

Wartime Acculturation: Anti-Japanese and Anti-War Resistance in China

HIRANO Ken'ichiro

This issue of the *Modern Asian Studies Review (MASR)* presents a part of the results of two group research projects carried out in Japan over a five year period. These two projects were organized and developed somewhat in an overlapping manner by way of Japanese preparations for the Third International Conference on Wartime China: Society and Culture in China during the Sino-Japanese War. The international conference itself was held in Hakone, Japan in November 2006, with a total of thirty scholars from Japan, mainland China, Taiwan, the United States and Canada participating. The proceedings of the conference have been published separately in Japanese and Chinese, and will be published in English as well as in Japanese.¹

One of the two Japanese preparatory research projects was a workshop-type activity funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan for 2003–05.² The project report, already submitted in May 2006, contained seven papers, all in Japanese. The other project was carried out under the Toyo Bunko's auspices as a research activity conducted by its Contemporary

¹ The Japanese delegation to the conference contributed seven papers, all of which were selected from fifteen research outcomes that were products of the two preparatory research projects. The Japanese language proceedings of the Conference were published by Keio Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai as *Chinese Society and Culture under the Sino-Japanese War* in 2010.

² Project title: "Synthetic Research on Chinese Social and Cultural Change during the Second Sino-Japanese War"; Project Number: 15330033; Project leader: Hirano Ken'ichiro.

China International Relations and Culture research team.³

In recent years, new source materials related to society and culture in China during the war have appeared, which in turn have led to vigorous investigations by both veteran and younger researchers in Japan and elsewhere into heretofore uncharted, but very exciting, waters. It was in the midst these developments that the above-mentioned joint research project took off five years ago under funding from the Ministry of Education and Science. This was immediately followed by the Toyo Bunko's decision to select a similar project as one of its new research activities. Since that time, an increasing number of researchers, both inside and outside these projects, have been actively studying related topics from various viewpoints, but under what could be called the common underlying theme of acculturation in China in wartime conditions.

1. Wartime Acculturation

(1) Overview

Here, "acculturation" refers to changes in a culture subsequent to its contacts with other cultures.⁴ What is the process in which contacts with other cultures give rise to cultural change? In terms of process, acculturation exhibits two aspects: one is a process that starts and develops according to the logic of culture; the other is a process that starts and develops as social action, that is, by people's conscious behavior.

If we look at a culture as a system, any one culture is composed of innumerable cultural elements and structured by their particular inter-

³ The team concluded the first phase of its joint research by publishing eight papers in March 2007 in No. 69 of the Toyo Bunko Ronso series, entitled *Social and Cultural Change in China during the Second Sino-Japanese War*, edited by Hirano Ken'ichiro. The three articles that appear in this issue of MASR were chosen for translation from this collection of papers as the most directly related to cultural change that occurred in China during its war with Japan between 1937 and 1945.

⁴ For a more detailed discussion, see Hirano Ken'ichiro, *Kokusai bunka ron* (International Cultural Relations), Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2000, p. 33 & Ch. 4.

connections with one another. Thus, when one cultural element changes as cultures come into contact, other cultural elements functionally connected with that element inevitably change one after the other. To repeat, it is according to the logic of culture that successive changes or replacement of cultural elements take place in culture contact. On the other hand, there are cases where people consciously take group action to advance such acculturation. In the final analysis, culture is the way of living practiced by a group of people. People take social action either to adopt better or more convenient ways of living from other peoples or to lend such ways to other peoples. We must note that acculturation starts and develops as group social actions, as well as according to the logic of culture. Yet, it is the logic of cultural change that determines the process of acculturation pushed ahead by group social action. That is to say, acculturation is a simultaneous cultural and social phenomenon. Therefore, in order to understand acculturation, it is necessary to study both cultural logic and social behavior.⁵

(2) Acculturation as Resistance

In our efforts to understand acculturation, it is important to see cultural change produced by it, but it is more important to see resistance against cultural changes brought about by it. Resistance to acculturation also exhibits both aspects of a cultural and social phenomenon. Since change in one cultural element tends to trigger a series of changes in other related elements, it is almost inevitable that some form of rejection will arise within any culture experiencing such changes. This is resistance on the part of culture itself to a continuum of changes. At the same time, there are many instances in which the people on the receiving end, whose culture is being changed, engage in movements to resist acculturation by group action.⁶

Resistance to acculturation can be divided into 1) resistance to specific cultural elements that are liable to start a successive series of changes, and 2) resistance to the group who is forcing cultural change.

⁵ The discussion in *ibid.* put most of its emphasis on the cultural logic of acculturation, while not devoting enough attention to the social aspects, resulting in a lack of balance between the two.

⁶ For a more detailed discussion on resistance and resistance movements against acculturation, see *ibid.*, Ch. 5.

To explain simply how these two types of resistance to acculturation interact, even if certain cultural elements are regarded as leading to desirable cultural change, when the group(s) implementing such cultural elements are considered undesirable, vehement resistance to even any desirable elements will arise.⁷

An even more interesting form of resistance to acculturation is “antagonistic acculturation.” This type of resistance is characterized not by the rejection, but by the outright acceptance of cultural elements from the opposing group exactly for the purpose of resisting it. It is of course preferable to use cultural elements which the enemy does not possess to resist and oppose it. However, when the enemy presses in with powerful cultural elements, or powerful weapons, to be more specific, in the absence of cultural elements superior to them, the only way not to be defeated, or at least stay on an even footing, is to adopt and use the enemy’s cultural elements as weapons for resistance.

Once another’s cultural elements are adopted, chain reactions of cultural change will inevitably occur, due to the functional links between cultural elements. This is the reason why groups fighting one another tend to resemble each other. It should be kept in mind that resistance to acculturation is not only a social movement, but also resistance to change according to cultural logic.

(3) Coercion, a Condition of Acculturation

In addition to inter-group dynamics and cultural logic, another factor determining the process and consequences of acculturation is the character of the contact situation; namely, under what kind of situation two parties enter into a relationship that results in acculturation.⁸ The two parties are not always trying to cooperate with each other, but in many cases are embroiled in a competitive or even belligerent situation. The nature of the relationship is already determined by the surrounding “field” that exists before the two parties enter in to the relationship. Group relationships within the process of acculturation are

⁷ On the types of resistance to acculturation, see *ibid.*, pp. 93–4.

⁸ In anthropology, Melville J. Herskovits, *Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contact*, Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1958, for instance, argued that the contact situation should always be taken into consideration on acculturation. Here, I expand the concept to cover the general trend of the time and international environment.

highly political. Yet, the larger field that envelops acculturation situations is far more political and influences the process of each particular acculturation event. What forms the larger field, or the contact situation, under which acculturation occurs is the nature of international relations that cover the time-space of an era.

War is one of coercive situations that trigger acculturation. As soon as the parties enter into hostilities, or even while they are in conflict prior to hostilities, each of their societies is compelled to become conscious of the other's cultural elements over a wide range, not necessarily limited to directly war-related elements. Wartime acculturation may seem to resemble that which occurs under colonialization, but the two are by no means identical.

Acculturation under wartime conditions should be regarded far more coercive than colonial acculturation and taking on more clear-cut characteristics. While acculturation is forced upon the belligerent parties by the international relations of the time, they are equal combatants, unlike conflicting groups in colonial society. Therefore, each has the power to decide autonomously whether to accept or refuse acculturation in search for victory. Acculturation studies to date have regarded resistance as the most important moment in the wartime condition, the "ultimate situation," so to speak, and much effort has been directed to investigating how this most important moment operates.

Acculturation particular to wartime conditions takes place and progresses during the period of conflict that precedes the opening of hostilities and in regions not directly embroiled in them. In order to emerge victorious, or at least not to be defeated, it is vital to make life-and-death decisions about acculturation indispensable for all-out resistance against the enemy. Acculturation in battle zones and militarily occupied areas is extremely direct and harsh, and intricately entangled with political rule, resistance and subjugation. On the other hand, it is society in the throes of war and the people who live there who are forced to experience acculturation demanded across the board in every phase of daily life.⁹

⁹ Fujita Yuji, *Ajia ni okeru bunmei no taiko: Jyōi ron to syukyū ron ni kansuru Nihon, Chōsen, Chūgoku no hikaku kenkyū* (Opposition of Civilizations in Asia: A Comparative Study of Advocacies for Foreign Exclusion and for Conservatism in Japan, Korea and China), Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobō, 2001 is an astonishing work that provides a detailed yet systematic comparison of group decisions on reactions under the situation of enforced acculturation.

2. Acculturation during the Sino-Japanese War and Its Impact on Chinese Culture

(1) Acculturation as Anti-Japanese Resistance

For the people of China, their war with imperial Japan, which began in 1937, was a war of resistance against an outside aggressor; therefore in terms of acculturation, it was a time of anti-Japanese acculturation. However, due to the internal political conflict between the Nationalist and the Communist Parties, the war never really waged in the form of anti-Japanese resistance per se. In the course of time, the vast territory of China became divided up into the colonized region of Manchukuo, Japanese occupied areas, battle zones, the great hinterland and the Communist Party-controlled regions. It follows therefore that the acculturation which occurred in wartime China was similarly segmented and took on a very complicated form. To put it simply, one cannot say that acculturation was uniformly perceived as “anti-Japanese acculturation.”

Any attempt to identify acculturation in wartime China as “anti-Japanese” must confront at least two points. The first relates to the fact that anti-Japanese acculturation in China began neither in September 1931 nor in July 1937, but had been on a long and winding road since the late Qing reform movement modeled after the Meiji Restoration. As the order of modern international relations reached East Asia, China and Japan had both sought sovereignty as modern nation-states and followed independent paths in a concentrated amount of contact with Western culture and efforts at its acculturation. Although there was a short period during which it was possible for the two countries to acculturate cooperatively, from the Russo-Japanese War (1905) on, the acculturation became competitive, and when Japan's imperialistic ambitions became apparent, acculturation of Japanese culture in China turned negative and resistant, tending towards outright hostility. In short, when addressing the issue of anti-Japanese acculturation during the second Sino-Japanese War, one must take such preceding history into consideration. That is to say, from the time of its first attempts to introduce Western technology, China had been accumulating a rich amount of experiences of acculturation, namely, experiences armed with strategies of “Chinese essence and Western technology (zhongti-xiyong 中体西用), ideas of cultural traditionalism (「托古論」, 「古已之

有論」; all things originated in the ancient China), and recent strategies of resistance.

The second point concerns the idea that due to the wartime situation, Sino-Japanese antagonistic acculturation involved the movement of cultural elements from Japan into China; however, it does not follow that these elements were rigidly Japanese in nature and thus both immutable and unacceptable to the Chinese people. In fact, not all of the cultural elements that Japan foisted on the Chinese in the course of the war were imported from Japan; rather, most of them were improvised on the battlefields in China. The attempts by the state of Manchukuo (such an improvisation in its own right) to come up with policies appealing to its Chinese residents, and to implement it through propaganda campaigns and the organization of Xinminhue 新民会 are one case in point. We can only conclude that the acculturation going between China and Japan during the war was not a one way street leading from Japan, but was rather a two directional process of coercive contact and resistance to change, which had tumultuous effects on Japanese cultures as well.

(2) Acculturation as Resistance to War

The wartime Sino-Japanese acculturation inflated the culture of war aspect in both countries. What should be noticed here is that while acculturation in wartime China may have been anti-Japanese, more importantly it was acculturation for resistance to war. That is to say, rather than acculturation for resistance against Japan and Japanese cultural elements, it was more to endure and get past hostilities with the enemy; it was not only a war of resistance but resistance against war. In fact, the society at that time faced not only the war perpetrated by Japan, but also various conflicts stemming from that war. In order to survive such a situation, the Chinese people made efforts to contrive a variety of adjustments, in the form of cultural change. The type of acculturation which gave birth to wartime culture and war resistance culture in the process of world war during the first half of the 20th century is by no means exclusive to Japanese and Chinese belligerents. For example, the Soviet techniques of film-making were adopted by both Japanese and Chinese and by both Nationalists and Communists within China. Almost the same mass mobilization techniques were adopted in all countries and by all political groups. Wartime Sino-Japanese ac-

culturation should therefore be considered as one phenomenon occurring simultaneously within a historical setting of all out world war.

Moreover, neither should it be considered unique to Sino-Japanese relations during that time that under the coercive nature of the contact situation in wartime, both sides become resembling to each other.

3. The Historical Character of Wartime Acculturation

(1) The Creation of New Cultural Elements and their Survival

Many of the new cultural elements born from the trauma of the Sino-Japanese war lingered in the postwar era. This is particularly true for a China under a Communist regime having to operate under a "Cold War" international atmosphere. Therefore, one of our tasks as historians is to discover as accurately as possible which of the cultural elements with legacies tied to the ravages of war did remain at the war's end and how they changed from that point on. In general, many of the war remnants found in postwar Chinese culture attest to the strength and endurance of Chinese society and its people in the face of such pain and misery, in their efforts to preserve their cultural heritage. We find Chinese culture with roots of resistance sunk deeply and widely against changes faced by the logic of culture.

What specific elements of that culture were adjusted and newly created for the sake of resisting and surviving coercive change, and how many of them lived on in the postwar era still need be investigated in more detail.

(2) Changes Specific to the Twentieth Century

If indeed the process of wartime Sino-Japanese acculturation was only one of many such simultaneous processes in the course of global war, much of the resulting cultural transformation may be thought of as characteristic of the 20th century world as a whole. It is perhaps necessary to consider the acculturation during the Sino-Japanese War as one of the 20th century war culture.

On the other hand, even if the war time acculturation that caused Chinese people a great amount of suffering might have left legacies that sometimes functioned positively in the post-war era, that fact by no means exonerates Japan for forcing acculturation by war. Although

much has been said of late about the improvements made to local society under colonial rule, such reasoning does not apply in any way to the study of acculturation under a colonial situation. So let me repeat in summary: It was the antagonistic acculturation by Chinese society and people themselves that changed Chinese culture under the coercive situation brought about by the Sino-Japanese War. In that process, not one element of Japanese culture was adopted by the Chinese people in the original form. What was “adopted” was adopted to resist the enemy, only through acculturation motivated by continuous, indefatigable resistance.

Whatever was offered by the Japanese was only triggers for resistance that brought about acculturation.

4. Content of the Present Issue

The three articles chosen for English publication in this issue of MASR are a treatment by Kawashima Shin of the Xinminhue association, an examination by Misawa Mamie of the Chinese Nationalist Party’s policies of film production control, and a study by Takishita Saeko concerning changes that occurred in Chinese comics during the War. Xinminhue was one of Japan’s wartime contrivances to provoke acculturation in China. The KMT’s film control policies are examined as a part of Chinese reactions, resistance and cultural creation vis-à-vis Japanese cultural aggression. Wartime Chinese comics were one aspect of the anti-Japanese war of resistance.

The other topics dealt with by the Toyo Bunko’s International Relations and Culture Research Team include the propaganda and literary policy of Manchukuo, radio broadcasting in Manchukuo, reforms of local administration implemented by the Nationalist Party, sanitation in wartime Shanghai, refugee relief activities in Shanghai, opium policy in Inner Mongolia, the transformation of local transportation networks in Japanese occupied areas, changes of village administration in Shanxi Province, China’s public diplomacy toward the United States, and acculturation of the war memories in the postwar era. There are a lot more aspects of acculturation that should have been included in our joint research project. For example, changes in lifestyles experienced by Chinese urban residents (in Beijing and Shanghai) under the Japa-

nese occupation, and changes that took place in such areas as school education, commercial activity, entertainment and medical and sanitation services are among the topics that need to be studied. Research on such topics will certainly show the resilience of the Chinese people in their daily lives and the endurance of Chinese culture.

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