



Nihon Senryoka no Chugoku Musurimu: Kahoku oyobi Monkyo niokeru Minzoku Seisaku to Jyoshi Kyoiku [Muslims in China under Japanese occupation: The ethnic minority policy and women's education in the North China and Mongol military governments]

by Atsuko Shimbo, Tokyo, Waseda University Press, 2018, 384 pp., JPY 5,000 (including tax), ISBN: 978-4-657-18701-7

Bing Zhang

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1. Synopsis

This book is the first treatise that examines the conditions of Chinese Muslims in the Japan-occupied China. It focuses on the Muslim strategy that was systematically implemented by the Japanese army. It provides a consideration about how the wartime mobilization system was incorporated in the education of young people belonging to ethnic minorities in the above-mentioned area during the Sino-Japanese wartime (1931–1945).

The Japanese army operated a Muslim strategy in the Japan-occupied China, namely, the areas of north China and Mongolia, to control the Han Chinese through a policy of ethnic division and employ Muslims in military incursions in northwest China. This strategy was exercised in the light of the discord between the Han Chinese and the Muslim Chinese, stemming from differences in religion and customs, and imposed a policy of ethnic division to control the former. With a focus on this Muslim strategy, the book covers four core issues: Firstly, how did the Japanese army mobilized young adults belonging to ethnic minorities, particularly Muslims, to support the war? Secondly, how did the people survive under the occupation while being confronted with Japan's machinations? Thirdly, how did the Japanese imperialist policies reshape the Chinese people's identity and changed the Chinese society as a whole? Fourth, what were the long-term consequences of encounters with Japanese people during the occupation for those subjected to it? To put the conclusion first, the book completely accomplishes its goals.

The book comprises seven chapters, and the contents of each chapter are summarized as follows.

Chapter 1 examines the religious policies of the territories under the Japanese army's occupation and discusses in detail the increasing awareness of Islam during the Japanese imperial expansion and the perceptions of the Muslim strategy in Japan. The author acutely proposes that this phenomenon was aimed purely at using Islam as a tool in the Japanese colonization of Asia.

Chapter 2 addresses why the Japanese army undertook the Muslim strategy and examines the then state of international relations and Japanese military tactics. The author then illustrates in detail how the Muslim strategy was implemented and what it entailed by focusing on the role of the All China Muslim League, a central player in Japan's Muslim strategy.

Chapter 3 focuses on the education of Muslims under the north China puppet government. In this chapter, the author analyzes the influence of Japanese military rule on the efforts to modernize Muslim education through the Islamic Reform Movement.

Chapter 4 discusses the Young Muslim Association, one of the main projects of the All China Muslim League, and thoroughly illustrates the circumstances of its inception, its curriculum and activities, and the careers of its alumni.

Chapter 5 explores the Muslim strategy operated by the Northwest China Federation of Islam under the Mongolian military government. This chapter discusses youth education and investigates the Mongolian government's plans for the Muslim strategy and the circumstances that ultimately led to its demise, with a focus on the Japanese leaders who promoted the strategy in the first place.

Chapter 6 is a study of Jissen Girls' Junior High School, a secondary education institution for Muslim girls established in Beijing. Chapter 7 focuses on the Zenrin Muslim Girls' School established under the Mongolian military government.

2. Significance

As Part I indicates, the scope of the book is wide and includes many topics that had never been investigated before. Compared to the existing research, this book makes the following contributions.

First, the book provides a comprehensive description of the Japanese army's Muslim strategy. During the Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese actively developed a Muslim strategy to achieve their imperialist objectives and ultimately caused great damage to the Chinese Muslims involved in this process. Although this aspect was undoubtedly an important part of the Sino-Japanese War, the strategy thereafter was largely forgotten in both China and Japan and has never been completely recounted until now. The book more accurately unfolds the history and describes it in detail for the very first time. In the words of the author, this book is certainly nothing if not the work of recovering the memory of a forgotten past (p. 12).

Furthermore, the book adopts new approaches to research on Japanese colonial education: Firstly, territories where colonial education was conducted. The existing literature has focused on Manchuria, Korea, and Taiwan, whereas this work examines the territories that had never been studied – North China and Mongolia – and analyzes them while observing the differences between them and Manchuria. Secondly, content of colonial education. The literature on colonial education has focused on school curricula and emphasized forced Japanese-language learning and Japanization of education as tools for sustaining a long-term control over the colonies. By contrast, this book also examines other issues in colonial education by expanding its scope to include military training among youth groups and religious education, off-campus activities, and religious activities within school curricula. It ultimately succeeded in depicting the actual state of the wartime mobilization and education of the ethnic minorities in the Japan-occupied China. Thirdly, colonial education and gender. The literature on colonial education has been lacking in gender-based analyzes. The wartime mobilization effort targeted young women and men, but research into this phenomenon has been inadequate. In the Japan-occupied territories, young women from ethnic minorities were recruited for varied purposes, a topic that has rarely been directly examined. This book not only provides insights into the actual circumstances of ethnic minority girls' education under Japanese occupation but also considers the lives that these women led after their education in the Japan-occupied territories.

As for research methods, the book is especially valuable because of its extensive use of material collected and collated through fieldwork. Existing research has mainly relied on official documents, magazines, newspapers, and other written sources. Historical research into colonial education has rarely been based on first-hand information through interviews. In contrast, when researching for this book, the author conducted interviews with over 20 people, either directly involved in the events discussed or family members of those directly involved. Thus, she ushered into her research, making an extremely significant contribution to the field by preserving precious oral histories.

This work provides new perspectives and topics to be applied in the historical research on colonial education, the Sino–Japanese War, and Sino–Japanese educational exchanges; additionally, this work is essential for researchers in related fields.

3. Themes

In conclusion, I have addressed two themes of the book.

First, I would like to provide a clarification regarding the context of Japan's Muslim strategy and Islamic policies. As the author asserts, Although the religious policies adopted by Japan in the colonies and occupied territories varied by area, time, ethnicity, and religion, in general they were rather stringent. The Japanese army repressed any rebellion against its intervention and interference into people's religions. Nevertheless, Japan attempted to accept Islam to use Muslims, took the initiative to actively operate a Muslim strategy targeting local Muslims, and adopted a relatively open-minded approach in its treatment and education of Muslims to the point of developing the strategy while implementing policies that favored Muslims. According to the author, the purpose of this scheme was to use Muslims in the colonization of China. Because back then both the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party were actively implementing hostile policies against the Chinese Muslims, the Japanese army filled that gap and attempted to control the Han Chinese through a policy of ethnic division (p. 80). However, this discussion is not enough to completely understand Japan's adoption of a proactive Muslim strategy and Islamic policies; hence, this aspect should have been examined in a more detailed manner.

Finally, there is the need for comparative research into the history of other religious and ethnic minorities in the Japan-occupied territories. This work focuses on Chinese Muslims under Japanese occupation by clearly and effectively illustrating and investigating Japan's Muslim strategy and girls' education in northwest China and Mongolia. Further research should continue to explore strategies and education policies targeting religious and ethnic minorities under Japanese occupation, alongside identifying their differences from the Muslim strategy and Muslim education policies. For example, the religious policies in the Japan-occupied China by the Central China Religious League, the manipulation and use of religion in the northeast China under the Japanese rule, the Jewish ghetto of the Japan-occupied Shanghai, and so on. In this regard, I have high expectations from the author's next work.

It is hoped that the publication of this book will have an invigorating effect on historical research into colonial education, Sino–Japanese War research, and Sino–Japanese educational exchange, thereby advancing these fields.

Bing Zhang
Yamanashi Prefectural University, Kofu, Japan
 zhangbing@yamanashi-ken.ac.jp

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