

Neither victors nor victims: transplanted/suppressed memories of the Sino-Japanese War in postwar Taiwan

Taiwan was a Japanese colony between 1895 and 1945. During the 1937-1945 Sino-Japanese War, the people of Taiwan, as subjects of the Japanese Empire, fought alongside the Japanese against China and the Allied forces. At the end of the war, Taiwan was turned over to its wartime enemy, the Chinese Nationalist (KMT) government. Overnight, wartime enemies became postwar compatriots and fellow citizens. How did the Taiwanese, transformed from Japanese colonial subjects to Chinese citizens, remember the war after 1945?

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In the study of historiography, it is well-argued that a common flaw of history writing is anachronism - writing history based on the present day view instead of what actually happened in the past. If anachronism represents a temporal issue in historiography, the transplantation and suppression of wartime memories in postwar Taiwan points to a neglected spatial dimension in history writing.

Transplanted memories

Under KMT rule between 1945 and 2000, the people of Taiwan were taught a war history transplanted from mainland China while having their own and their ancestors' war histories suppressed from public memory. Immediately after the war, Taiwanese who had worked with the Japanese were indiscriminately accused of collaboration and/or prosecuted as *Hanjian* or Chinese traitors. Even leading anti-Japanese figures such as Lin Xiantang were once considered by the KMT government as *Hanjian* (Qiu 1962:317). The KMT view of Taiwan's wartime experience not only conflated voluntary and forced cooperation with the Japanese; more significantly, it projected the postwar condition of Taiwanese being Chinese nationals backwards into wartime and asserted, anachronistically, that Taiwanese were Chinese nationals during the war.

This transplantation of a mainland Chi-

nese view of recent history was intensified as the KMT government retreated and consolidated itself on Taiwan in 1949. To mold patriotic Chinese out of former colonial subjects, KMT government policy propagated as orthodoxy its own view of the war. In history textbooks and official accounts, the war only consisted of events that did not take place in Taiwan: the 9/18 or September 18 Incident (*jiuyiba shibian*) in Shenyang (Mukden) of 1931, the 7/7 or July 7 Incident (*qiqi shibian*) or Lugouqiao (Marco Polo Bridge) Incident of 1937, and others. The war as a whole was known as the 'Eight-year War of Resistance (against the Japanese) (*banian kangzhan*)'. Memory of the war based on these events did not take into account what happened in Taiwan and to Taiwanese, and subsequently contributed to a view of the war that was entirely China-centered. As a result, postwar Taiwanese absorbed the transplanted perspective of the victors, which was the opposite of the true wartime experiences of Taiwanese.

Suppressed memories

As the KMT government transplanted the mainland Chinese view of the war to postwar Taiwan, it suppressed memory of what did happen in Taiwan. Before 1945, China was at war with Japan; as subjects of Japan, the people of Taiwan were at war with the people of China. However, memory of this experience was largely suppressed. For example, the history of more than 200,000 Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers and military per-

sonnel (*taiji ribenbing*) who had fought against the Chinese and Allied forces, and the resulting Chinese hostility towards Taiwanese, was nowhere to be found between 1945 and 1990.

Stories of Taiwanese casualties and suffering in the war against the Allied forces, such as the aborigines who perished as Japanese military conscripts and who were subsequently enshrined in Japan's Yasukuni Shrine, did not fit the history of the 'War of Resistance'. Thus, stories of Taiwanese being wartime victims were rarely included in postwar accounts. It was not until the 1990s that oral history by Taiwanese vet-

China's takeover of Taiwan was depicted as a glorious recovery, discounting the sense of loss, fear and uncertainty that many Taiwanese felt when they learned of Japan's defeat

erans (Zhou 1997) and films like Hou Hsiao-hsien's 1995 *Good Man Good Woman* (*haonan haonu*) - which briefly touched upon Chinese wartime hostility towards Taiwanese who went to the mainland to join the 'war of resistance' - began to rescue Taiwanese wartime experiences from postwar Chinese Nationalist representations.

Whose memories?

This transplantation of memory from mainland China and the suppression of memory from within Taiwan complemented and reinforced one another to construct a *false memory* of the war. For example, the people of Taiwan were represented as patriotic Chinese fighting the Japanese, most bluntly in government-sponsored publications or movies such as *Victory* (or *Meihua*, plum blossom, 1976) in the 1970s. Contradicting historical facts, all respectable Taiwanese in *Victory* spoke Mandarin and fought China's 'war of resistance' - against Japanese rule in Taiwan, and against Japanese military invasion in China.

Similar processes of transplantation/suppression of historical memory and constructions of false memory informed representations of Taiwan's wartime international relations. As a part of the Japanese war machine, Taiwanese were mobilized to support and consequently suffered dearly from Japan's war against the Allies. Toward the end of the war, Taiwan was heavily bombarded by the Allied air force. However, this part of wartime history was rarely found in postwar accounts as it contradicted the transplanted KMT government's view where the Allies were the saviors of Taiwan and friends of China. As a result, these episodes, too, were suppressed from public memory. Instead, what was emphasized in postwar accounts of Taiwan's wartime international relations

was the benevolence of the Allies. Most notably, the 1943 meeting between Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek in Cairo and the resulting joint statement (known as the 'Cairo Declaration' in postwar accounts) was featured and highly celebrated.

The most notable example of false memory was the account of China's commitment to recover Taiwan. Between 1895 and 1942, Chinese authorities never challenged the status of Taiwan as prescribed in the Treaty of Shimonoseki. It was not until 3 November 1942 that the then Chinese Foreign Minister Song Ziwen (T.V. Soong) stated China should 'retrieve

ous recovery' continues to prevail in Taiwan today.

As a result of the aforementioned processes of transplantation and suppression of historical memory, Taiwanese largely forgot their own wartime history of fighting and suffering as part of the Japanese wartime empire. What the Taiwanese remembered about the war was, instead, mainland China's wartime history. But while remembering the transplanted Other's war history of glory and triumph, Taiwanese were continuously reminded that they did not win the war. It was often asserted in history textbooks and official accounts that it was the Chinese, contrary to the Taiwanese who sided with Japan, who fought the 'national war of resistance (*minzu kangzhan*)'. As a result, the Taiwanese hardly recognized themselves, or were recognized by others, as victors of the war. At the same time, since Taiwan's own wartime history of fighting and suffering was largely suppressed in public memory, Taiwanese hardly recognized themselves, or were recognized by others, as victims of the war.

Taiwanese postwar memories of being neither victors nor victims challenge the conventional epistemological paradigm that categorically identifies victors and victims in wartime history. Furthermore, the transplantation and suppression of Taiwanese wartime memories, as discussed in this paper, point to a spatial dimension in history writing that deserves more scholarly attention. ◀

References

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