

III.

Overview of Scholarship on Southeast Asia's Overseas Chinese During the Second World War

Võ Minh Vũ

Introduction

When one is looking at the Sino-Japanese War and the Japanese invasion and occupation of Southeast Asia during the Asia-Pacific War, the topic of Southeast Asia's Overseas Chinese in wartime and their close connections to China is an important subject. This report will provide an overview of scholarship on the topic from Japan and Taiwan while suggesting possible directions for future research.

1. Japanese Wartime Research on the Overseas Chinese

The prolongation of the Sino-Japanese War and the broader geopolitical and strategic developments of the 1930s dramatically increased Japanese interest in Southeast Asia. This was even more the case when boycotts against Japanese goods were launched among the region's Chinese communities. During the war years, the study of Overseas Chinese began with empirical surveys of the current population. In the publications of Nan'yō Kyokai, Taiwan Sotokufu (the Government-General of Formosa), and the Bureau of East Asian Economic Investigation that belonged to Mantetsu (the South Manchuria Railway), the experiences of individual Japanese living in Southeast Asia and reports by various official organizations were disseminated.

In the chronologically classified publications are listed in the "Index of Chinese-Chinese Affiliated Books" published by the Asian Institute of Economic Research (Ajia Keizai kenkyujo), we can easily see that the Japanese period most interested in the Overseas Chinese is during the second half of the 1930s to the first half of the 1940s. In order to capture the reality of the Overseas Chinese population, the Japanese government has mobilized the main research institutes that actively conducts some scholarships about Overseas Chinese. These research surveys have conducted not only on the Southeast Asian identity itself, but also on the relationship between Overseas Chinese with motherland and the characteristics of Southeast Asia's Overseas Chinese society from different angles like economics, politics, culture, language. The reports of these investigation were published, and laid the foundations for Japanese understanding of the region's Overseas Chinese during the wartime period.

2. Postwar Research

From the end of the Second World War through the 1970s, research concerning the Overseas Chi-

nese, especially during the wartime period, received less attention. It was not until the 1970s that academic interest in the topic began to increase significantly. During this period, researchers on the modern history of China and Southeast Asia worked to clarify issues related to the Overseas Chinese during the war from various angles. Most of this scholarship concentrated on five main topics. The first was the anti-Japanese activities of Overseas Chinese, especially those residing in Southeast Asia. The second was the social structure of Chinese communities in colonies or Japanese-occupied areas. The third was the relationship between the Overseas Chinese and the governments of Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei. The fourth was Overseas Chinese networks during the war. The final topic was Japanese policy towards these communities.

Regarding anti-Japanese activities of Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, the most important research is by Akashi Yoji.¹ Akashi studied these activities throughout the various parts of the region. In order to prevent the total loss of China to the Japanese army, Overseas Chinese organized campaigns to raise funds for a strong China, boycotted Japanese products under the inspiration of the KMT (Guomindang Party) and attempted to unify the various communities by organizing the General Association of Nanyang Chinese (*Nanyang Huaqiao Zonghui*). However, such activities proved to be in conflict with their economic interests. Studying Overseas Chinese who were loyal to each of the two regimes of Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei and these communities' involvement in anti-Japanese activities, Akashi found that the level of involvement varied according to place of origin. There was a significant difference between Chinese from Guangdong and Fujian and those originating elsewhere. Akashi also demonstrated that some Overseas Chinese cooperated with the local governments in their countries of residence and reluctantly developed a more cooperative attitude toward Japanese to protect their own economic interests. Furthermore, he observed that many Chinese remained neutral towards the Nanyang-wide political movement.

Ichikawa Kenjiro has surveyed both anti- and pro-Japanese movements among Overseas Chinese after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, focusing on the Straits Settlements, Thailand and the Philippines. He studies in detail these communities' material assistance for the War of Resistance and anti-Japanese movements like the boycott.² Murakami Katsuhiko has also studied these resistance movements aimed at saving the fatherland through different activities such as raising funds, boycotting Japanese goods in favor of Chinese products, encouraging investment in China, and conducting public appeals. As Murakami points out, however, this movement lost its strength once the Asia-Pacific War began.³

These studies tend to emphasize the patriotism and resistance of the Overseas Chinese communities by illustrating their political and economic involvement in Southeast Asia-based movements and their

¹ Yoji Akashi, *The Nanyang Chinese National Salvation Movement 1937-1941*, International Studies, East Asian Series Research publication, No. 5, Center for East Asian Studies, The University of Kansas, 1970.

² 市川健二郎「日中戦争と東南アジア華僑」『国際政治』47号, 1972.

³ 村上勝彦「日中戦争下の東南アジア華僑」宇野重昭編『深まる侵略屈折する抵抗：1930年-40年代の日・中のはざま』, 研文出版, 2001.

funding for anti-Japanese activities in China through their networks. However, there has been little work focusing on the activities of Overseas Chinese in one particular area of Southeast Asia.

By contrast, some studies in recent years emphasize that there was some degree of cooperation between the Overseas Chinese and the Japanese. Kagotani Naoto, working in economic history, uses statistics from Japan to study the structures and motivation of Chinese communities in various parts of East Asia, noting their overt commercial activities involving the Japanese.⁴ Matsuura Masataka has studied their political activities, noting that in preparation for the war, the Japanese made efforts to utilize the potential of Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Japan, and Taiwan and succeeded in gaining considerable support from parts of these communities.⁵

Kagotani's and Matsuura's studies have focused on instances of Overseas Chinese cooperation with the Japanese, as opposed to the conventional emphasis on anti-Japanese activities. However, their research does not analyze the motivations behind such cooperation. Regarding this issue, Kikuchi Kazutaka has explained that those who originated from Guangdong and Fujian may have had family members held as "hostages" of Japan, which would explain their greater support for Wang Jingwei.⁶ Moreover, drawing on studies of Overseas Chinese communities not only in Japanese-occupied Southeast Asia but also in colonized Korea and Taiwan and in Japan itself, Kikuchi presumes that in areas under Japanese rule, these Chinese were in no position to support resistance in China. He argues that in these communities had only two choices: to return to China to protect themselves and their property, or else to remain silent and cooperate with Japanese. In reality, he believes, a genuinely "neutral" attitude was not an option.⁷

Kikuchi, in his research, has analyzed the organizational structures and policies used by the Chiang and Wang regimes to attract Overseas Chinese support.⁸ Sankichi Yasui has focused particularly on the Overseas Chinese community in Japan as a target of efforts by the governments in Peking and Nanjing. He has shown how the latter regime in particular shifted its stance on the Overseas Chinese from "enemies of the nation" to "good citizens", and how they were drawn to the Japanese side and administered through a carrot-and-stick policy.⁹

Relatively few studies on the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia have been done in Japanese. Those that have appeared, however, shed light on some aspects of policies toward Overseas Chinese and their situation in British Malaya, the Dutch Indies, the Philippines, and southern China. Edie Hermawan has examined correspondence between military and civil authorities for the period 1942-45 to study the policies of the Japanese 16th Army in West Java toward the Chinese community and the response

⁴ 籠谷直人『アジア国際通商秩序と近代日本』, 名古屋大学出版会, 2000.

⁵ 松浦正孝『「大東亜戦争」はなぜ起きたのか』, 名古屋大学出版会, 2010.

⁶ 菊池一隆「抗日戦争時期における全日本華僑の動向と構造—大使館, 及び横浜・神戸・長崎各華僑の位置」, 大阪教育大学『歴史研究』39号, 2001.

⁷ 菊池一隆『戦争と華僑: 日本・国民政府公館・傀儡政権・華僑間の政治力学』, 汲古書院, 2011, p. 3.

⁸ 菊池一隆, 「重慶国民政府の華僑行政と華僑の動向—英領マレイ、シンガポールを中心に—」, 大阪教育大学『歴史研究』37号, 1999と, 菊池一隆『中国抗日軍事史』, 有志舎, 2009.

⁹ 安井三吉『帝国日本と華僑—日本・台湾・朝鮮』(シリーズ中国にとっての20世紀), 青木書店, 2005.

of local people to these policies. Hermawan concludes that the Chinese in West Java supported Japanese policies, and that the Japanese administration there appears to have been “quite comprehensive”.¹⁰ Ikehata Setsuho has followed a similar approach to study the Chinese community in Japanese-occupied Philippines. Unlike Hermawan, however, Ikehata focuses on the persecution of Chinese by the Japanese military and the resistance of Filipino Chinese against the occupiers.¹¹

Akashi’s study of Japanese-occupied Malaya and Singapore, although it does not focus specifically on the Chinese, helps to understand the structures, significance and limits of the Japanese presence. Akashi examines the functioning of Japanese military authority, the activities of the Malayan Communist Party cadres, Japanese policies of arrest and detention, and their economic policy as well.¹² He also looks at the process of formulating the “Outline of Action of Overseas Chinese in Nanyang” policy document produced by Military Command Number 25.

While Akashi, Hermawan and Ikehata have all looked at Japan’s treatment of Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Higuchi Hidemi focuses on the Japanese Navy’s policy in Fujian during the Sino-Japanese War. As Higuchi explains, after the outbreak of the conflict, the Navy formulated its own approach towards Overseas Chinese along with the policy of the Wang Jingwei regime. He concludes that “for Overseas Chinese, ‘pro-Japanese’ and ‘pro-Wang Jingwei’ were not the same. They were willing to cooperate with any government which would build China and help it prosper even though such government might be pro-Japanese”.¹³

This author’s doctoral dissertation examined Japanese policies toward Overseas Chinese in French Indochina, as well as their response and that of the French colonial authorities.¹⁴ Working through the French regime, the Japanese military imposed pressure through coercion to repress anti-Japanese activities within the Chinese community and ensure a stable supply of resources for the war effort.

The same explanation is found in studies on this topic by scholars in the PRC and Taiwan. Sources from the KMT and Chinese Communist Party allow detailed analysis of the policies towards Overseas Chinese followed by the Chiang and Wang regimes, including the activities of their respective offices for Overseas Chinese affairs, with two fundamental slogans: “Overseas Chinese are the mother of Revolution”, and “Patriotic Overseas Chinese”. Most studies have emphasized the bonds between China and the overseas communities, as well as the latter’s patriotism and contributions to the anti-Japanese resistance on the mainland. Since the 1990s, however, some studies, especially by scholars in Taiwan, have taken a different perspective. Gu Hongyan’s study of the Overseas Chinese community in Malaya makes it clear that it is not sufficient to look at this topic only in terms of their patriotism. Gu observes that in previous studies, the economic motivations of Overseas Chinese communities received little at-

¹⁰ エディ・ヘルマワン [Eddy Hermawan] 「日本軍政期の西部ジャワにおける華僑政策」『社会科学討究』, 第 28 卷第 2 号, 1982, p. 322.

¹¹ 池端雪浦, 「日本軍政下フィリピン華人社会」(東南アジア・南アジア史研究資料の基礎研究), 1993.

¹² 明石陽至 「渡邊軍政—その哲理と展開」明石陽至編 『日本占領下の英領マラヤ・シンガポール』岩波書店, 2001.

¹³ 樋口秀実 「日中戦争下の日本の華僑工作」アジア経済研究所 『アジア経済』 Vol. 41, No. 4, 2000 年 4 月.

¹⁴ Vo Minh Vũ 『第 2 次世界大戦期の仏領インドシナにおける日本の華僑政策』, 東京大学, 学位請求博士論文, 2014, pp. 184-185.

attention when in fact economic relations with the Japanese were often the defining factor in their relationship, notably in Indochina.¹⁵

Huang Xiaojian has noted the need to study the Overseas Chinese not only from the perspective of nationalism but also with reference to demographics, political status, educational background, and social status. Huang is critical of scholarship which is excessively “China-centric” and thus fails to sufficiently examine the roles of powerful individuals in the Overseas Chinese communities, the decisive factors affecting the attitudes of these communities, and the conflicts between the Overseas Chinese policies of the Chiang and Wang regimes.¹⁶ Li Yinghui divides the Overseas Chinese into “anti-Japanese” and “pro-Japanese” groups, suggesting that the first were mainly new immigrants and the latter those who had been born in their country of residence. Li notes that the characteristics of these overseas communities differed according to political environment, military influences, geography and economic factors and that such diversity must be taken into account when one studies them.¹⁷

Shiu Wen Tang has used KMT archival documents to examine the Overseas Chinese community in Vietnam during the Second World War and First Indochina War.¹⁸ Shiu pays particular attention to the material losses that this particular community suffered during these years. He argues that after the Japanese occupied Southeast Asia, a number of Overseas Chinese in Vietnam, especially those from Guangdong and Fujian, considered that protecting their own lives was their highest priority and in order to maintain their economic interests, they supported the Wang government, thus implicitly cooperating with the Japanese.

Conclusion

Looking at the history of research on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, we can formulate a rough chronology of its evolution. During the wartime period, studies of the Chinese communities consisted mainly of empirical data collection. Subsequent scholarship began to study their wartime activities, notably their relations with the Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei regimes. Of particular interest are the measures taken against the boycotts of Japanese products, the economic and political links between the Overseas Chinese and China, and their support for the resistance there. Japan's carrot-and-stick policies aimed at preventing such support have also been studied.

The most significant trend in this scholarship is the emphasis on the overseas communities' close relationship with mainstream Chinese politics. As Hara Fujio has demonstrated in his comprehensive study, this relationship included very diverse attitudes and positions within these communities.¹⁹ While Overseas Chinese generally felt some degree of loyalty and support toward China, their behav-

¹⁵ 古鴻延『東南亞華僑的認同問題 馬來亞篇』，聯經出版公司，台北，1994。

¹⁶ 黃小堅「關於華僑與抗日戰爭研究若干問題」，華僑協會總會主編『華僑與抗日戰爭論文集』，正中書局，上冊，台北，1999。

¹⁷ 李盈慧『抗日與附日：華僑，國民政府，汪政權』，水牛出版社，2003。

¹⁸ Shiu Wentang, “A Preliminary Inquiry into the Wartime Material Losses of Chinese in Vietnam, 1941-1947”, Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies, Volume 4, 2010.

¹⁹ 原不二夫『マラヤ華僑と中国一帰属意識転換過程の研究一』，龍溪書舎，2001。

ior depended on whether they supported the Chiang government or the Wang regime. This issue was not considered in previous research but should continue to receive attention in future scholarship.

A number of issues still remain to be studied concerning the Overseas Chinese communities under Japanese rule and their relations with the Japanese, both in Indochina and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. For Indochina in particular, there needs to be further study of the local Chinese communities and the degree to which they actually cooperated with the Japanese during the wartime period.