

An Analysis of the Evolution of Chinese Image in Modern Japanese Literature

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Abstract: A large part of modern Japanese literature takes China as its research theme, and it vividly depicts the local conditions and customs of China, reveals the recognition of the cultures of the two countries, and conveys some ideas. In Japanese literature works related to China, there are not only looking up to and remembering Chinese history, but also contempt and misunderstanding caused by modern history. Sino-Japanese relations have a long history, and literary works can reflect the characteristics of relations and daily life between the two countries in different periods. Therefore, by studying contemporary China described in modern Japanese literature, we can not only communicate in literary form, but also better interpret the classic and modern images of China.

1. Introduction

It seems that it is difficult for China to understand most of Japan in detail, because China has a vast territory, many nationalities, a long history and profound cultural heritage, and it is difficult to understand the whole picture of China through a certain book or someone's experience.^[1] Japanese people generally know Chinese information through narration, but the authenticity of these narratives needs to be verified. Because narrative covers fiction and narrative poems in the category of fictional narrative literature, as well as artificial trade-offs, or fabricated fictional documentary travel notes and reports.^[2] Because these narratives are formed based on different viewpoints or angles of different individuals, there is no connection between them, which leads to the ever-changing image of China in Japanese literature.^[2] To study the image of China in Japanese literature, it is first necessary to clarify the changes of Chinese history and modernity. Ancient China has a long history, creating many immortal masterpieces, providing spiritual wealth to Japanese scholars and leading the value orientation of Japanese literature.^[3] In modern times, due to China's special background and environmental factors, China's development stagnated, so Japan began to form self-awareness. This paper studies the image of China from the perspective of Japan, and then explores the image of China in modern Japanese literature through relevant research and analysis in different periods.

2. The Image of China in Japanese Literature during Meiji Period

Japan adopted a closed-door policy for two and a half centuries under the tokugawa era of Tokugawa, and only started to open its doors after the Meiji Restoration.[4-5] At this time, China was at the end of the reign of the Qing Dynasty, with social unrest and stagnant development. Because Japan's inherent impression of China resolutely stays in the earlier period of China's prosperity, the current image of China has produced a great gap to the Japanese, and also aroused Japan's curiosity about China. For Japan, China has always existed in classic texts, and when the images in the texts become reality, it will have a great impact. For China, there is a kind of self-denial, that is, denying the original memory in the text or the simple illusion with ethereal, mysterious, beautiful and romantic characteristics. Therefore, no matter how realistic China is, it can't reach the image imagined and judged by the Japanese, and the final result can only be Japan's disappointment. Influenced by the Meiji Spirit, Japanese writers usually avoid keeping a submissive attitude towards mainstream ideology. In their hearts, they still maintain the authoritative position of classic texts, and cherish the goodwill remaining for real China. Therefore, Japanese writers not only yearn for the ancient Chinese generation, but also look down on modern China. That is to say,

deliberately keep a certain distance from the bad aspects of China's reality, and curb one's true feelings, so as not to express too intensely or vividly. In this way, they can break away from the constraints of their living place and experience in China, thus making their personal true feelings towards China more in line with the mainstream consciousness.^[6]

3. The Change of Chinese Image in Japanese Literature

Many Japanese scholars are deeply influenced by Chinese traditional classical literature, which makes them unable to give up the accomplishment of Chinese classical literature completely. Because most of these memories are beautiful, even their personal illusions, Japanese scholars are more willing to keep them. Usually, Japanese scholars use MoMo's attitude to treat reality and phenomena in writing, so as to curb their extreme existence, which is embodied in their portrayal of Chinese image. In order to avoid being influenced by the submissive attitude formed during Japan's closed-door period, writers' associations can avoid the actual personal experience and try their best to keep their texts close to the mainstream ideology, which is also the cherish and goodwill left by Japanese scholars for Chinese classic culture.^[7-8] The image of China showed utopian state in the works of Japanese authors in Taisho era. At that time, Japanese society was in a mechanical and utilitarian environment, and Japanese scholars were bored and disappointed with Japanese reality, which made Japanese scholars yearn for “exotic” feelings in China during the period of integrity and barbarism. Although China was in a period of social unrest and stormy weather, Japanese literati enjoyed the infinite possibility of the game between reality and phenomenon. During the Showa period, Japanese writers began to pursue modern art and aesthetics in Western Europe, which made it a model for Japanese writers to imitate. At this time, the influence of Chinese culture has been greatly reduced, and even has no influence. At this time, Japanese writers began to pay more attention to China's current politics, instead of focusing only on Chinese literature in Meiji and Taisho era.

4. The Image of China in Modern Japanese Literature

The formation of Chinese image in Japanese literature mainly originates from the feelings and imagination of Japanese writers, and is not a repetition of the actual situation. Common sources include texts describing China, Japanese national imagination of Chinese social collective, and Japanese writers' own experience and residence in China. Among them, the text describing China can be understood as the Japanese text written by Japanese writers, and most of them exist in the form of travel notes; There are also Chinese texts spread from China to Japan, which are various and huge in number, and are the main reference documents for Japanese writers to write Chinese images. Chinese image often exists in the form of ideology and literary image in modern Japanese literature. However, it is generally believed that the image of China in Japanese literature is a literary image. Because its literary features will not be weakened by the emergence of ideology, and it has been verified in many representative Japanese literary works.^[9]

5. Conclusion

Japanese literati are deeply influenced by history and modern China. It is embodied in many aspects, such as Japanese scholars' looking up and pursuing for classic texts, examining and judging China's current situation, and so on. Chinese image in Japanese writers' works has both literary image and ideology. Through the content of the text, we can appreciate the beauty of China and understand some bad aspects of China. Chinese readers often choose to know China from one side. However, as a qualified reader, we should hold a rational and objective attitude and face the image of China in modern Japanese literature frankly. In the study of Sino-Japanese relations, only by comparing and exploring in depth from different angles can we reveal the deep connection between different cultures of the two countries and promote the better development of the two countries.

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