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Phantom Pains in Manchuria: Dreams, Projection, and Nostalgia

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1. Introduction

Every year, the residents of Heihe, in the Chinese province of Heilongjiang, just across from the Russian city of Blagoveshchensk, commemorate a traumatic event that occurred over a century ago. In the summer of 1900, as the Boxer Rebellion (*Yihetuan yundong* 义和团运动) was raging, authorities in Blagoveshchensk panicked. Fearing that the 8,000 Chinese residents might form a "fifth column," they decided to deport the Chinese community in its entirety. All Chinese residents were driven out of the city at bayonet point and made to swim across the river. Those who were too old or too frail to comply were ruthlessly killed. Altogether, about 5,000 Chinese men, women, and children died on that day (Dyatlov 2003; Qi 2009: 76–79; Zatsepine 2011).

While the tragic events of 1900 undoubtedly marked the lowest point in the relations between China and Russia, much of the twentieth century was punctuated by various troublesome episodes. The border clashes at Damanskii Island (Ch: Zhenbao Island 珍宝岛) in the late 1960s, at the height of the Sino–Soviet split, was an especially critical moment which very nearly led to war between the two countries. The turbulent decades that followed saw the hermetic closure of the international border, and were dominated by much anxiety and paranoid narratives.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, relations between the two sides finally normalized and all outstanding border issues have now been amicably settled. The Sino–Russian border has also become the site of frantic trade, with 70% of all Chinese exports to Russia (some of which then continue on to the rest of Europe) transiting through the inland port of Manzhouli. For many residents in the borderlands, in Russia in particular but also in China, the re-opening of the international border has proven a veritable lifeline, and a great source of economic opportunities. Understandably, therefore, both Russia and China have been eager to downplay the thorny aspects of their common history and to focus instead on positive commonalities. The only museum in Heihe is dedicated to Sino–Russian friendship, to the many Chinese students and migrants who studied and worked in Russia and the Soviet Union, with not a single display mentioning the tragic events of 1900. On the Russian side, the *Amur Regional History Museum*, the principal museum, makes no mention of the events either, and has been careful to arrange

its displays in a "sensitive" fashion.[1)]

In spite of much goodwill, traces of older traumas nonetheless remain. On the Chinese side, a less well-known museum, in Aigun, to which Russian visitors are not allowed, recounts through texts, photos, dioramas, and material objects the massacre of the Chinese residents of Blagoveshchensk. Allegedly,[2)] commemoration of these deaths also takes place every year, when Heihe's inhabitants release paper boats with lit candles into the Amur River. Publications in Chinese (and therefore not accessible to the majority of Russians) also relate the events of 1900 (see Qi 2009). Far from forgotten, the Blagoveshchensk massacre in fact features as one of the events listed in a Chinese book published in 1998 entitled "A Record of National Humiliation" (Callahan 2010).

In Chinese culture, especially in the south, it is common for shrines to be erected to commemorate "the spirits of hungry ghosts, anonymous humans who died under mysterious circumstances or far from home" (Szonyi 2008: 181). The ways in which these violent deaths and traumatic events continue to haunt particular places have been explored by anthropologists in the context of Vietnam (Kwon 2008), China (Szonyi 2008) and elsewhere (Carsten 2007). This aspect forms part of this chapter insofar as they are a node of interaction between place, history, and affect, though my primary focus is somewhat different.

Similarly, my concern for spectral images also extends to the many familial and affective ties that span the international boundary between Russia and China. In addition to the nomadic communities that historically inhabited the region and straddled the border—such as the Buryats for example—many family relations were also formed across ethnic divides. These kinship ties were severed when the border was hermetically sealed between the 1960s and 1980s. Not only were family members on each side unable to visit or keep in touch, but family histories were occasionally rewritten as well. Thus, Russians who had Chinese ancestry frequently constructed alternative histories in order to pass for another Asian group, for Koreans for instance, while actual histories were buried deep and often forgotten. One of my informants related that her grandfather had even hidden his Chinese ancestry from his own wife, only revealing the truth many years into their marriage. On the Chinese side, individuals with mixed heritage were compelled to adopt similar strategies, some carefully dyeing their hair black in order not to attract undue attention (Shishmanova 2011). These genealogical dislocations have led to breaks in both cultural continuity and linguistic knowledge. Connections to the other side only survive in the most tenuous forms, as half-remembered stories and faded photographs.

While these ghostly afterimages and familial palimpsests are part of my overall focus on phantoms, this paper is concerned primarily with spectral lingerings over space itself. While the territorial disputes that long plagued relations between Russia and China were finally resolved amicably in 2008, popular views in both countries remain aligned on previous national incarnations. Thus, for many Russians in the Russian Far East, the city of Harbin and parts of Chinese Manchuria continue to be perceived as culturally Russian; on the Chinese side, vast tracts of the Russian Far East—extending hundreds of miles north of the current border, and encompassing the island of Sakhalin in the east and Lake Baikal in the west—are seen as "historically Chinese" and lost to Russia at a

time when China was weak and politically impotent.

My paper looks at this misalignment between, on the one hand, an official discourse that celebrates the successful resolution of all territorial disputes between the two countries, and on the other, the persistent popular views that the decision taken by the two governments is unsatisfactory. My use of the analogy of "phantom pains" in this chapter is twofold. On the one hand, it seeks to engage with the dominating imagery of the nation as body, in which loss of national territory is routinely framed through corporeal analogies such as mutilation and dismemberment. On the other, the metaphor of phantom pains also speaks to the traces left by former political incarnations and sedimented nationalist discourses. Like phantom pains—recognized by the brain as survivals of an older bodily map that continues to frame neural and emotive responses—territorial phantom pains map out a political imagination unhinged from official narratives, both echoing older concerns and proposing alternative futures.

2. Manchurian Phantom Pains

The phantom limb phenomenon was first observed as early as 1545 by French surgeon Ambroise Paré, who was a battlefield surgeon and one of the fathers of modern surgery. But it would be another three hundred years before a medical article was published on this unusual phenomenon, by American physician Weir Mitchell. Until comparatively recently, surgeons were not sure how to treat the problem, or even whether to take it seriously. To alleviate the pain, a second, and sometimes third, amputation was at times performed, thus making the stump shorter and shorter but failing to make the problem go away (Ramachandran and Blakeslee 1998: 32). Recent research by neuroscientist Vilayanur Ramachandran suggests that phantom pains are the result of a conflict between, on the one hand, the body map held in the patient's brain and, on the other, proprioceptive and visual feedback from that particular limb. In other words, while consciousness recognizes that the limb is no longer there, the brain continues to respond *as if* it were. The topographic map of the body in the somatosensory cortex continues to prevail despite the visible absence of the limb.

This concept of phantom pains closely echoes Sarah Green's notion of tidemarks (Green 2010, 2012)—those elusive yet powerful and evocative traces of past incarnations that stubbornly refuse to fade away. Green defines tidemarks as "traces of movement, which can be repetitive or suddenly change, may generate long-term effects or disappear the next day, but nevertheless continue to mark, or make, a difference that makes a difference" (Green 2012: 585).

Like sea levels shifting with the waxing and waning of the moon, political boundaries are subject to fluctuations—at times expanding to encompass vast areas, at other times retracting to a core nucleus. This process was especially dramatic in the European corridor between Poland and Russia, which over the last three hundred years found itself under Russian, German, Polish, and Ukrainian sovereignties (see Brown 2003). Other borderlands, found on the margins of imperial entities, have also been the theater of political fluctuations. Manchuria, one of the "pivots of Asia" in the words of

Owen Lattimore (Lattimore 1950), on the borderlands of Russia and China, is such a case. In this article, I take Manchuria to encompass not only the three Chinese provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning (usually referred to as *Dongbei* (东北) or "Northeast" in Chinese), but also encompassing the Russian regions of Primorsky Krai and parts of Khabarovsky Krai, Birobidjan, and the Amur Oblast.

Manchuria is found at the crossroads of various empires and the subject of historical claims by their successor states, principally Russia and China, but the region is also crucial to a number of other groups, such as the Koreans and the Japanese.[3)] For Koreans, Manchuria carries great symbolic weight as it is the site of the Koguryŏ Kingdom (37 BC–668 AD) and associated with national foundation myths. Cradle of Korean civilization, southern Manchuria is also the site of the sacred Paektu Mountain, worshiped by both Koreans and Manchus as the place of their ancestral origin.[4)] In addition to these ancient and mythical ties, Korean national affect also seeps northwards on account of the traumatic experience of World War II, when vast population transfers occurred, with millions encouraged (or compelled) by Japan to relocate from the southern peninsula to Manchuria with a view to colonizing and developing the region.[5)] As these population transfers occurred largely from the southern half of the peninsula, resettlement of these displaced masses led to the emergence of a spectral Korean peninsula, literally "flipped over" and overlaid upon southern Manchuria.[6)] For Koreans, Manchuria is thus more than just a territory neighboring their country. It is steeped in both positive and negative affect, and the region features prominently in Korean narratives of both cultural authenticity and loss.

For the Japanese, Manchuria has been just as crucial to their country's modern history. With the creation of the "puppet state"[7)] of Manchukuo (满洲国, 1932–1945), Japan hoped to secure a foothold on the mainland with the further goal of controlling the rest of the Asian continent. Japanese involvement in Manchuria led to countless human and personal tragedies. In addition to the numerous Chinese and Korean casualties, around 1.5 million Japanese perished in Manchuria—the highest death toll in fact of Japanese civilians in World War II (Itoh 2010). After the war, 1.2 million Japanese civilians were repatriated, but many were left behind.[8)]

But if the Japanese psyche associates Manchuria with war, loss, and suffering, Manchuria is also a place which has been imbued with much hope and anticipation, and imagined as a place where utopia, or "a new heaven on earth" (*shintenchi*) could be built (Young 1999: 5). As Prasenjit Duara (Duara 2003: 62) wrote, "idealists and visionaries of every hue saw there a frontier of boundless possibilities that were unlikely to be found in any other part of the Japanese Empire." It was presented to the Japanese as a vast, virgin land (Tamanoi 2009: 2) where the nation could be reinvented and renewed.

These wartime Japanese narratives in fact closely echoed Russian (and Soviet) discourse about the region. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the nation's attention was redirected towards northeast Asia, focusing specifically on the Amur River. Suddenly, historian Mark Bassin writes, "an obscure region which had not only been a virtual terra incognita for the Russians but moreover did not even figure as a part of their imperial dominions was able to attract the interest of the entire society, excite widespread

enthusiasm, and even nourish the dreams of the country's most outstanding social and political visionaries" (Bassin 1999: 2). In fact, the very lack of knowledge about this region made it possible to imbue it with a rich "kaleidoscope of meanings and significations" (Bassin 1999: 8). It constituted an empty signifier which could become the vector for the political and social preoccupations of the moment.

The Amur region, and later the Primor'e and Chinese Manchuria, were in fact akin to a blank canvas, onto which a renewed and revitalized Russian future could be projected. Thus, parallels with the New World and America were rife, with Kropotkin comparing the Amur River to the Mississippi, and Murav'ev equating the town of Nikolaevsk with San Francisco. The discovery of gold and other riches, and the subsequent mushrooming of settlements such as the so-called Zheltuga Republic, greatly facilitated these associations (see Gamsa 2003; Kurto 2011). Later, the founding of Harbin—a node of Russian culture deep in Chinese Manchuria—was invested with similar significance, as a later section of this chapter will make explicit.

For the Chinese nation, Manchuria has also been symbolically central, with many contemporary Chinese cultural associations directly inherited from the Manchu after whom the region is named. The Amur River, which later came to delineate the international border between Russia and China, was especially crucial to both: for Russians, it was the only access to the Pacific Ocean; for the Manchu, it was a sacred river integral to their mythology. As the Russians consolidated their presence in the region, they began to impinge upon Manchu territory. The treaties of Nerchinsk (1689) and Beijing (1860) were the outcome of the dramatic encounter between two culturally

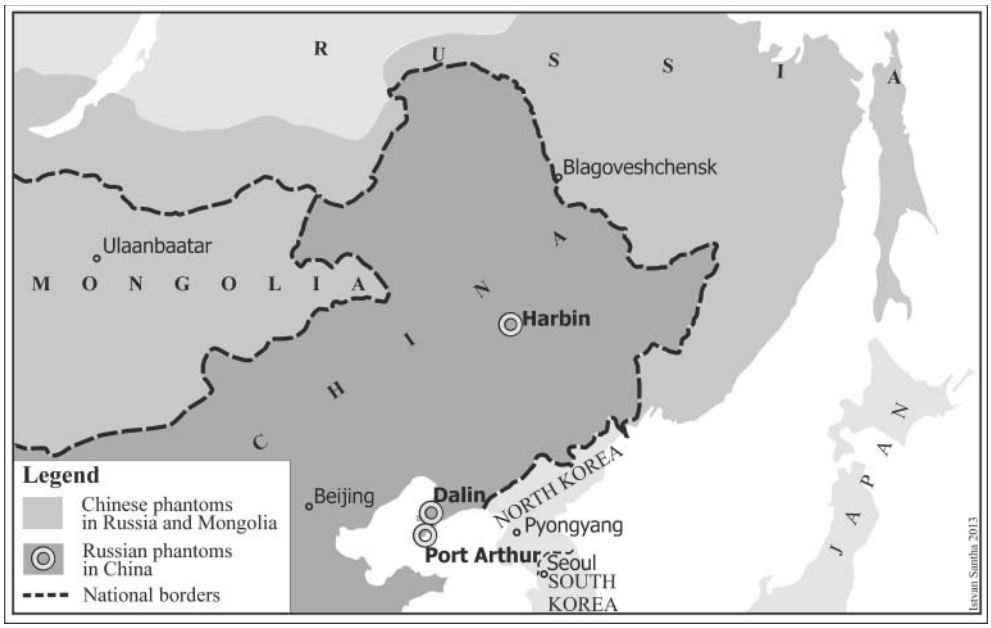

Figure 1 Phantom territories in Russia and China (©István Sántha 2013).

different groups, and the seed of much lasting hostility. If neither Russia nor China are currently making territorial claims to territories that are no longer under their control, the region of Manchuria remains, for both of them, as well as for Japan and Korea, a place suffused with affect and steeped in narratives of modernity, progress, and loss.

3. Unbounded China

The formation of the Chinese state has often been described as a process of gradual expansion outwards, slowly incorporating lands on its margins (Fairbank 1968; Tu 1994) in a process of Sinicization or "cooking" of surrounding barbarian groups (Fiskesjö 1999). From a cultural center located in the North China Plain, China is perceived to exist "at the center of an ever-widening series of concentric borderlands" (Potter 2007: 240). The center, or "core," noted Sinologist Owen Lattimore (1967: 41–42), was known as the "central plain" (*zhongyuan* 中原) or "inner China" (*neidi* 内地) and referred to the densely populated, ethnic Han region running from north to south along the coast. The periphery, also known as "frontiers" (*bianjiang* 边疆) or "outer China" (*waidi* 外地) enveloped this Han heartland to the north, west, and southwest.

While this traditional understanding of self and other may not necessarily be reflective of China's modern political worldviews—indeed, China does not appear to differ significantly from other modern polities in this respect—what deserves attention is the assumptions of many of China's neighbors that this model remains dominant. In fact, a large proportion of anxieties about China gravitates precisely around this idea, namely that China continues to perceive itself as a cultural center radiating outwards, and that formal demarcation (and resolution) of her national borders continues to exist in parallel with an ever-advancing cultural front.

One of the reasons why China continues to be seen in this way may be the recurrent Chinese claims that large swathes of western and northern Asia were previously Chinese. If China does not officially claim ownership of polities such as Mongolia, Tuva, or Buryatia, unreflected statements that these countries or regions used to be part of China are frequently perceived as imperialist assertions. Thus, in conversations with Mongols, benign remarks by Chinese interlocutors regarding the historical place of Mongolia with respect to China routinely elicit anger and discursive violence (Billé 2015).

A transhistorical understanding of China based on the widest extent of Chinese presence has, of course, also been actively used to buttress Chinese sovereignty over the provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang, and to foster the notion of *Zhonghua minzu* (中华民族), an umbrella Chinese identity encompassing all 56 Chinese ethnic groups of the PRC. This reframing has greatly facilitated China's claim to Genghis Khan as a Chinese hero (Borchigud 1996) and, by extension, to all the lands ever ruled by Mongols (Sun and Zhang 2006).

Chinese cartographic practices similarly convey a somewhat elastic sense of China. As William Callahan has noted (Callahan 2010: 92–93), official Chinese maps are often imaginative and aspirational, and they inscribe territories not under state control but that could (and should) be part of China's sovereign territory. PRC maps thus include Taiwan

as a province of China, along with the territory of Kashmir, and numerous islands disputed by Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and other southern neighbors. In the same way, until very recently Republic of China (ROC) maps included Outer Mongolia as well as Tuva and other regions included within the territory of the Qing Empire. These numerous, overlapping, and inconsistent cartographic footprints elicit both confusion and anxiety in China's neighbors, and lead to an image of China that continues to be viewed as imperialistic and land-hungry.

From the Chinese perspective, lost territories formerly included within the national boundaries qualify as phantoms insofar as they are closely associated with traumatic events and with what is called the "Century of National Humiliation" (*bainian guochi* 百年国耻) i.e., the period of foreign intervention and imperialism by Western powers and Japan in China between 1839 and 1949. This is made graphically evident in maps of national humiliation that often mark in red ink the treaty ports, massacres, and other wounds inflicted upon China during that time (Callahan 2010: 105). Even if these lost territories are not officially claimed by China, they retain a strong metaphoric force. Though some of these territories may be little more than tiny specks of land, they nonetheless condense spatially much pride and national affect. They are therefore often invested with a significance that extends well beyond geopolitical or material resources.

A dramatic example of this was seen in the years when Russia and China were working on a resolution concerning their remaining territorial disputes. It had been agreed as early as 1991 that Damansky Island (Ch: *Zhenbaodao* 珍宝岛), the site of the Sino–Soviet clashes in 1969 that subsequently led to the Sino–Soviet split, would be ceded to China, but two unresolved disputes still remained: the Bolshoi Ussuriisk (Ch:*Heixiazidao* 黑瞎子岛) and Tarabarov (Ch: *Yinlongdao* 银龙岛) Islands, located near the Russian city of Khabarovsk. In an article published in 2002, the Russian newspaper Izvestia reported that some Chinese were surreptitiously throwing rocks and sandbags into the Amur River, allegedly in an attempt to increase Chinese territory by linking disputed river islands to their side of the river (Kuhrt 2007: 127).

China eventually (re)gained sovereignty over Tarabarov Island in 2004, after the shallowing of the river resulted in the island becoming attached to the Chinese bank and rendering the dispute moot (Kuhrt 2007: 33). This reintegration into the national map was perceived as a recomposition of the country's natural shape, namely the cockerel, whose crest had been missing its tip (The Economist 2008). Despite its small size, the missing island had been experienced like a lost limb, without which the country had been mutilated and its true shape compromised.

The next section of my chapter looks at Russian phantoms in China, but before I do so, it is important to bear in mind that the phantoms of the Other have material consequences and practical effects for the self as well. This is especially clear in the case of Chinese phantom survivals in Russia. In retracing the long history of the region, from the time of the first human settlers to the present day, the *Amur Regional History Museum* carefully avoids all mention of Chinese inhabitants. Yet most of the principal Russian cities in the region, such as Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, and Ussuriisk emerged around 600 AD as Chinese settlements (Alexseev 2006: 111). The museum describes the

ancient settlements located on the Russian side of the border as Manchu or Evenki, ethnic groups unrelated to the Han. This emphasis on the excision of all Chinese presence north of the Amur River is not limited to the museum of Blagoveshchensk. As historian James Stephan (Stephan1994: 19) has shown, as early as the 1970s, Soviet archaeologists and historians were careful to cleanse the territories included within the Russian borders from Chinese historic presence by renaming over a thousand locales. Traditionally, the Chinese name for Vladivostok was *Haishenwai*, Khabarovsk was called *Boli*, and Ussuriisk was known as *Shuangchengzi*. While these locales tend today to be referred to by their Russian names, i.e., *Fuladiwosituoke*, *Habaluofisike* and *Wusulisike*, these transliterations have not wholly displaced former names and in informal conversations older Chinese names often resurface. What these older names index is the enduring national "body map" held by some Chinese. These lexical phantoms are often resented by the Russians, who understand these alternate names as Chinese claims to historical precedence and sovereignty.

Lexical significance and resonance is clearly visible in naming practices. Like migrants and pioneers elsewhere, Russian settlers gave names that were meaningful to them in terms of history and personal provenance, or names that projected a successful future. Names like Blagoveshchensk ("Annunciation") or Vladivostok ("Ruler of the East") are indicative of this phantasmatic lexical dimension.

Thus, the Russian insistence on suppressing older Chinese names, just as the reluctance to have Chinese characters on official signs (unlike Heihe, where street names are in Chinese, Russian, and English) are, I suggest, a reaction against a Chinese ghostly layer overlaid upon much of the Russian Far East. It is primarily as a response to this spatial palimpsest that the ubiquitous presence of historic monuments on the Russian side should be construed.

Similarly, the enduring reluctance to build a bridge across the river, or the media stories that Chinatowns are mushrooming all over the Russian Far East and undermining Russian sovereignty in the region, can be seen as traces of suppressed histories. Tellingly, I think, the commemorations by Heihe's Chinese of the fateful events of 1900 were stories I heard from Russians in Blagoveshchensk. While the Blagoveshchensk massacre disappeared from Russian history books and museum exhibitions, its phantasmatic presence continues to exert force, via transference and projection, through imagined Chinese commemorating practices.

4. Nodes of Europeanness in "Deep" Asia

A fascinating aspect of the Sino–Russian border in Manchuria is the mirrored layering structure of the international boundary. While Chinese space has traditionally been conceptualized, as I showed, as a series of concentric circles around a Chinese core, Russian sovereign space is similarly striated by several layers of protection and buffer zones marking the limits of the polity. The Russian state border is thus supplemented by further lines of defense. Virtually the whole length of Russia's border with China is paralleled by two additional kinds of demarcation: a no-man's land (*dublirovanie*

pogranichnoi polosy) that frequently includes ploughed out strips and that, at some points along the border, may extend to widths of several miles; and a zone of fortification (*ukreplennye rayony*), which typically includes obstructions and/or minefields. In addition, at several points one also finds what historian Prescott has called "relict boundaries" (1987: 14), i.e., ancient lines of demarcation that have been abandoned but continue to endure through differences in the landscape.

The Great Wall is perhaps the most visible and emblematic of such relict boundary lines, but it is not the only one. The cultural front between China and her northern neighbors is in fact replete with supplementary boundary markers. The "Chingis Khan's Northern Wall" (Severny Val Chingis-Khana) for instance, a 340-mile-long demarcation line built during the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234), was the first and unsuccessful attempt by Jurchen rulers to protect themselves from Tatar and Mongolian tribes (Logvinchuk 2006). Some of these older lines of defense have now grown faint and barely perceptible, but their effects tend to be long-lasting. At sites that marked the divide between Eastern and Western Europe for instance, lines of fracture are still apparent on the ground (Nugent 2012: 564). A palimpsest of overlapping political realms, borderland environments are frequently dotted with ruins—of castles, churches, and fortifications (Szmagalska-Follis 2008: 337). At times, differing practices of land use also leads to drastic differences in the physical landscape and ecology. These various historical lines are, I suggest, a fitting illustration for Sarah Green's notion of tidemarks, that temporal oscillation of lines of sovereignty over space.

Interestingly, at the same time as Russia insists on the absence of folded space as far as the Russian Far East is concerned, several places throughout Chinese Manchuria remain invested with affect and a ghostly Russian presence. The most important of such nodes is Harbin, a city originally founded by Russians at the turn of the twentieth century, as the Chinese Eastern Railway (or *Kitaisko-Vostochnaya zheleznaya doroga*) was being built. A Russian-owned enterprise that linked Chita to Vladivostok, the Chinese Eastern Railway brought a large contingent of Russians to the region and led to the founding of Harbin, a Russian city within Chinese territory.

For several decades, the city of Harbin remained very Russian, spatially and culturally organized around the Saint Sophia Cathedral, one of the largest Christian churches in Asia. Harbin grew significantly after the Bolshevik Revolution, to eventually become the largest center of Russian population outside of the state of Russia. The streets of Harbin were lined with European-style buildings, and the city was known as the Paris of the East on account of its strong European presence and rich cultural life (Carter 2002). But in the 1930s, following Japanese occupation of Manchuria, most Russians left the city, some for the Soviet Union, others for other cities in China and eventually abroad. By the early 1960s, only a handful of Russians still remained, most of them elderly.

In the course of my fieldwork in Blagoveshchensk, whenever I spoke with local residents about Harbin, the city was unfailingly described to me as Russian. Irrespective of the age of the interviewee, the impression generally conveyed was that Harbin had somehow remained part of the Russian cultural topography. Harbin is the nearest sizeable

Chinese city for Blagoveshchensk residents and this is one of the reasons why it is an important destination for tourism and education, but the appeal is also due to its perceived Russianness. The sentiments expressed by Irina, a PhD student, echo what a number of other respondents also felt:

> I've been to Harbin, I liked it. It's a Russian city, and the Chinese in Harbin have good attitudes towards Russians. Quite a few Chinese there can speak Russian, some of them have Russian ancestors. There are also Russian schools, a Russian church, and many buildings left from the time Russians lived there. Many Russians also study there. There is a shop called Churin, it used to be a big Russian shop. It's still there but it's a Chinese trade center now.

However, accounts of personal experiences of the city often differed from these descriptions. More often than not, those Harbin residents who spoke Russian were in fact interpreters or tour guides, so with the majority of Harbin residents, Russian visitors had to speak English or Chinese. Interestingly, Chinese residents of Harbin do not share these perceptions of cultural hybridity. For Zhang Min, a young Chinese woman from Harbin currently studying in Blagoveshchensk, Harbin is not particularly Russian. Yes, she agreed, it is true some of the architecture is Russian. The local beer is also quite similar to Russian beer. But neither she nor her family ever thought of Harbin in those terms. In fact, Harbin is in many ways a quintessentially Chinese city. It is known in China as the city with the purest, unaccented Mandarin, and its residents are keen to stress that "a disproportionate number of China's television and radio announcers hail from this northernmost city" (Carter 2002: 12). Yet, for Russians it remains a space that feels somehow familiar, with a ghostly Russian past that continues to endure.

If the original Russian buildings still found in Harbin constitute only a tiny fraction of the modern city, their central location gives them an undeniable prominence. Many of these buildings, like Churin, have retained only their skeletal structure and have taken on a new Chinese life. These "urban palimpsests," in the words of historian Andreas Huyssen (2003), are for many Russians tied to ideas of loss. Like ruins, they evoke a sense of nostalgia about a golden past (Stewart 1984; Ivy 1995; Navaro-Yashin 2012) and about a future that never was (Boym 2001).

Indeed, the sense of loss that pervades accounts of Russian Harbin (see Bakich 2000) is not simply linked to a past era when Russia was playing an important role in Asia, it also mourns the loss of a promise of a golden future. For Russians, Manchuria was a place where they could stage their own Europeanness and showcase technological advances. By building a railway line that would link European Russia to several sea ports in China, Russians were hoping to achieve equality with Europeans. The founding of Harbin was similarly potent symbolically. The emphasis on the cosmopolitanism of the city and the recurrent comparisons with Paris were not casual. They constituted a claim that Russia was just as capable as the rest of Europe of taking on the role of colonial ruler.

Just like the Russian buildings still standing in Harbin, the railway line remains the

primary and underlying communication structure. Like a skeleton, its presence highlights the crucial role of infrastructure in the conceptualization of phantoms. Indeed, Russian phantoms are in fact articulated along these older links. While the spatiality of the Chinese phantoms is imagined as extending outwards somewhat homogenously, Russian phantoms are nodular, spots of Russian presence along the Chinese Eastern Railway line: Harbin, Dalian, Port Arthur. And whereas Chinese phantom territories are extensive, imagined to stretch across lands rich in ginseng, tigers, bears, and other resources, Russian phantoms are localized, some of them deep within China, like Dalian (Billé 2014). Unlike the Chinese phantom territories, Russian phantom space is inherently fractured and discontinuous.

5. Conclusion

Both Russia and China are post-imperial states with a strong sense of their place in the world. They are also two of the five nations classed as "Rising Powers." Of these five nations, only three have common borders. As a site of unresolved conflict, the border between China and India has been the focus of numerous studies; by contrast, the Manchurian border, settled amicably and no longer subject to dispute, has not received comparable attention.[9] Yet Manchuria is a fascinating region to study. Deeply embedded in both Chinese and Russian national narratives, it remains symbolically crucial to both countries.

For the Chinese, Manchuria is a place central to the theme of national humiliation. While other Qing territories were lost elsewhere, Manchuria was the scene of especially vast losses—in his famous speech of July 1964 to a Japanese delegation, Mao Zedong spoke of 1 million square miles stolen by Russia. In reactivating a mythical past that imagines a greater China stretching all the way north to the Arctic Ocean, China is reclaiming its own history without interference from others. The cartographic stretching of its own national body northward (but also eastward and southward to include countless islands) illustrates a desire to find its own place in the world, to reclaim what is due but was unfairly taken away.

Recently, some Chinese nationalists have begun referring to China's lost territories in Manchuria (what are now the Russian regions of Primorsky Krai and parts of Khabarovsky Krai, Birobidjan, and the Amur Oblast) as "Outer Manchuria" (*Wai Dongbei*). While this name has not yet gained wide acceptance,[10] it is an interesting development insofar as it is constructed on the same model as "Outer Mongolia" (*Wai Menggu*), thus suggesting that this vast territory was previously an integral part of China, on a par with Mongolia. The "outer" element (*wai*) echoes here a territory inalienably part of China, bringing the two parts into dialogue and hinting at a primordial unity.[11] This is particularly true in the case of "Wai Dongbei" since *dongbei* is in fact translated as "North-East." In effect, therefore, *Wai Dongbei* extends the Chinese northeast to encompass the territory lost to Russia with the signature of the Convention of Beijing in 1860. These lexical aspects are an apt illustration of the spectral afterimages discussed here in that they seek to culturally appropriate territories not included within the polity

(and accepted as such) but which continue to exert affective power in nationalist narratives.

In the context of Russia, Manchuria is just as rich in history and significance. For Russians, China has long been a stage on which they could enact their own Europeanness, convey their own messianic message, and claim equality with the West. That Asia acted as a terrain onto which political and cultural aspirations could be actively projected was in fact made explicit by Fyodor Dostoyevsky in the late 1880s: "In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, but in Asia we shall be the masters. In Europe we were Tatars, but in Asia we too are Europeans" (Dostoevsky 1995: 1374).

Unlike Africa or Indonesia, which for European powers were alien lands, Asia was immediately contiguous to Russia. Indeed, the very cultural and geographic continuum between the Russian core and its eastern possessions renders it difficult to draw a clear line between them, (Tolz 2001: 163) which explains why Asia has long stood as the undeveloped, dark side of Russia itself. By shining the light of European culture onto this continent, the Russian (and later Soviet) project was thus less colonial than transformative. As MacFadyen eloquently articulated with regard to Russian presence in Central Asia—and this is certainly applicable to Manchuria as well—Russia "went to war with the absent half of itself" (MacFadyen 2006: xii).

The ethnographic examples given in this chapter show that borderlands are rarely if ever discursively bracketed exclusively by the two nations competing for political control over them. Manchuria is a veritable palimpsest of Chinese, Russian, Japanese, Korean, but also Manchu[12)] presence. The region is also awash with wider, indeed global imaginaries. The Californian "flavor" of the Sino–Russian borderlands unexpectedly reemerged in the early 1990s when the Russian border town of Blagoveshchensk witnessed the proliferation of casinos and quickly became known as "Blago-Vegas." Similarly, if China continues to feel the imprint of wartime Japanese ambitions on its own territory,[13)] ghosts of Japanese presence also endure further west. In Mongolia, rumors have long circulated that Japan, faced with overpopulation and various environmental disasters, plans to relocate millions of its inhabitants to the empty steppes of Mongolia (see Billé 2015). If these rumors certainly speak to geopolitical anxieties specific to Mongolia—a comparatively "empty" land surrounded by densely populated Asian nations—they may also be, I argue, the survival of wartime territorial assertions.

I have argued in this paper that these phantoms are partly about memory, but that they are also strongly future-oriented. They are not simply echoes from the past, but spatial representations of geopolitical imaginations of the future. In addition, they are not just an imaginative layer, they also hold palpable political and cultural potency.

Thus, the Russian phantoms project a sense of familiarity onto parts of China. Harbin is felt to be a town that was built upon a Russian skeleton. This sense of familiarity and closeness leads Russians to visit, create new ties, and thereby rekindle old memories. In effect, these phantoms are creating anew a Russian Harbin. And partly because of this increased visible Russian presence, the city of Harbin has actively tried to capitalize on its Russian heritage: today, Harbin is one of the largest centers in China for the study of Russian and it is also there that the main Russian-language news website in

China operates.

That phantoms of the other also have the power to shape policy is also clear in the reluctance of Russia to build bridges and its insistence on enforcing several layers of border restrictions. As I argued earlier in the paper, the phantoms that animate Chinese nationalist and patriotic aspirations provoke considerable defensiveness in Russian boundary practices and infrastructure. These phantasmatic layers are thus more than an imaginary dimension. Overlaid upon the political world—where the amicable resolution of all territorial disputes is celebrated—these phantoms offer insights into residual anxieties as well as into future dreams and aspirations.

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Notes

1) In addition, when groups of Chinese visit the museum, they are routinely rushed by the display showcasing the Nerchinsk Treaty, one of the unequal treaties signed between Russia and China.
2) I was told about this by Russian interviewees but I have not been able to ascertain whether it is indeed the case.
3) Because of spatial constraints, this paper focuses on Russia and China only.
4) Koreans also share numerous cultural and linguistic affinities with the Manchu as well as other groups in the region, such as the Mongols.
5) In the late 1930s, Japan implemented a policy to relocate peasants to Manchuria (Park 2000: 196). The majority of these relocated Koreans were landless peasants who "escaped poverty and debt and came to Manchuria to seek new land or job opportunities" (Park 2000: 195).
6) This negative image acts as an apt spatial metaphor for the traumatic events of World War II. I am grateful to Prof. Song-Yong Park for drawing my attention to this phantasmatic doppelgänger.
7) Shin'ichi Yamamuro (2006: 4) contests the term "puppet state" and argues that the horrifying details of mass extermination by the Japanese army might better deserve the name of "Auschwitz state."
8) Sixty thousand Japanese remained in Manchuria after the war. In the 1950s, half of them were repatriated. For the remaining 30,000, repatriation resumed in the early 1980s.
9) This is the case in English at least. Many studies exist in both Russian and Chinese (Iwashita, personal communication).
10) The name *Wai Dongbei* does not appear to be used by Chinese academics, but it has gained prominence in non-academic sites such as Chinese Wikipedia (http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/外东北).

11) This inner/outer complementarity was also seen in Japanese wartime discourse with the terms *naichi/gaichi* (内地 / 外地) referring to "inner" and "outer" lands, namely Japan's mainland and its overseas possessions (Tamanoi 2009: 1).
12) The Manchu may themselves qualify as phantoms. If they are today the second most numerous minority in China (10 million, after the Zhuang who number 16 million), the fact that they have experienced a quasi-total loss of their original culture, including their language, and become "invisible," means that Manchuria does not "belong" to anyone (Tamanoi 2009: 11). Manchus have thus been appropriated by various actors under different guises: as a group integral to the modern nation (China), as an ancestral relative (Korea), as an extinct ethnic group (Russia), as a cautionary tale (Mongolia). The geographic detachability of Manchuria also means that it can act as extension of the nation, perhaps even as a prosthetic (see Nelson 2001).
13) The spectral imprint of Manchukuo (commonly known in Chinese as 'wei Manzhuguo', i.e., "illegitimate Manchukuo") is reactivated upon each visit to the Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese officials. The Manchurian landscape is also dotted with monuments thanking the Soviet Army for its support in resisting Japanese encroachment.

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