

RESEARCH NOTE

German Studies of Koreans in Manchuria: Gustav Fochler-Hauke and the Influence of Karl Haushofer's National Socialist Geopolitics

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Abstract

This article analyses scholarship and memoir writing by German geographer Gustav Fochler-Hauke with respect to Korean settlement in Manchuria, and along the Tumen and Yalu/Amnok rivers in the 1930s and early 40s. The research note demonstrates that while Fochler-Hauke's work has its value—not least due to the access he received thanks to the Japanese military government—his concepts of geopolitics and the influence of his mentor and collaborator, Karl Haushofer, renders the work flawed; its value as a historical source for scholars today is therefore limited. The research note begins with Fochler-Hauke's rising profile within German geopolitical studies and turns toward that field's documentation of Koreans in Manchuria, the role of borders between Korea and Manchuria, the blind eye turned toward Korean resistance to Japan, and the rehabilitation of some of these scholars and works after World War II.

Introduction

Gustav Fochler-Hauke was one of the more productive German geographers active in northeast Asia in the 1930s and early 1940s. His fieldwork in, and analysis of, Manchuria and the border regions between then-Manchukuo and Japanese-occupied Korea included extensive discussion of ethnic Koreans, settlement politics around the Tumen River, and geographical exposition of the areas around Mount Paektu or Changbaishan. Although his work was flawed by a lack of Korean or Chinese fluency and reliance on questionable conceptual frameworks, the fieldwork and the writing of Gustav Fochler-Hauke both before and after World War II allows contemporary readers with opportunities for greater engagement and a slightly new perspective on Koreans in Manchuria and the border region. Critical revisiting of analysis by Fochler-Hauke and his associates working on northeast Asia can also feed into growing areas of study today, spanning from the transnational history of German-Korean relations, to the relationship between German geographers and fascist Japan and its colonies in the Second World War era, to the influence of Karl Haushofer on the study of geography both of and within East Asia, including Korea.¹

Fochler-Hauke's work on Japanese colonialism in Manchuria and his interface with the Koreans grew out of three separate trips to the region. The first trip took place in 1927–28, and was undertaken when he was about 20 years old, and thus prior to his formal doctoral studies. Having been orphaned at a young age, Fochler-Hauke had been working as a bookseller in his teenage years and undertook his journey to Asia without much by way of financial backing. His first trip to Manchuria was largely confined to the Liaodong peninsula; he did not move into Sinuiju or Andong, much less navigate into the Korean-populated areas of Kando/Jiandao. Instead, he busied himself with making money in a textile factory in Mukden (present-day Shenyang), working on a foreign language which would allow him to communicate with the floating population of White Russians that so captivated him in the city that cold winter.²

Fochler-Hauke's first sustained engagement with Korean issues and Koreans in Manchuria came in 1932–33, as part of his second trip around Manchuria. This journey was far more extensive, and this was because it had been arranged at least in part by his new mentor, Dr. Karl Haushofer in Munich.³ This journey was a significant one for Fochler-Hauke's research plans, but it did not result in great notoriety for the scholar or outputs about Koreans, and it seems that most of 1933 and 1934 were taken up with completing his Ph.D.⁴ He spent much of 1935 on a research trip around Manchukuo which went well beyond the well-known urban trunk of the region and got into all the peripheral corners of

the new puppet state, collecting data for what would be his magnum opus, a huge prize winning book on Manchuria.⁵ After some further travel in northern China in 1936, Fochler-Hauke returned to Germany and quickly became prominent, publishing multiple journalistic and fieldwork reports on his travels in the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* and other journals, all in 1936.⁶ He also completed a short book on the geopolitics of East Asia which was revised and republished three times during World War II, cementing himself amid a public debate over German policy toward East Asia that was constantly shifting.⁷ In 1937, he became still more prominent by co-editing a popular book on global current affairs with the already-famous doyen of German geopolitics, Karl Haushofer, a book which concluded with an orgy of photos and propaganda praising Hitler and the ability of the German people to thrive under fascist conditions. Fochler-Hauke also turned his Asian expertise on colonization and border areas toward a volume on ethnic Germans in border regions with Czechoslovakia, a work which clearly had Haushofer's imprint on it.⁸

In 1938, as war swept across East Asia and Korea and Manchuria were mobilised in support of the Japanese war effort, Fochler-Hauke busied himself with bureaucratic moves in Germany, joining the Nazi Party in December of that year and continuing to consolidate his position as the General Secretary of the German Academy, a post which he had begun the prior year.⁹ Consequently, his publication output dipped significantly, managing only short articles in the period from 1939–1941 on Japanese colonial policy and state-building in Manchukuo, respectively, while still preparing his major monograph on Manchuria.¹⁰

Like his more Korea-focused counterpart Hermann Lautensach, Gustav Fochler-Hauke both benefited and was misled by Japanese rule over the region he studied.¹¹ As Owen Lattimore argued in his review of Fochler-Hauke's 1941 book, *Die Mandschurei*, during the period prior to and during the Second World War, German scholars benefited extensively from access to areas of Japanese control in Korea and Manchuria.¹² However, access itself did not lead to outstanding prognostications and these scholars were uniformly wrong in foreseeing no end to Japanese dominance. As Keith Howard assessed in his overview of Lautensach's geography of Korea, German scholars active in northeast Asia during the height of Japanese colonial control were misled by their hosts into 'seeing a welcome and increasing assimilation likely to lead to Korea's incorporation into the Japanese nation.'¹³ Korean resistance to Japanese colonial rule was perceived by a few German observers at the time, but as a whole only a vague and generally Chinese mantle of 'banditry' was put over the whole work of opposition.¹⁴ Fochler-Hauke was therefore part of a larger group of journalists and geographers who had access to Manchuria in this period and

colonial Korea, and whose work on these subjects was tied up intimately with Japanese colonial politics. Some of their work dealt intensively with Koreans, others (most in fact) did not, being overly focused on economic development, transport, mineralogical investigation rather than on areas where Koreans were prominent such as agriculture or migration. There was a tendency in the work, likely stemming from the example of Karl Haushofer, to treat Korea largely within a much longer history of Japanese engagement with the outside world, meaning that the Imjin War and Tokugawa era often received more attention than the actual annexation of Korea in 1910 or the governance of the peninsula since.¹⁵ Rarely were individual Koreans given a voice in this scholarship and journalism. Nevertheless Fochler-Hauke was intensely concerned with settler politics and borders, and this reflects the influence of his mentor Karl Haushofer.

Koreans in the writings of Fochler-Hauke in the late 1930s and early 1940s appear a transitional ethnicity between Chinese industry and Japanese modernity. In his 1941 magnum opus *Die Mandschurei*, Fochler-Hauke regards them with a little curiosity, but certainly not disdain. He does not regard the Koreans engaged in the diffuse settlement project of Manchukuo as unwelcome or unexpected guests, nor as a glitch in the prospects for colonial success. Koreans demonstrated some initiative in crossing the Tumen to take advantage of new spaces brought about by Qing and Manchu weakness, the dissipating energy of the Russian Empire and the disruptive power of the Japanese.¹⁶ While he is very concerned with industrial and mineralogical efforts, Fochler-Hauke considers in some detail the agricultural efforts of Koreans, particularly the dry and wet rice cultures and the declining impetus for slash and burn agriculture in more peripheral places in the territory.¹⁷ Koreans appear a little old fashioned with their “mud houses” and “thatched roofs,” but certainly not in the same league as actual Manchus, who in his writing appear rich with Orientalist flavour.¹⁸ While not as at the forefront of modernity as the Japanese, Koreans are on a par with the Han Chinese in the book, muscular and capable, if, on this side of the Tumen at least demonstrating a preference for white clothing.¹⁹

After the publication of his major monograph in 1941, Fochler-Hauke's outputs changed distinctively. Like other geographers of his generation, he became more involved in the general war effort. According to one short biography, he was enlisted in the Wehrmacht in 1940 and returned from captivity in 1946, severely wounded.²⁰ His other outputs make clear that he was not enlisted into Germany's effort to sustain the alliance with Tokyo, nor necessarily producing intelligence about East Asia for the Wehrmacht.²¹ In any event, as the geographer Carl Troll demonstrated soon after the war ended, there was little debate among German scholars concerned with East Asia, and rarely would

they criticize or even cite one another's work.²² So Fochler-Hauke's writings on Koreans in Manchuria were, to an extent, the standard for German scholars of that era, and they enabled him to write further about Korea as an authority even after he had concluded a period of exile in Argentina from 1948–1954 and, presumably, left the shadow of his mentor Dr. Haushofer behind.²³

In 1951, Gustav Fochler-Hauke returned to the publishing scene in Germany along with his old collaborator, Kurt Vorwinkel, who had published many books during the 1930s and 40s out of Haushofer's geopolitical school. Fochler-Hauke had chosen to write reminiscences of his journeys to East Asia, and some other world travel, in the years from 1926–1933, years which had the advantage of avoiding any discussion of his early life or his period of embrace with the Nazi Party as well as scholars associated with it.²⁴ In some respects, however, this memoir was rather frank. Fochler-Hauke never backed away from his empathy for Japanese colonial settlers in Korea and Manchuria, and in both his 1951 book and his 1970 book chapter on Korea, he notes the difficulty that the end of the war caused for those settlers.²⁵

He also described his relationship with the Japanese high command in Manchukuo, which had allowed him to get into the border areas and meet Koreans under one particularly important introduction or personal link. Relaying his conversation with a Japanese general in Xinjing (present-day Changchun), then the capital of Manchukuo in 1932, he states the following:

[The general] also did not hide the fact that especially in the remote mountain areas, the "danger from bandits" was still very great, although the number of armed "enemies of the state" of half a million in 1932 had already declined to about a tenth of its former size thanks to the "mopping up" campaign. I explained to him that I was not afraid of the irregular forces (Freischärlern), because as a neutral scientist I would only deal with research tasks, and that on the other hand interesting tasks have to be solved, especially in the borderlands on the Amur and across from Outer Mongolia. With a heavy heart, the General finally consented to help me in accordance with my wishes.

In an elegant car of the Japanese General Staff, I was led first to the Japanese Embassy, because, in truth, that is where all the power threads (Machtfäden) were gathered together. In lengthy negotiations it was necessary to explain to the responsible officials in detail the reasons for my travels, while I was quite aware that it was impossible to dispel the extraordinary mistrust of all these Japanese posts. By a hundred seemingly well-meant warnings they tried to keep me away from this or that area; again and again it was emphasized that when taking the trains or on the streets, there could be no guarantee for my safety, and again and again I pointed out emphatically that I did not expect such at all and would of course take all the risk upon myself.

Had not the General absolute confidence in his friend Karl Haushofer, one of my teachers, who had recommended me, all my efforts would have been in vain from the outset; I would have had to content myself with a visit to the generally accessible to strangers areas and have had just to do without the peripheral landscapes which are important for me (für mich wichtigen Randlandschaften).

Fochler-Hauke on Kando

In *Die Mandschurei* Fochler-Hauke goes into great detail on the ethnic and cultural flux at play in the Manchuria he has visited. Focusing in particular on what was known as Kando (roughly equivalent to present day Yanbian area), Fochler-Hauke goes into extraordinary detail on the cultural and physical geographies of the territory. Satisfied with the displacement of the power of the Manchu themselves by Han Chinese and many others, Fochler-Hauke explores the settlement of not only Han and Koreans, but also Japanese, Russians and Muslims in the area. He traces the geospatial and agricultural development of Manchuria under colonisation as well as under new forms of rural practice, slash and burn agriculture and wet and dry rice farming. Equally he considers the impact on urban expansion and reconfiguration given the incoming of quite so many immigrants and the differing patterns of land ownership, management and development of the main ethnic groups. Although very clear on the point of historicity and the past, Fochler-Hauke does have a sense of *terra-nullis* about Manchukuo, as if the entire territorial space was up for grabs at the fall of the Qing and that intense settler activity was only right and proper for each of the incoming ethnic groups.²⁶

Following the events of 1932 Fochler-Hauke parses the territorial disputes on Kando/Kanto and the displeasure of the Koreans at Japanese efforts to co-opt, prior to Manchukuo, the debateable lands north of the Tumen. Bringing the pages of Nianshen Song's recent important work *Making Borders in Modern East Asia* to life,²⁷ Fochler-Hauke in particular retells the deliberate and accidental confusions following Mukedeng's unfortunate 1712 effort at demarcating the boundary between Qing and Chosŏn—confusions which were useful to Japanese Imperialism's narrative some two hundred years later.²⁸ He is concerned also to give detailed accounts of the coal fields, other mining landscapes and timber extraction enterprises and the impact of railways on the whole process of colonisation, as well as on both cultural diffusion and displacement. Fochler-Hauke in *Die Mandschurei* is also intriguing in his description of ethnic difference, though without being overtly offensive or racist. There is of course

a touch of Orientalism in his imagery, but Koreans and Chinese are seen as industrious and hard working, the latter frugal and perhaps the former a little old fashioned. If anything it is the Manchu themselves that come off worst in this aspect, depicted as puffs of exotic smoke seldom glimpsed in the market, a native lady with “exotic hair ornaments” as he puts it.²⁹ As a geographer the landscape itself, as much as the geopolitics or cultural geography of colonisation, is the star, and Fochler-Hauke generally reads as awed by the mountains at Manchuria/Manchukuo’s edges, by the larches, birches, bears and tigers. As much as modernity and coloniality are embedded in this new Imperial project, the physical materiality of the area seems to challenge whatever modern project the Japanese seek to build.

This landscape would one day awe others and be deeply engrained in the political and cultural geographies of the North Korean present. The tigers and bears would become for both Korea’s cyphers for lost ecologies of historical nationalisms and nationhood—North Korea insists that they are even still present now. The larches, birches and pines would become part of the visual language of modern Korean nationalism, displayed at moments of political authority and inter-Korean engagements. Fochler-Hauke hardly seems to countenance the possibility of Koreans regaining their independence south of the Tumen/Amnok or unpicking themselves from the mix of colonial and Imperial projects and settlements found in *Die Mandschurei*. He even only briefly mentions a communist movement among Koreans in the area and does so in the past tense, but these borders would become contested once again by Koreans, not only in his time, but in the historical memory and invented traditions of Pyongyang. In this the border region, politics is activated and energised again as a space of insurrection and struggle against the forces of Capitalist modernity and Imperialism. The landscape of the area would in this conceptual reconfiguration become even more dramatic than that encountered by Fochler-Hauke. It would not only be the bears, basalt, trees and tigers he was so enamoured of, but the place of many altercations between Kim Il Sung’s guerrilla band and the institutions of both Manchukuo and Chosen (such as its border control force comprised of Koreans and Japanese). During the Korean War this border would also be the victory line in the minds of both assertive and aspirational Americans and rollbackers and anti-communist ROK forces. Dipping a toe in the Yalu would no longer be an exercise for the settler colonialist on their way to greater things in Chientao, but a physical manifestation of the defeat of the Communists. Of course this was not to be but the mines and timber enterprises of *Die Mandschurei* are still vital to North Korean developmental structures and in 1950 were vital to the US Air Forces 19th Operations Group and Far East

Bomber Command as they sought to defenestrate North Korea's industrial and military capabilities and futures.

While Fochler-Hauke's border space was at the time of writing one of the most active and activated places on the planet, a territory of un-bordering, re-bordering and all the many boundings in between, it would become frozen and quiet following the events of 1953. However Die Mandschurei's edges are it seems always active and energetic in the minds of those seeking a reconfiguration of the geopolitics in our own time. Those settler colonialists of Yanbian and what would become Yanji are equally echoed in our times by the colonising power of Chinese speculative capital and the energies which force North Koreans to cross the Tumen once more to join the new categories of settler, becoming trans-national economic migrants in South Korea and elsewhere, forming new bonds, connections and disruptions as they do so. It is unlikely that Manchuria as Fochler-Hauke would know it, will rise again from underneath its now many patterned ethnic and political quilt. Manchu as a language is confined to villages in Aihui district on the bank of the Amur river, an infinitesimally small fragment of the cultural territory once occupied by its people, the strange hair ornaments of the mysterious Manchu woman glimpsed for a moment in the marketplace crowd will not be seen again. The space which Korean Manchuria occupied, however, now known as the expansive eastern counties of Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces will always be a contested, conflicted space at the edge of geopolitics.

Notes

1. Christian Spang, *Karl Haushofer und Japan: Die Rezeption seiner Geopolitischen Theorien in der Deutschen und Japanischen Politik*, Monographien aus dem Deutschen Institut für Japanstudien (Tokyo: Iudicium, 2013); Eun-jeung Lee and Hannes Mossler, *Facetten deutsch-koreanischer Beziehungen: 130 Jahre Gemeinsame Geschichte* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Verlag, 2017).
2. Gustav Fochler-Hauke, ... *Nach Asien! Vom Abenteuer zur Wissenschaft* (Heidelberg: Kurt Vorwinckel, 1951), 146–152.
3. Popular literature and US intelligence files from the early 1940s interpreted such journeys as exercises in pure German espionage by Haushofer's students. See entries for Haushofer in Central Intelligence Agency, "OSS Note Cards," circa 1943, CIA-RDP82-00038R001000160005-0, 16–25.
4. For articles yielded from this trip, see Gustav Fochler-Hauke, "Chinesische Kolonisation und Kolonialpolitik," in *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde*, Berlin 1933, 108–122; Gustav Fochler-Hauke, "Deutschland und China" *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, Vol. 11 (1934), 275–280. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Munich, where he worked under the formal supervision of Erich Dagobert von Drygalski, the famous and rather aged polar explorer; Fochler-Hauke would later take up a teaching post at the same university from 1954 until his retirement in 1971.

5. Gustav Fochler-Hauke won the Silver Carl Ritter Medallion in 1953 for his research on Manchuria and Argentina. "Die 125-Jahrfeier der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin vol 1. Bis 3. Mai 1953," *Die Erde* 1953, 319.
6. Gustav Fochler-Hauke, "Die Mandschurei als Wirtschaftliches und Politisches Kraftfeld," *Schweizer Monatshefte: Zeitschrift für Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur*, Vol. 16 (1936–1937), 35–43. For a listing of other articles published in 1936, see Gustav Fochler-Hauke, *Die Mandschurei*, 390–391.
7. Gustav Fochler-Hauke, *Der Ferne Osten: Macht- und Wirtschaftskampf in Ostasien*, Macht und Erde series, Vol. 3 (Berlin: B. G. Teubner, second edition, 1938, first published in 1936, third edition in 1942). Korea and the role of Koreans in China paid almost no role in this book, 56.
8. Karl Haushofer and Gustav Fochler-Hauke, *Welt in Gärung: Zeitberichte deutscher Geopolitiker* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft / Breitkopf und Härtel, 1937); Gustav Fochler-Hauke, *Deutscher Volksboden und Deutsches Volkstum in der Tschechoslowakei: eine geographisch-geopolitische Zusammenschau* Heidelberg & Berlin: K. Vowinckel, 1937. Series: Bücher der Grenzlande, vol 2. Fochler-Hauke may also have had a personal interest in the subject having been born in Troppau, a German area in the Sudetenland (present-day Opava, in the eastern Czech Republic).
9. Donald H. Norton, "Karl Haushofer and the German Academy, 1925–1945," *Central European History*, Vol. 1 (1968), 92–93.
10. Gustav Fochler-Hauke, "Japanische Kolonisation und koloniale Politik," *Koloniale Rundschau*, Vol. 27, No 6 (1939), pp. 453–460; Gustav Fochler-Hauke, 'Staatsidee und Nationalitätenpolitik in Mandschutiko,' *Volksforschung*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1941).
11. In the Korean section of his 1967 monograph on 'divided nations,' Fochler-Hauke cites Lautensach as 'the best German expert on Korea' and meditates on the 'alienating effect' that Japanese rule had with respect to Koreans' own sense of themselves as a nation ('Volksbewusstsein'). Gustav Fochler-Hauke, *Die geteilten Länder: Krisenherde der Weltpolitik* (Munich: Rütten and Loening Verlag, 1967), 15–16.
12. Owen Lattimore, Review of Gustav Fochler-Hauke's "Die Mandschurei: Eine Geographisch-Geopolitische Landeskunde" in *Pacific Affairs* (Summer 1948), 303–304.
13. Keith Howard, review of Herman Lautensach, *Korea: A Geography Based on the Author's Travels and Literature*, translated by Eckart and Katherine Dege (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1988), in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* Volume 55, Issue 1 (February 1992), 176.
14. One exception exists in the work of the generalist journalist and world traveller, Anton Zischka, who described the deep currents of underlying opposition to colonial rule he felt whilst in Korea, and traced some of it back to Koreans operating in Vladivostok under Soviet auspices. See Anton Zischka, *Japan in der Welt: Die Japanische Expansion seit 1854* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Goldman Verlag, December 1937), 265–266.
15. Ernst Schultze, *Japan als Weltindustriemacht*, vol. 1, 111–114; Karl Haushofer, *Japan baut sein Reich* (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte-Verlag, 1941), 53–61.
16. Gustav Fochler-Hauke, *Die Mandschurei: Eine Geographisch-Geopolitische Landeskunde* (Heidelberg/Berlin: Kurt Vorwinkel, 1941).
17. *Ibid.* 193.
18. *Ibid.* 199.
19. *Ibid.* 200.
20. Josef-Walter Koenig, 'Gustav Fochler-Hauke: Geograph, Schriftsteller,' *Kulturportal West-Ost*, <https://kulturportal-west-ost.eu/biographien/fochler-hauke-gustav-3>.
21. Instead, during the German war with the Soviet Union from June 1941, he published a couple of edited volumes on German identity and editing an illustrated memoir from a German officer involved in a ski unit during the winter war with Soviet troops. The

- University of Hokkaido holds a 1944/45 Festschrift, the scholar's final output of the war years, which lauds the career of one Dr. Karl Haushofer. See Christian Spang, *Karl Haushofer und Japan: Die Rezeption seiner Geopolitischen Theorien in der Deutschen und Japanischen Politik*, Monographien aus dem Deutschen Institut für Japanstudien (Tokyo: Iudicium, 2013).
22. Carl Troll, "Geographic Science in Germany during the Period 1933–1945: A Critique and Justification," translated and annotated by Eric Fischer, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (June 1949), 129–130.
 23. See Gustav Fochler-Hauke, "Korea," in *Die Machtblöcke des Ostens: China, Japan, Sowjetunion, Macht und Wirtschaft zwischen Ostsee und Pazifik* (Berlin: Safari-Verlag, 1970), 147–160; Christian Spang, *Karl Haushofer und Japan: Die Rezeption seiner Geopolitischen Theorien in der Deutschen und Japanischen Politik*, Monographien aus dem Deutschen Institut für Japanstudien (Tokyo: Iudicium, 2013).
 24. Gustav Fochler-Hauke, ... *Nach Asien! Vom Abenteuer zur Wissenschaft* (Heidelberg: Kurt Vorwinckel, 1951).
 25. Fochler-Hauke, 1951, 192, 193 and 1970, 147–160. See also Ronald Suleski's extraordinary account of such a moment in "Salvaging Memories: Former Japanese Colonists in Manchuria and the Shimoina Project, 2001–2012," in *Empire and Environment in the Making of Manchuria*, ed. Norman Smith (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017), 197–221.
 26. Fochler-Hauke was familiar with the Japanese research (Hamada Kosaku) on the Koguryo Kingdom and the Koguryo tombs in Jian. Like Haushofer, Fochler-Hauke was attuned, if sporadically, to the longer-durée.
 27. Recounted in Nianshen Song, *Making Borders in Modern East Asia: The Tumen River Demarcation, 1881–1919* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–15. and Nianshen Song. "Imagined territory: Paektusan in late Chosŏn maps and writings," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*. Vol. 37. No. 2 (2017), 157–173.
 28. Gustav Fochler-Hauke, *Die Mandschurei*, 191.
 29. *Ibid*, 199.

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