

Analysis of the Image of China in Japanese Literature

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Abstract: Due to the established narrative patterns and powerful and profound ideological influences of classical Chinese literature, the image of China has been reinterpreted during the process of imagination, construction, and experience of Japanese writer or researcher, with many distortions and misinterpretations. The image of China in Japanese literature is an impression and illusion formed by the combination of cultural awareness and literary classics. The following article will analyze and sort out the Chinese image in Japanese literature.

Keywords: Japanese literature; Chinese image; Historical tradition

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For Japan, "China" may never have been a concrete entity, and it is so complex and complicated that the Japanese who are aware of its existence can only touch the tip of the iceberg, and it is difficult to sketch an overall image based on personal experience. The Japanese learn about China through the descriptions of China in Japanese literature, which range from novels and narrative poems to travelogues, travelogues, and travel books, news reports, etc. These works are vast in number, from different sources and perspectives, producing different narrative styles, which differ greatly from each other, and the image of China built on it has become more unpredictable. China is an ideological and even more literary image in the history of Japanese literature.

1 The Image of China in Japanese Literature in the Meiji Era

After the Meiji Restoration in the middle of the 19th century, Japan, which had been closed to the rest of the world for over 200 years, embarked on a path of Westernization and reform. At that time, China was at the end of the Qing Dynasty and was falling apart. Such a face is presented to the Japanese, who had difficulty in associating a decaying China with a strong and ancient civilization. Japanese curiosity about China was sparked. At the beginning of the Meiji period, Japan was absorbed in learning from the West, and Japanese literature and Sinology, which symbolized tradition and history, became old shells that people were eager to abandon. People aspire to the power of modern European civilization. In the middle of the Meiji period, the craze for Japanese imitation shows passed, and the calmer Japanese literary world began to return to the classical, Chinese classical literature became a haven for passively escaping from the tides of the times, as the long-standing tradition of romanticism was so different from the rational spirit of Europe. Japan at that time saw China still looking up. After the war between Japan and the Qing Dynasty, Japan's colonization of China gradually increased and Japan began to discriminate against China, and the government instilled this discrimination in its citizens. Japanese literature went from looking up to China to looking down. However, the beautiful image constructed by Chinese classic literature is part of Japanese people's growth and memory, and the overlooking from the reality and the look-ups from the heart could not be got rid of. The Japanese still sustained the tangled feelings towards

China. At that time, Japan portrayed itself as powerful, superior and advanced, and China as weak, backward and lowly. China was like a reference, the real image was not important, what was important was what image China should be to Japan. There is little observation and

knowledge of China in the Japanese literary world, and the narratives and descriptions of real China become childish and shallow. The only thing they wanted to describe was themselves^[1]. See Table 1. for some of the literature in the Meiji era.

Table 1. Selected Literature of the Meiji Era

Works	Age	Author	Genre
Drifting Clouds	1887	Futabatei Shimei	Realism
Dancer	1890	Ogai Mori	Romanticism
Sanshiro	1908	Natsume Sōseki	Anti-naturalism
The evil clan	1909	Kitahara Hakushu	delayed-action style
Tattoo	1910	Junichiro Tanizaki	delayed-action style

Japanese writer Kunikida Doppo, who went to China as a special correspondent for a Japanese newspaper at the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, sent out a message based on his imaginary brother. A series of newsletters were later compiled and published under the title "Correspondence with loving brother". As a journalist, literary figure, humanitarian and patriot, his book is both a tribute to the Japanese army, with high national pride and also has literary sentimentality, as well as a sympathy for China, and a yearning for peace. He depicted the majestic grandeur and vastness of the Manchurian land at that time, and was also amazed at the cowardly material people of China, who did not know that the country was at war. As for the cowardice of the Beiyang Fleet, Kunkida Doppo was extremely sneer, comparing the Chinese and Japanese armies, belittling China and praising the Japan. After the collapse of the Qing government, "May China" was constructed from ancient Chinese classical literature, and the image of a strong and glorious China in the Japanese mind became smoke and ashes. The Japanese, following the course of the war through such reports, gazed at the reality with remembrance and attachment to the image of China in classic Chinese literature. They were shocked and disappointed by China's ugliness, but they also saw in it Japan's gradual rise to power.

2 The Image of China in Japanese Literature in the Taisho Era

The loyal and patriotic ideology of the Meiji period gradually disappeared with the death of the emperor, and Japan entered the Taisho Era, a period of turmoil.

The Japanese government continued to intensify its policy of aggression and deepen its colonization of China. At home, Japan also faced a variety of ideological trends, as fascist forces prevailed through physics and conspiracy, and Japan rose to become the first power in Asian. Times were tumultuous, and Japanese literature in the Taisho era was more deeply influenced by European literary currents, which overwhelmed classical Japanese and Chinese literature. Japanese literature was opposed to the scientific and rational European civilization, that is, to the incoming changes, and in this current of thought, Japanese literature Romanticism is on the rise. The young Japanese writers vigorously promoted an artistic movement in which romance, beauty and art were paramount, and which was full of youthful dreams and passion for struggle. As a result of this Romanticism, the Japanese literary world began to look to the primitive Orient for inspiration, and for a time, it became increasingly interested in India, Southeast Asia and China and the writers of the Taisho period were very much concerned with the appearance of foreign lands. China became an idea rather than a tangible entity, representing something different from Japan, and an unknown world which is remote, mysterious, fascinating, and unforgettable. It is beyond the real, and is the ideal existence. Japanese writers turn China into a place they spiritually experience rather than actually visit, replacing themselves with illusions, using ideas replacing objectivity, or, to a certain extent, the image of China can be imagined in any state that the Japanese scholar want her to appear^[2]. See Table 2. for some of the literature of the Taisho period.

Table 2. Selected literary works of the Taisho era

Works	Age	Author	Genre
Rashomon	1915	Ryuunosuke Akutagawa	Neorealism
Friendship	1919	Saneatsu Mushakoji	The shirakaba school
Solar disk	1923	Yokomitsu Riichi	New Sensations school
Spring and Chaos	1924	Miyazawa Kenji	Historic faction
Lemon	1925	Kajii Motojiro	Art nouveau

During the Taisho period, the term "Chinasan fun" was popular. "Chinna" was once a mispronunciation of "Chin" in Japanese, first appearing in the Japanese translation of Indian Buddhist scriptures, and by the end of World War II in Japan, China is called "China". The taste of China represents a sense of nostalgia. In his *Travels in China*, Ryuunosuke Akutagawa describes his search for the romantic and mysterious land of China, wishing along the way that he could see China in ancient classic Chinese literature. He repeatedly borrows beautiful stories from *Liaozhai*, seeking a sense of supernatural mystery. Seeing flowers drenched in rain outside a wine shop and feels the flowers glow. Flowers, drizzle, and lonely journeys are intentions often used in Chinese poetry and bear witness to Ryuunosuke Akutagawa's imagination of China. The white walls of the mansion, the glorious lights, the flowers and the rain are not unique to China, they are the result of Japanese writers imbued with Chinese literature. Illusion, hoping to prove this mood on the journey, thus showing the sentimentality and poetry of the Chinese style. And the *Taisho Almanac*, where Japan, as the most powerful and advanced country in Asia, presents itself as an Asian pioneer, sees Asia the way Westerners see it. It treats China as a "dirty" country, and makes China's "dirtiness" bitter and bitter, as evidence of his rejection of China. In Akutagawa's travels, the filthiness of China is constantly exaggerated, in sharp contrast to the Chinese mood he pursues, makes people feel as if China is decaying under the afterglow of a splendid civilization. The denigration of China has led to the gradual disappointment of the Japanese in the reality of China and the gradual shattering of their fond visions of China.

3 The Image of China in Showa Era Japanese Literature

The rapid expansion of Japanese militarism in the early Showa period and the colonial invasion of China reached a peak, with a large number of Japanese coming to China and setting foot in the region which extends from Manchuria under Japanese colonial rule to Shandong, Beijing, Shanghai and even Hong Kong. Almost all of the Japanese writers active in the Showa literary scene visited China between 1926 and 1945, and had a richer experience of China, and China also became real, no longer an illusion and a myth. In the Japanese impression, China falls completely from the splendid image and wonderful world of ancient classical texts into reality. Showa writers look at the realization of China with a straightforward focus on the reality of China, gradually going deeper and deeper into typology. Their Majesty's China is replaced by catchphrases and specific regional images. Under the powerful control of Japan, China has become dilapidated, obscene and mysterious. The image of China is in the position of being controlled and represented, reduced to a collection of several paradigms and types in Japanese literature. The pleasures and evils of Shanghai are not found in Tokyo, Japan. Japanese writers see Asia under the influence of Western civilization affected and being compared back. Japanese writers were not only concerned with Shanghai itself, but also with the pan-Asia. They see the subtle fusion and violent clash of Eastern and Western civilizations, the distortions and deformities of the Western forces in the East, and also the trends in the democratic movement^[3]. See Table 3. for some of the literature of the Showa era.

Table 3. Selected Literary Works of the Showa Period

Works	Age	Author	Genre
Crab boat builder	1929	Takiji Kobayashi	Realism
Mechanical	1930	Yokomitsu Riichi	New Sensations School

Works	Age	Author	Genre
Survey vessel	1930	Miyoshi Tatsuji	Seasonal fiction
The quest for life	1937	Kensaku Shimaki	Documentary literature
A Journey to Manchuria	1937	Kensaku Shimaki	Documentary literature

Yokomitsu Riichi came to Shanghai in 1928 and lived there for a month. He did not pursue the exoticism of famous places like other Japanese writers, but went into textile factories, the stock exchange, the he was very interested in the Chinese reality and understood the deep structure of the Chinese economy. He then completed his own novels, published in a collection under the title Shanghai, of which the titles are "A Few Women - The Harbor Chapter, The Woman - Seaport, Seaport Chapter, Cebu and Bullets, Time in the Dump, Feet and Justice, Bathhouse With the Bank. His work connects people from all walks of life and of all colors in Shanghai, between the Japanese and the Chinese, and looks at the splendor of Shanghai And nasty.

4 The Image of China in the Age of Revolutionary China

Table 4. Selected works of proletarian literature

Works	Age	Author
People living on the sea	1924	Yoshiki Hayama
A Street Without Sun	1930	de Jonghia
Wintering Buds	1934	Yuriko Miyamoto
The art of conducting investigations	1925	Aono Chikichi
A collection of literary criticism by Yoshihito Mihara	1940	Zilahara no Kato

Kenzo Satomura's depiction of Chinese laborers is pioneering in the history of Japanese literature. Chinese laborers have always been grotesque, dirty, and obscene in the writings of Japanese writers, a colonial backdrop with no voice, much less a have their own story. The fact that Kenzo Satomura describes them as brothers is undoubtedly a huge shift in identity. The description of China by Japanese proletarian writers gradually evolved from an imagination based on Japanese cognition to an imagination of the Chinese proletariat as the The subjects of concern make representations, free from colonial bias, and the characters move from ambiguity to clarity, and gradually symbolize, with characters The tendency for ideas to outweigh characterization became more pronounced. Proletarian writers insisted

The early Showa period was also the high point of Japanese proletarian literature. Japanese colonial forces penetrated the regions of China, the Japanese government was preparing for invasion, and Japanese proletarian writers were concerned about China. He has produced a number of works based on China, including Hiroshiro Maeda's "Chinas", Ito Naganosuke's "Manbozan", Hirabayashi Taiko's "Laying Down Trains", etc. Proletarian writers concerned with China's exploiting working class and the surging democratic revolution, they wrote about the Chinese proletariat no longer the bitter laborers that had once been written about by other Japanese writers, but close class brothers, with class affection above exclusion and discrimination against China. Class consciousness transcends national consciousness^[4]. See Table 4. for the literature of the Japanese proletariat.

on development, and during the war many writers persisted in their fight against the war and spent long prison terms. Some proletarian writers was threatened, left the proletarian literary camp and even stood against the proletarian struggle, endorsed the imperialist war of aggression and scandalized and dwarfed the image of China. After the war, there was a relentless struggle to revive proletarian literature. But because of factional struggle and ideological problems, Japanese proletarian literature was ultimately unable to regain its glory, and in the tide of the times and the Pinned under change.

5 The Image of China in Modern Japanese Literature

After the Second World War, a new trend emerged

in Japanese literature, which was based on realism, constantly updating the concept of literature and valuing human and literary, attaching importance to the nature and relationship between man and literature. The richness of human connotation is explored from the aesthetic point of view and the law of artistic development. This greatly enriched the means and

connotations of Japanese realist literature, and also met the diversified demands for literature in post-World War II Japanese society. This literary work, which focuses on social conflicts and sensitive topics in a realistic context, exposes the various problems of Japanese society and the contrast between human relations^[5]. See Table 5 for some works of modern Japanese literature.

Table 5. Selected Japanese post-war literature

Works	Age	Author
Timing	1953	Horita Yoshiyasu
Where Shizuko is going	1953	Hiroshi Noma
Dice of the Sky	1958	Hiroshi Noma
Destinies	1958	Horita Yoshiyasu
People who travel in the white night	1985	Akifumi Miura

Realistic works from this period depict many stories of China. Yamazaki Toyoko's masterpiece, *Earthchild*, is a social novel that focuses on the experiences of Japanese orphans growing up in China, depicting his After being abandoned, he is adopted, grows up, and serves his country in a twisted life. The protagonist's different stages of life, love, family and friendship are intertwined, the plot is ups and downs, touching and profound. After the publication of *Children of the Earth*, the novel has triggered heated discussions in both China and Japan, and people are again concerned about the issue of "Japanese orphans". As a novel set in China, there are a lot of texts depicting Chinese society and nature. Characters except the boy and his father all are Chinese. This is in line with the desire of Japanese readers to understand contemporary China. "*Children of the Earth*" even became China's intention, along with "*Factory of the World*" and "*The Great Wall*". While many Japanese writers came to China at the beginning of the twentieth century in search of their own vision of China, Toyoko Yamazaki did not come looking for impressions of China. So the *Son of the Earth* is realistic, reflecting little psychological fallout, rarely mixed with the disappointment and puzzlement of China. The descriptions of China in his works are more objective, realistic and rational. Due to the limitations of the times, Japanese writers saw mostly China of the late twentieth century in their work, when the Chinese environment was changing and many Japanese writer is unable to predict China's future, is not sufficiently knowledgeable about various Chinese issues, and there is a semi-fictional and semi-realistic approach in their

work to the portrayal of society, things, and people which is inevitably labeled.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the image of China in Japanese literature has different faces according to the passage of time and the changes of Japanese society. The image of China in Japanese literature includes not only ancient Chinese images, but also modern and contemporary images. Chinese images have always been the exotic images of concern in Japanese literature and are constantly constructed in Japanese literature. These images are associated with war, domination and ideology, reflecting the process of Chinese image in Japanese literature aggregate from classical to modern.

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