfu 1946: 651). It was not until after the war, however, that this plan became a priority for Chiang Kai-shek himself (Jiang 1946). During the five years that followed the Nationalist government's retreat to Taiwan in 1949, the government continued to draw up a 'Provincial Areas Adjustment Plan' (*Tiaozheng shengqu fang'an*) as part of Chiang's grand strategy to recover mainland China from the communists (Xingzhengyuan sheji weiyuanhui 1954).

In 1951, the Ministry of the Interior even published a draft map dividing China into sixty-three provinces (Yap 2009). Jiangsu, Anhui and Zhejiang were split into seven provinces, the boundaries of which were very close to those planned by the RNG in 1943. This shows that, unlike the RNG, the postwar Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan was willing to use maps as a way to assert its sovereignty over mainland China, even though the gap between its nominal sovereignty and its actual authority over this territory was even larger than that of the Wang regime.

Meanwhile, the People's Republic of China did the opposite by reducing the number of province-level units from fifty-three (including twenty-nine provinces) in 1951, to twenty-nine (including twenty-two provinces) in 1958. This number has been stable ever since, but for a few modifications (e.g. the promotion of Chongqing as a province-level municipality in 1997). The current number is thirty-four province-level units (Hua 2002: 32–3).

The RNG's ambitious plan to redraw the administrative map did not materialize before the end of the war. There was, however, one important exception: the creation in January 1944 of Huaihai Province, made out of twenty-one districts taken from northern Jiangsu and Anhui (see Figure 5.3). The RNG's Executive Yuan emphasized the fact that this decision was to be an experiment to study the effect of the adjustment programme (*Guomin zhengfu gongbao* no. 591, 21 January 1944: 6, reprinted in *Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'anguan* 1991).

The reason why this particular region was chosen instead of better-controlled areas such as southern Jiangsu is because Nanjing wanted to enhance its control over this interface zone between the Lower Yangtze Delta and north China. The fact that the control of this region was contested by Nanjing and Beijing, and also the fact that many communist resistance bases were located in it, explains why the administrative map was redrawn so many times during the war, first by creating special zones placed under the direct authority of the central government,

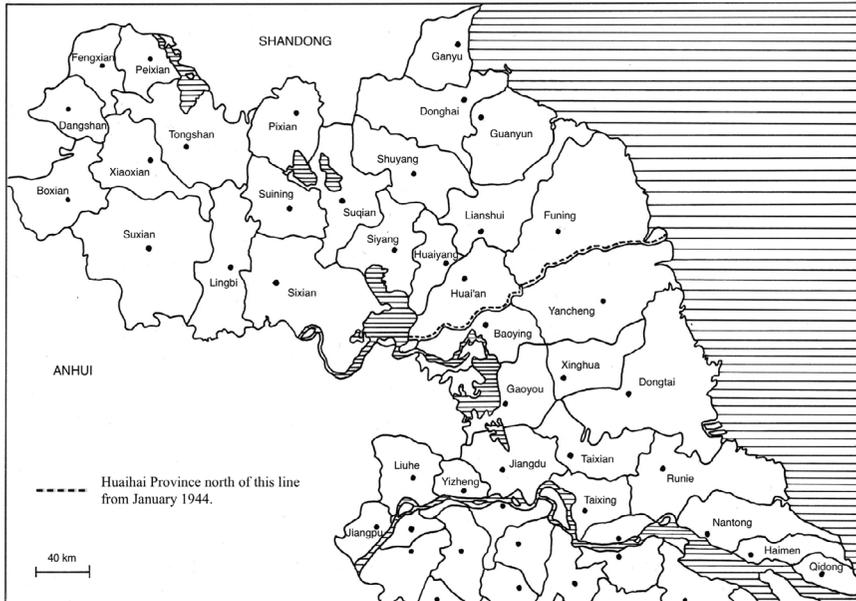


Figure 5.3 Map of northern Jiangsu and Huaihai. Map by the author (based on Liu Cheng 2016; Yu et al. 2006: 1498–501; Zhou and Ren 1981).

and later by establishing a new province in order to integrate the region into the regular administrative apparatus (Yu et al. 2006: 1499–500). Indeed, the redrawing of the map of east China was immediately followed by other manifestations of sovereignty. For instance, the RNG Finance Minister Zhou Fohai announced that, from 1 March 1944, the issuance of the north Chinese currency (*lianyinquan*) would be stopped in Huaihai in favour of the Central Reserve Bank currency (*zhongchuan*) (Yu et al. 2006: 1211).

Conclusion

In a communiqué about the ceremony conducted on 30 March 1942 to mark the return of Sun Yat-Sen's viscera to Nanjing, the RNG's Central Press Agency described 'President Wang Ching-Wei' as the one 'on whom the mantle of the Father of the Republic [Sun Yat-sen] has now fallen' (Central Press Service 1942). Such imagery, used here to express legitimacy, can also be applied to the evolution of the Chinese administrative map under Japanese occupation. The pre-war map of China was like a suit that was too large. Wang Jingwei's so-called 'Nationalist

government' had to wear this suit to pretend that it was the one and only central government of China, even though it was too emaciated to wear such a large suit properly. After using temporary expedients, the Wang regime decided to have the suit tailored so it could fit its owner by reducing the size of its provinces. This dilemma between, on the one hand, the orthodox map and the legitimacy attached to it, and, on the other, a new map based on administrative efficiency, is obvious in the case of the Wang Jingwei regime because of the gap that existed between the fiction of orthodoxy (based on the *huandu* principle) and the realities of the Japanese occupation.

However, this dilemma was in no way specific to this so-called 'puppet' regime, as successive remapping of China under Japanese occupation was similar to efforts which took place before and after the war, be these driven by debates about federalism versus centralism, by arguments over the location of provincial capitals, or by considerations over the optimum scale for provincial administration. In other words, a better understanding of the occupation state in space also allows us to reassess its place in time. Far from being the historical anomalies described in much of the Chinese historiography, 'puppet' regimes such as the one led by Wang Jingwei are an integral part of the *longue durée* of the Chinese state. In this regard, the Wang regime's efforts to map China to reconcile nominal authority, administrative efficiency and Japanese encroachments were similar in nature to those of China's Nationalist government in the 1930s. As shown by Major Tōwaki's memorandum, this long-term view of occupation in China can also contribute to the history of Japan's colonial and wartime empire by shedding new light on how the spatial configuration of the occupation state adapted to both the Chinese existing map and to the Japanese institutional structure.

Notes

- 1 An earlier draft of this paper was presented as part of the 'Cultures of Occupation in 20th Century Asia', Asia Research Institute Seminar Series at the University of Nottingham in January 2019. I thank the organizer Jeremy E. Taylor and the participants of that event, especially Mark Baker and Stephen Legg, for their comments and suggestions. I am also indebted to Oriane de Laubrière and the editors of this volume.
- 2 In this chapter, I borrow the notion of the 'occupation state' from Timothy Brook's ground-breaking work on collaboration (2005). However, I define the occupation

- state not as a synonym of the ‘collaborationist government’ but as a concept referring to an apparatus going beyond the collaboration regimes and including the Japanese military and civilian agencies as well as local governments in China (Serfass 2022).
- 3 Torsten Weber (2013: 44) notes that, unlike Japanese maps, the RNG portrayed ‘Greater Asia’ without any borders. This ‘abolition of national borders’, one can add, revealed the Wang regime’s inability to overcome this gap. Maps can lie, but only up to a certain point.
 - 4 The Chinese abbreviation for ‘Mongol United Autonomous Government’.
 - 5 The preface provides further details on the background of the document: ‘Major Tōwaki used it during a meeting attended by the head of each Special Service Division to explain to them the concept of the confederal system that has been circulating lately among the population of Central China’ (Tōwaki 1938: 197). Since the said major’s given name is not mentioned, we can only assume that the author is Tōwaki Mitsuo (Serfass 2017: 244). ‘Central China’ (J. *Chūshi*; C. *Huazhong*) refers to the Yangzte Delta or east China.
 - 6 When Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in March 1933, it justified the occupation of Manchuria by the fact that China could not be regarded as ‘an organized state’ (Beasley 1991: 200).
 - 7 I thank Kristin Stapleton for introducing me to this book.
 - 8 Provinces were only one aspect of this reconfiguration aiming at reducing the distance between each administrative level and between the bureaucracy and the population. These efforts translated into the creation or the expansion of new bureaucratic levels within the local administrative apparatus (between the provincial and the district echelons) as well as under it through structures such as the *baojia* (an old system set up for policing and mutual surveillance between groups of households). For a discussion of the reciprocal adaptation of administrative organizations and local communities ‘for organizing territory into manageable portions’, see Brook (1985).

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