

In the Shadow of War: Nationalism and Folk Studies in Wartime Beiping and Shanghai

Selina J. Gao

Murray State University

Abstract

The discipline of folklore studies was introduced to China in the early twentieth century while the country faced a grave national crisis resulting from intense foreign pressure and a rigid political system that was incapable of adapting to the challenges of the modern world. Nationalism contributed to the rising interest in folklore from the late 1910s to early 1920s, then became the dominant theme of folklore studies thereafter. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, folklore studies spread all over the country and developed vigorously within China. However, the eruption of the War of Resistance in 1937 interrupted this revitalization process and most folklore activities came to a standstill. In wartime China, leading scholars looked to the past in part as a reaction to Japanese imperialism, but also to strengthen cultural cohesion for the nation. In Japanese-occupied areas, some scholars persisted in independent folklore investigations and writing even though most upper tier Chinese universities and leading figures in the folklore movement gradually relocated to non-occupied territory. Scholars who remained in the occupation zone often had contact with foreign-backed institutions and were able to continue working during the war years. Their research activities served the purpose of rallying the nation and fed a growing popular demand for more and deeper investigations into China's folk traditions. This work examines the influence of nationalism on folk studies in Beiping and Shanghai, shining a light on folklorists' activities, folklore organizations, and primary publications during China's War of Resistance against Japan.

Keywords

Folklore studies; Modern China; Nationalism; Intellectual history; Second Sino-Japanese War

Folklore Studies and Nationalism

Folklore emerged as a new field of learning in the eighteenth century when philologists in Germany and antiquarians in England began to look closely at

* Selina J. Gao, Department of History, 6B-10 Faculty Hall, Murray State University, Murray, KY 42071, USA; sgao2@murraystate.edu

the ways of the lower classes (Dorson 1972, 1). The basic concept of the “folk” has remained crucial throughout the entire development of folklore as a field of study. The term folk has Germanic roots (*volk*), meaning “(of) the people” as opposed to different clans, tribes, or nations. The concept of folklore developed as part of the nineteenth-century ideology of romantic nationalism, leading to the reshaping of oral traditions to serve modern ideological goals.

There is a deep pool of sophisticated western literature on the role folklore studies played in stimulating the rise of nationalism in both Europe and the United States during the industrial era¹, but English language academic coverage of related developments in China has been unfortunately thin up until the publication of *Saving the Nation through Culture: The Folklore Movement in Republican China* (UBC Press, 2019).² This article sets out to help fill that gap and contribute a brief case study for wartime China that will help contribute to global understanding of the relationship between folklore studies and nationalism. As we will see, Chinese folklore practitioners were compelled to apply themselves in the service of national unity by some of the most brutal scorched earth tactics the world had ever seen. At the same time, they faced restrictions on their work that ranged from inconvenient, such as the inability to travel freely to conduct field research, to life-threatening, such as the risk of publishing works that ran afoul of the feared Japanese occupation authorities. Despite the difficult circumstances, these Chinese cohort you will be introduced to here felt the stakes were so high that they had to continue their work.

The term *folk-lore* entered the English language on August 22, 1846, when William John Thoms, an English antiquary writing under the pseudonym Ambrose Merton, published a letter in the British journal *The Athenaeum*, a magazine catering to the intellectually curious, introducing the coinage as “a good Saxon compound” meaning “the lore of the people”. Thoms

1 One of the best recent primers on Europe is Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin’s (eds) *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). See also Terry Gunnell, ed., *Grimm Ripples: The Legacy of the Grimms’ Deutsche Sagen in Northern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2022). For an American context, see Simon J. Bronner, *Folk Nation: Folklore in the Creation of American Tradition* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002); Richard Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); and David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

2 This is the author’s monograph-length contribution to the field. There are brief but valuable folklore-related passages in major works from Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation – Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). See also, Sandra Eminov, “Folklore and Nationalism in Modern China,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 12, 2/3 (1975); Juwen Zhang, “Folklore in China: Past, Present, and Challenges,” *Humanities* 7, 2 (2018); and Lijun Zhang and Ziyang You, *Chinese Folklore Studies Today: Discourse and Practice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019).

intended folklore as a replacement for more prolix terms – especially “Popular Antiquities” – long employed in England. Thoms listed the areas constituting the field of folklore as “the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden time”, and he pleaded that they needed to be “rescued” before they were “entirely lost” (Dundes 1965, 4-5; Tillis 1999, 29). In 1878, George Laurence Gomme (1853-1916) discovered Thoms’ publication from 1846 and was inspired to found the Folk-Lore Society (FLS) of London for the purpose of collecting and preserving the fast-perishing relics of folklore. These efforts can be seen as the first organized attempt to understand folklore as a science of social man. *The Handbook of Folklore* was first published in 1890 by the English Folklore Society, one of the first organizations in the world devoted to the study of folk culture, and defined folklore research as the study of elements of archaic culture surviving in the modern age (Gomme 1890). Folklore enthusiasts saw their subject as a resource for the creation of a new national culture, one that embodied the primal origins of the nation and linked the past to the present. The aim of those who studied it was to create a new culture that was both modern and distinctly national.

Folklore studies in Europe and North America became a respectable and wide-spread academic pursuit in the nineteenth century that was closely tied to the emergence of the modern nation-state. Alan Dundes, a prolific American folklorist, argues, “[t]he serious studies of folklore found an enthusiastic audience among individuals who felt nostalgia for the past and/or the necessity of documenting the existence of national consciousness or identity” (Dundes 1980, 1).³ Folklore studies were often used to reinforce support for new forms of political organization by casting them as natural expressions of these timeless and essential identities.

For example, German scholars such as the famous Brothers Grimm embraced folklore research as a national duty that saw them articulate a pan-Germanic cultural identity to serve as the ideological underpinning of political efforts to unify the separate Germanic principalities into one nation-state. They began publishing some of their most influential works⁴ toward the end of the Napoleonic Wars, a trigger for Romantic Nationalism that resulted in a political settlement that divided Central Europe’s German-speaking peoples

3 The English word “folklore” was coined in 1846, but European scholars had begun to talk about “folksongs” and “folk beliefs” by the late eighteenth century.

4 Among them were *Die beiden ältesten deutschen Gedichte aus dem achten Jahrhundert: Das Lied von Hildebrand und Hadubrand und das Weißenbrunner Gebet* (*The Two Oldest German Poems of the Eighth Century: The Song of Hildebrand and Hadubrand and the Wessobrunn Prayer*) as well as *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children’s and Household Tales*) both in 1812.

among 39 separate states. A generation later, they were both firm supporters of the *Großdeutschland* (Greater Germany) movement that undergirded the 1848 Revolution in the German Confederation, as were other aspirational national unifier artists and thinkers such as the composer Richard Wagner, biblical scholar/orientalist Paul Anton Lagarde (both of whom are often first remembered today as notorious anti-Semites), and luminary economist/political theorist Friedrich List. Grimm sentiments, such as “we can grasp nothing else as surely as our innate powers” and “Nature herself guides us towards the Fatherland” had an inspirational quality to them while Germany was divided and lived under France’s shadow in the first half of the nineteenth century, but took on darker tones later as Hitler grasped for power after World War I. Neither Grimm brother lived to see it, but modern Germany finally took shape in 1871 after Otto von Bismarck led Prussia to victory in a series of wars against Denmark, Austria-Hungary, and then France.

Folkloric evidence of the primordial and persistent national spirit was evoked by nationalist movements in Eastern Europe, Russia, Ireland, Greece, and other countries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The best-known example of the power this folk ideal exerted over the political imagination is perhaps found in Finland, where an epic poem cobbled together by physician-poet Elias Lönnrot from fragments of poetry preserved in oral traditions was published in 1835. (It was subsequently doubled in size with the addition of new verses in 1849 and then appeared as a more easily digestible abridged version in 1862.) Known as the *Kalevala*, this creation story epic was accepted as a core component of Finnish heritage and became a focal point of Finnish nationalism during a period of rising dissatisfaction with life under Russian imperial rule in the waning years of the nineteenth century. The more the Tsars pushed unpopular Russification policies in a failed bid to snuff out the native languages of minority peoples throughout the empire, the more the Finns took succor in the *Kalevala* as a means of asserting their right to national literature in Finnish. Their moment of liberation came in 1917 with the Russian collapse in World War I, then victory for monarchist forces over leftist elements supported by Bolshevik forces in a short civil war in early 1918.

Thus, folklore served two functions in the work of the nation-builders: it provided both historical information and a model for future action. Folklore itself became a symbol of national wealth and a treasure-house of history and culture. These were the reasons why scholars entered the field, collecting, studying, and publishing the traditions they found (Hobsbawm and Rauder 1983). The concept of folk was closely linked to the rise of modern nationalism,

although not all nineteenth-century folklore studies or folklore were explicitly nationalistic. For example, in a relatively well-governed and stable society like that of Great Britain, the English school of ethnography and folklore—highly influential in the later nineteenth century—described the task of folklore research in terms of its contributions to a universal human history, not in terms of its bearing on national identity. The English school of folklore, by contrast, drew on an understanding of universal historical development that was deeply ingrained in nineteenth-century intellectual culture.

Nationalism has been defined as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation (Smith 1991, 73). It was linked to a specific political and territorial organization of society and the nation-state within a discourse on international power. Nationalism served the nation-state by legitimating and proliferating territorially bounded ideas about the natural organization of human beings according to nationality. Prasenjit Duara argues that “[w]hat is novel about modern nationalism is the world system of nation-states. This system, which has become globalized in the last hundred years or so, sanctions the nation-state as the only legitimate expression of sovereignty. The nation-state is a political form with distinct territorial boundaries within which the sovereign state, ‘representing’ the nation-people, has steadily expanded its role and power” (Duara 1995, 2).

In China, nationalism held an obvious appeal as a solution for people confronting a national crisis. It emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and became increasingly influential in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chinese nationalism was articulated in terms of protecting the nation as a whole, an entity physically as well as culturally defined. The most easily identifiable expressions of Chinese nationalism as a relationship were the rapid growth of anti-imperialist sentiment and organized political movements (Gao 2019, 12-13). Following painfully confronting new international realities after China’s military defeat to Japan in 1895, the Chinese gradually accepted the concept of a modern nation-state system “based on a non-Chinese world order and determined by the norms of the Western-dominated international system” (Xu 2001, 102).

In the new nation-state system, the state’s obligations were twofold. Externally, it should exercise sovereignty within distinct, but not disputed, territorial boundaries. Internally, the state should claim to represent the people of the nation, and, through this claim, steadily expand its role in society (Duara 1995, 70). The new Chinese republic born of the 1911 Revolution failed on both fronts, which directed the attention of many scholars to the role of the

modern media in the construction of nation state. This was possible, they believed, through an extensive exploration of Chinese popular culture coupled with a vigorous campaign to enlighten the Chinese people about just how rich it truly was.

These nationalist scholars believed that China needed to strengthen itself in order to survive in the world of competitive nation-states and that the Chinese people could be rallied to the cause through the proper mobilization of mass sentiments, especially those that strengthened individual identification with a set of goals common to the nation (Hobsbawm 1990, 141-42). They accepted contemporary Western theories of cultural evolution that held that the strength or weakness of a national state was a reflection of the character of its people, and they agreed that the quality of the common people would finally decide China's destiny (Fitzgerald 1996, 106-8). For these modern Chinese intellectuals, "traditional culture," or the presence of the past, in particular the folk culture, was useful in a nationalist discourse to reach through to the masses or to respond to the cultural dilemmas brought on by Westernization.

Folklore Studies in China Before the War

These new intellectuals, having rejected the orthodox Chinese tradition – Confucian culture – and frustrated by Western imperialist ideologies, were eager to find a new way to save the Chinese nation. Under the circumstances, most of the basic strains of thought associated with the development of the concept of folklore in the West were introduced into China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The initial stage of modern Chinese folklore research⁵ began as it had in other nations with the collection and survey of folk literature. In early 1918, budding folklorists opened the Folksong Collecting Bureau (*Beida geyao zhengjichu* 北大歌謠征集處) at National Beijing University as a vehicle to collect folksongs from the public. Its mission was to set up a crowdsourcing framework for folk material collection that amateur enthusiasts could follow. The bureau's initial efforts were met with a positive response, prompting the formation of the Folksong Research Society (*Geyao yanjiuhui* 歌謠研究會) in 1920 and then, two years later, the launch of *Folksong Weekly* (*Geyao zhoukan* 《歌謠周刊》) to share this work with readers at and around National Beijing University. In short order, a small but growing number of professors joined the movement, rules and regulations for collectors were modified based on experiences

5 The most comprehensive monograph on the Chinese Folklore Movement is Jie Gao's *Saving the Nation Through Culture: The Folklore Movement in Republican China* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019).

gained in the field, the invitation to submit folk materials was extended to a nationwide audience, and other influential journals and newspapers pledged to devote space to folklore discoveries. There was a conservative backlash at Peking University over the publication of this supposedly vulgar material in the campus paper, but it was nowhere near sufficient to snuff out popular demand for more (Gao 2019, 45). Over the ensuing years, Beijing-based folklorists did pioneering research on the songs of the working class, peasants, women, and gangsters, illuminating the lives of the underclass for a learned audience of readers.

From early 1918 through 1937, Beijing University made an exceptional contribution to folklore studies and laid a foundation for the Modern Folklore Movement in China. Under the university's influence, folklore studies appeared in various newspapers and other research institutions in Beijing and Shanghai in rapid succession. Still, political tension and a financial crisis at Beijing University forced many intellectuals to abandon Beiping and the Chinese Folklore Movement following the Chinese National Revolution initiated by the Nationalists in Guangdong in 1925. From then on, the Folklore Movement migrated southwards, where it found a new home at Xiamen and Zhongshan Universities. In November 1927, the Folklore Society, the first official organization with “*minsuxue*”⁶ (民俗學 folklore) in its title, was established at Zhongshan University (中山大學 Sun Yat-sen University). This Folklore Society was composed of diligent intellectuals who had a remarkable influence on Chinese society through their noteworthy publications and the public support they enjoyed, especially from 1927 to 1933.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Chinese Folklore Movement developed vigorously within China, particularly in the south. Many intellectuals from different provinces and cities not only wrote for the *Folklore Weekly* (*Minsu zhoukan* 《民俗周刊》) and other folklore series published by Zhongshan University, but also established scores of folklore associations and created corresponding local folklore publications. Heavyweight intellectual Gu Jiegang served as the founding president of the Chinese Folklore Society from 1927, guiding affiliated historians, anthropologists, and other scholars in their efforts to establish a firmer academic framework for folklore study (Gao 2019, 103). Most importantly, in the new center of the Folklore Movement, Hangzhou, intellectuals produced a massive volume of noteworthy work, carried out a large number of valuable investigations, and undertook many remarkable academic projects. In 1935, folklore activities entered a

6 *Minsuxue*, the modern Chinese term for “folklore,” is a modern term; it was not part of the Chinese language until 1913. Zhou Zuoren adopted it into modern Chinese from Japanese.

renaissance era at Beijing University and Zhongshan University, while the Folksong Research Society and the Folklore Society were re-established one after another.

Unfortunately, the war brought all of these positive developments to a halt. After the Marco Polo Bridge (Lugouqiao 盧溝橋) Incident near Beiping on July 7, 1937, an accidental skirmish between Japanese and Chinese forces that quickly expanded into a full-scale war, the whole situation in China took a sudden turn for the worse as the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) rapidly lost ground on all fronts. Beiping and Tianjin first fell into Japanese hands, and then the flames of the war spread to Nanjing, Wuhan, and Changsha; finally, Guangxi was thrust into a state of emergency. By year's end all of China was thrust into the abyss of war. It was no longer tenable for most folklore institutes and publications to continue their work, and the Chinese intelligentsia grew increasingly divided over the question of how to live and work in wartime. Despite extremely adverse conditions in Japanese-occupied Beiping and Shanghai, a group of dedicated scholars persisted in carrying out independent folklore investigations and writing. Their freedom of movement was severely curtailed, and there were dire consequences for publishing anything that might offend the occupation authorities.

Folklore Studies in Beiping

Beiping was still a national cultural center after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and was fortunate to be spared serious physical damage during the war. The scholars who stayed behind in Beiping did, however, have to tread very carefully when it came to publishing any work that might have been perceived by the Japanese to contain nationalistic undertones. They responded to their strict limitations with an impulse to serve their country by immersing themselves in academic research; therefore, folklore collecting and research continued in Beiping, albeit on a much-reduced scale (Yang 2002, 226).

The institutes that continued to carry out folklore study in wartime Beiping typically had a foreign or church background, such as Yanjing University (*Yanjing daxue* 燕京大學), the Sino-French Center for the Studies of Sinology (*Zhongfa hanxue yanjiusuo* 中法漢學研究所; Centre Franco-Chinois d'études Sinologiques), and Furen University (*Furen daxue* 輔仁大學). They had operated independently of the KMT government before the war, leading the Japanese occupiers to the conclusion that their work was a relatively harmless academic pursuit. Essentially cut off from the outside world, these scholars dove deep into existing translations of the works of foreign scholars as they carried out field surveys near Beijing (Gao 2019, 165).

Yanjing University began as a united post-secondary venture blending Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, American, and British strands of Christianity in 1919⁷ and quickly evolved into one of China's elite post-secondary institutions. The university had developed an extensive international network with high-profile institutions such as the Harvard-Yanjing Institute, the Missouri-Yanjing Foundation, Princeton in Beijing, and the Rockefeller Foundation, prompting a move to claim extraterritoriality rights for its campus as a foreign enclave during the early war years from 1937 and 1941. These American ties largely deterred the Japanese from interfering up until their sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, after which the university relocated to Chengdu for the second half of the war.

Yanjing University – especially its Sociology Department – published a number of articles on folklore during the war, but most were written from a sociological or ethnological perspective. The war had left folklorists there largely cut off from their colleagues at other institutions outside Beijing, and the university failed to develop any special associations or publications for folklore study. The Sociology Department under Wu Wenzao (吳文藻) and Zhao Chengxin (趙承信) managed the journal *Sociological World* (*Shehui xuejie* 《社會學界》), which published several academic papers on Chinese rural society. These works included Bronislaw Malinowski's⁸ *The Scientific Theory of Culture* (translated by Fei Xiaotong 費孝通), Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown's⁹ suggestions on the sociological survey of Chinese village life, Lin Yaohua's "Examining Chinese Patriarchal Villages from an Anthropological Viewpoint" ("Cong renleixue de guandian kaocha Zhongguo zongzu xiangcun" 《從人類學的觀點考察中國宗族鄉村》) among others. This demonstrated that the prevailing Western conception of functionalism and methods of community studies had been adopted by Chinese scholars within the Japanese occupation zone.

Scholars at Yanjing University paid great attention to field work, which they were able to continue around Beijing despite the war. They set up an initial investigation area in Qinghe (清河) Town, later relocating to Qianbajia (前八家) Village. The investigative reports of the sociology professors and students

7 This institution was maintained by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and the London Missionary Society.

8 Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) was a very influential British anthropologist and the founder of Functionalism, a theory that described society as an organic system of mutually supportive entities.

9 Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) was a British anthropologist. He did fieldwork in the Andaman Islands and in Australia. Radcliffe-Brown fostered the development of social anthropology as a science and contributed to the study of kinship and social organization.

at Yanjing University were closely related to folklore study in the sense that they focussed on how the people in these areas lived. Su Qinru, one of the most active scholars of this period, used field research as a basis for many works on Beijing folklore, such as “Temple Fairs in Beiping” (“Beiping shi de miaohui” 《北平市的廟會》) and “The End of the Year in the Lunar Calendar in Beiping” (“Beiping de jiuli nianguan” 《北平的舊曆年掛》).

Yanjing’s folklorists also worked to cultivate a new generation of scholars to continue growing the field once peace returned. After Yang Kun (楊堃, 1901-1998), a communist and French-trained sociologist, ethnologist, and anthropologist, took up a teaching position in the Sociology Department, almost all of the 19 bachelor theses he supervised between 1938 and 1941 fell under the field of folklore or ethnology. Yang was personally engaged in folklore study and published some influential folklore articles, for example, “Folklore Study on Chinese Children’s Life” (“Zhongguo ertong shenghuo zhi minsuxue de yanjiu” 《中國兒童生活之民俗學的研究》), and “A Brief History of the Chinese Folklore Movement” (“Wo guo minsuxue yundong shilüe” 《我國民俗學運動史略》).¹⁰ In addition, *Literature Yearbook* (*Wenxue nianbao* 《文學年報》) at Yanjing University published a handful of folklore articles during the war.

French sinology had been the most advanced in the world before the Second World War broke out. The Sino-French University was opened in Beijing in 1920 under Chinese management with French as the language of instruction. After Beiping fell into Japanese hands, the Sino-French University was suppressed by the puppet North China Provisional Government, so its administrators planned to join the exodus to the south. In order to maintain French cultural influence in North China and ensure that the property of the Sino-French University would not be seized by the Japanese, M.D. Rhein, the French Consul in Beiping, suggested to Henri Cosme, the French ambassador to China in Shanghai, on August 23, 1939, that a sinology center be established in Beiping.

France’s quick exit from the European War in 1940 meant that a collaborationist, pro-Axis regime was running the country near the end

10 This article was published in *Minzuxue yanjiu jikan* [《民族學研究集刊》Journal of Ethnological Studies] (no. 6) in August 1948. It was one of most important historical reviews published during the Folklore Movement. In this article, Yang Kun divided the Chinese Folklore Movement into five periods: 1. folklore study before the May Fourth Movement; 2. the origins of the Folklore Movement: Beida Period (1922-1925); 3. the golden age of the Folklore Movement: Zhongda in Guangzhou (1928-1930); 4. the decline of the Folklore Movement: Hangzhou Chinese Association for Folklore (1930-1935); and 5. the revival of the Folklore Movement (1936-1937). Although some of the viewpoints advanced in this article need re-evaluation from a contemporary perspective, it is still a valuable resource for those studying the Chinese Folklore Movement.

of 1941, leaving Japan with no reason to declare war. This gave French-affiliated scholars in Beiping slightly more latitude than their counterparts with other foreign ties. Still, the Sino-French Center's efforts were relatively modest, and it only operated one folklore study group under the charge of Yang Kun, a professor in the Sinology Department at Yanjing University who had studied in France before he returned to China. Its researchers were Francophile Chinese scholars mixed with a handful of French international students dispatched from the métropole or colonial Vietnam (*Xin minbao*). Under Yang's leadership, this group counted some notable achievements in collecting and organizing the datum of *shenma* (神碼 pictures or statues of a god or Buddha), New Year's pictures, and photos. Up to 1944, they collected over 3,900 items of *shenma* (4,900 pictures), 350 New Year pictures, and 600 photos. In July 1942, the folklore group selected some *shenma* material and held an exhibition of folk New Year's god pictures. This exhibition of 93 pieces of *shenma* in total (Ge 1-6) was intended to display *shenma*'s different types and its evolution in portrait study. *The Exhibition of Folk New Year's God Pictures* (*Minjian xinnian shenxiang tuhua zhanlanhui* 民間新年神像圖畫展覽會) was a valuable source of folklore material, especially for folk religion and gods' pictures. The Sino-French Center also held exhibitions of traditional Chinese paintings and compiled detailed tables of contents for each exhibition.

Within its first three years the folklore group also successfully compiled folklore classified tables, an index of over 11,000 daily newspaper articles, an index of journal papers, as well as records on local conditions and customs. In July 1943 in Beiping, Zhou and his friends launched Artistic and Literary Magazine (藝文雜誌 *Yiwen zazhi*), which published some folklore articles during its 23-issue run until May 1945.. Unfortunately, it never completed the project. However, the researchers in this folklore group collected and organized some local folk customs from 123 counties in Hebei Province, 89 counties in Shandong Province, and 80 counties in Shanxi Province. Yang Kun's book project on the "Study of five kinds of sacrificial ceremonies" ("Wu si kao" 《五祀考》) was only two-thirds finished when war broke out, but one of his best-known works, "Study of the Kitchen God" ("Zaoshen kao" 《灶神考》), was published as an article in the first issue of *Sinology* (*Hanxue* 《漢學》). Yang Kun also prepared the *Folklore Quarterly* for publication in Chinese and French and solicited all of the manuscripts for the first issue, but a lack of funds meant that the journal went unpublished. All of these important semi-completed projects were evidence of the toll the war was taking on folklore scholarship, even within French circles.

Two of the Sino-French Center's periodic journals, *Sinology* and *Scripta Sinica, Bibliographic Bulletin* (*Zhongfa Hanxue yanjiusuo tushuguan guankan* 《中法漢學研究所圖書館館刊; *Scripta Sinica, Bulletin Bibliographique*) occasionally published articles on folklore, for example, Yang Kun's "Study on Kitchen God", Sun Kaidi's (孫楷第) "Study of the Origin of Puppet Play" ("Kuileixi kaoyuan" 《傀儡戲考源》). "The Abstracts of Journal Papers" ("Zazhi lunwen tiyao" 《雜誌論問提要》) of *Scripta Sinica* contained notes on almost all of the contents of the folklore journals and papers in Japanese-occupied areas. The folklore group also translated a small number of western academic works on Chinese folk religion and customs, such as Père Dore's *Recherches sur les superstitions en Chine* (Research on superstitions in China) and Jan J. M. de Groot's *The Religious System of China*. The index group formed in September of 1942 published a series of books – including *Index to Discourses Weighed in the Balance* (*Lunheng tongjian* 《論衡通鑒》) and *Index to Mister Lü's Spring and Autumn (Annals)* (*Lü shi chungiu tongjian* 《呂氏春秋通鑒》)—that were very useful reference works for folklore researchers.

Beiping's Catholic institutions of higher education made their own efforts to press on with folklore activities in the face of wartime adversity. At the request of the Holy See, Furen University was established in 1925 by the Benedictines of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania.¹¹ Furen University established the Museum of Oriental Ethnology in *Gongwang fu* (恭王府 a palace of Prince Gong) in 1940. It consisted of three well-stocked exhibition rooms together with a combination office and library. The researchers who managed it were European priests who were engaged in missionary and academic field work in China as well as surveying and researching the folklore of North China. Prof. Matthias Eder ran the museum (Lou 2001, 97), which launched its official organ, *Folklore Studies*, in 1942 as an "instrument and organ for field workers."¹²

11 Furen University, then known commonly as the Catholic University of Beijing, was itself a successor to the previous Furen Academy, which was created through the efforts of Catholic scholars Ma Xiangbo and Yinghua. The university's first president (1925-1927) was the American missionary George Barry O'Toole, and he was succeeded by Chen Yuan, a Chinese Protestant who remained with the university until its forced closure. In 1952, as CCP repression of the Catholic Church intensified, Furen University's facilities in Beijing were usurped and absorbed by Beijing Normal University. However, the university was re-established in Taiwan in 1960 under the auspices of the Chinese Diocesan clergy, the Society of the Divine Word, and the Society of Jesus.

12 The journal was edited in Beiping until 1949, though by 1950 editing and printing were carried out in Tokyo. The publication was officially moved to Tokyo in 1954 under the auspices of the Society of the Divine Word. Thereafter, the journal was published biannually by the Society for Asian Folklore (1963-1972), the Asian Folklore Institute (1973-1975), the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture (1976-1978), the Nanzan University Institute of Anthropology (1979-1980), and presently by the Anthropological Institute of Nanzan University.

Early issues included articles in English, French, and German, with the latter outnumbering articles in English or French by a considerable margin. *Folklore Studies* maintained prodigious wartime production relative to other Beiping publications, consistently averaging over 200 pages per year. Most of its articles emphasized Chinese folklore, though each issue included a few articles on Japan or other countries stretching from Asia Minor to Northeast Asia. According to Lou Zikuang (婁子匡), a leading folklorist of the era, *Folklore Studies* covered topics that were overlooked by *Folksong Weekly* or *Folklore Weekly*, such as temples, riddles, children's songs, stories, and ceremonies praying for rain in Datong; Zhaowuda (昭烏達, today's Chifeng 赤峰) Mongolia's residence and cultural changes; spring festival scrolls, housing decorations, New Year's playthings and gambols in Beijing; East Mongolia's proverbs, marriages, funerals, lands, and religions; and Buddhist legends in Guizhou. *Folklore Studies* also published special issues on *Fuji's* (扶乩, a traditional ceremony) origins and evolution, *hebao* (荷包, pouch) and manufacturing technology, and Chinese seasonal songs (Lou 2001, 98).

As for individual folklore researchers, Zhou Zuoren was a towering writer and academic whose (周作人) reputation was irredeemably sullied by his collaboration with the Japanese during the war.¹³ Zhou and his friends launched *Artistic and Literary Magazine* (藝文雜誌 *Yiwen zazhi*) in July 1943 in Beiping, which published some folklore articles during its 23-issue run until May 1945. The publication itself served the propaganda interests of the Japanese occupation, featuring modern Japanese literature dealing with the institution of formalized Japanese colonial cultural policy. Issues 10-12 included Zhou Zuoren's apolitical translated work of Apollodorus' handbook of Greek mythology as well as his notes and introduction.

Over the course of the war, the Japanese appointed Zhou to over 30 positions and titles in the occupation zone, some relatively innocuous (such as curator of the Beijing University Library in 1939) and others overtly collaborationist (for example, in 1941 he accepted a job as education minister for the North China Provisional Government). Zhou's eagerness to serve the Japanese and their puppet government under Wang Jingwei resulted in his postwar arrest for treason by the Nationalist government. Zhou was sentenced to 14 years in Nanjing Prison, but he was pardoned and released in 1949 by the newly established Communist government. Later that year, he returned to Beijing, where he continued to write and translate, but he published his works under pseudonyms. After a period of relative anonymity, the Red Guards subjected

him to physical and mental torture during the Cultural Revolution, resulting in his death.

After Japan surrendered in 1945, the intellectuals who had fled to the south in the early stages of the war trickled back to Beiping one after another. They never rediscovered their prewar vigor despite engaging in some incidental discussions on folksongs in newspapers and publishing a few newspapers and academic periodicals. The Folksong Research Society, one of the brightest lights of the early Folklore Movement, was not restored. In general, Folklore activities in Beiping continued, but with little vigor, making little progress from the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War to the end of the Civil War in 1949.

Folklore Studies in Shanghai

Shanghai rivaled Beijing as a base of folklore activities during the Republican era and had an active research community going back to the early 1920s. For example, even before *Folksong Weekly* was created, Shanghai's *Woman's Journal* (*Funü zazhi* 《婦女雜誌》) had already opened two folklore columns in 1921, "Folk Literature" and "Folk Customs Investigation." Yue Sibing (樂嗣炳) later edited and published eight volumes of *A Collection of Children's Songs* (*Ertong geyao ji* 《兒童歌謠集》) at Zhonghua Book Company and also published folklore articles in other journals.

Shanghai suffered the full brunt of the Japanese invasion much earlier and far more severely than Beiping. After seizing Manchuria in 1931, Japanese forces in China turned their sites on Shanghai, the country's commercial heart as the gateway to the Yangtze River, deliberately provoking Chinese nationalists to gain a pretext to crack down and seize greater influence. There were thousands of casualties after the January 28th incident in 1932, and the city was on the precipice of war for years before it formally broke out. Folklore study continued nevertheless despite heavy Japanese interference. In 1931, Ye Dejun (葉德均) managed *Grassland* (*Caoye* 《草野》), which published folklore articles and special issues on social customs. In 1934, Chen Wangdao (陳望道) edited a semi-monthly *Venus* (*Taibai* 《太白》) that included a column on folk custom studies. Under this column, two to four folklore articles, either on Chinese or foreign folklore, were published in each issue. The Cantonese in Shanghai created *Guangdong Folk Customs Monthly* (*Yuefeng yuekan* 《粵風月刊》) on July 15, 1935, another publication that paid great attention to folklore studies.

Shanghai became an "isolated island" (*gudao* 孤島) after the Nationalist army's retreat on November 12, 1937, and the city's previously untouchable

foreign concessions later fell into Japanese hands. Most Chinese scholars abandoned the perilous conditions and heavy physical destruction in Shanghai for Nationalist-controlled inland areas and as a result Shanghai temporarily ceded its position as a major cultural center. A small minority of intellectuals opted to relocate to Communist-controlled territory, but a handful of brave scholars opted to ride out the Japanese occupation from home. The isolated island period was not at all conducive to academic research of any kind, but Qian Xiaobo (錢小柏) and Li Baiying (李白英) remained behind and pressed on with their folklore activities.

Li was a productive writer and editor before the war broke out, publishing *A Collection of Folk Love Songs at the South of the Changjiang River* (*Jiangnan minjian qingge ji* 《江南民間情歌集》), *Ten Kinds of Folk Melodies* (*Minjian shi zhong qu* 《民間十種曲》), and *Villatic Folksongs* (*Zai ye de gequ* 《在野的歌曲》) along with a handful of other works on folk literature in the 1920s and 1930s. He risked enormous reputational damage in the eyes of his peers by assuming the editorship of *Xueyi* (《學藝》), a supplement of *New China Daily* (*Xin Zhongguo bao* 《新中國報》), a Japanese-controlled mouthpiece, and published his prose and poems with some folklore essays within its pages. He and Qian convinced themselves that the rigid occupation authorities would not be threatened by apolitical writing, and Qian chose to return to Shanghai from Hong Kong after the Pearl Harbor attack. Qian suggested to Li that “[w]e certainly could avoid politics if we do folk literature in Japanese newspapers and journals. So, why not create a *Folklore Weekly* to publish folklore articles, which could weaken the political atmosphere and add the flavour of the locality?” (Wang 1987, 104) This conversation led to their decision to begin publication of *Folklore Weekly* and expand their network of local scholars working on folklore studies.

Qian and Li immediately encountered a major problem, but then found a creative solution. There simply were not any unpublished manuscripts to fill the pages of *Folklore Weekly*, so they both used different pen names to publish their own works. This deception successfully created the false impression that there was a bigger pool of folklorists behind Japanese lines than anyone assumed, and new contributors began submitting their works to *Folklore Weekly* so as not to miss out on this new scholarly hub. With real outside contributors on board, Qian and Li were able to use their work to increase the journal’s influence and expand their network of local scholars working on folklore studies. If not for this ruse, it is likely that folklore activities in Shanghai would have ground to a halt during the occupation to the great disappointment of thousands of eager readers.

One month after the *Folklore Weekly*'s establishment, they founded the Chinese Folklore Studies Association (*Zhongguo minsu xueshe* 中國民俗學社) and encouraged the writers and readers of the *Folklore Weekly* to join forces. According to Qian, the Chinese Folklore Studies Association had over 100 wartime members altogether (106). Funding for this organization mostly came from 10 percent of the author's remunerations supplemented by membership fees. As a result, the operating expenses of this organization were no longer the responsibility of the newspaper office, allowing *Folklore Weekly* and the Chinese Folklore Studies Association to become independent organs.

As valiant as Li and Qian's efforts were, they overestimated what they might accomplish in the face of self-censorship and wartime limitations. The *Folklore Weekly* began publication on August 10, 1943, folding after just its 36th issue on April 27, 1944, due to Li Yingbai's departure. It did publish some guidelines on the collecting of folk customs material borrowed from Miss Burne's *The Handbook of Folklore* and a handful of noteworthy articles during its ephemeral run. Better quality solicited folk works were published in a supplement of a special collection of early summer folk customs called *Interest* (*Quwei* 《趣味》) May 15, 1944. In addition, Qian Xiaobo and Li Yingbai also published booklets, *Seven Days of Discussion* (*Qi ri tan* 《七日談》) to raise funds for the Chinese Folklore Studies Association (105). They fell short, however, of their initial goal of turning *Folklore Weekly* into a reliable source of funding for the association's efforts (106). This was not a total, failure, though; other newspapers and journals influenced by *Folklore Weekly* started to publish folklore articles as well. These included *Literary Friends* (*Wenyou* 《文友》), *Chinese Pacific Weekly* (*Taipingyang zhoubao* 《太平洋週報》) and *Chinese Daily* (*Huawen meiri* 《華文每日》).

Shanghai's publishing circle – including Guoguang Publishing House (Guoguang shuju 國光書局) and Ertong Publishing House (Ertong shuju 兒童書局) – still published a considerable number of articles and books on folk stories, folksongs, and folk theories in spite of difficult circumstances during the Japanese occupation.¹⁴ Shanghai publishers could never overtly refer to nationalist themes, but they did help subtly soften their readers' depression during the Isolated Island period by continuing to churn out new works that reminded them of earlier, freer times when Shanghai was the beating heart of the Chinese nation rather than a foreign-occupied garrison. Li and Qian demonstrated tremendous resilience and sincere patriotism from the

14 Important works were Hu Kaiyu's (胡開瑜) *Funny Folk Stories of China* (*Zhongguo minjian qushi* 《中國民間趣事》), Qiao Dongli's (喬東黎) *China's Folktales* (*Zhongguo minjian gushi* 《中國民間故事》), and others.

intellectuals who refused to surrender. In the brief interregnum between the end of the Second World War and the CCP's victory in the ensuing civil war, Shanghai became the cultural and publication center of China once again, and a flood of folklore books were published in rapid succession.¹⁵

Conclusion

The discipline of Folklore studies was introduced to China and developed across the whole country during a series of unique national crises. Nationalism was not only closely related to the people's rising interest in folklore from the late 1910s to the early 1920s, but also became the dominant theme of folklore studies thereafter. As Richard M. Dorson writes in Wolfram Eberhard's classic *Folktales of China*, "[t]he relation[ship] between the study of the folklore and the rise of nationalism is beautifully illustrated in China" (Dorson 1968, V).

A small army of dedicated scholars and their allies built this movement as a cultural project, but it had profound political and social implications beyond the ivory tower. These Chinese intellectuals search for national vitality and essence, a basis upon which to unify and revive the nation; they were concerned with Chinese culture and traditions,¹⁶ though capturing China's uniqueness motivated them above all. These scholars turned to the past in part as a reaction to foreign imperialism, but also to create a sense of an independent cultural identity for the nation. Their work reflected numerous ongoing social changes as interwar China grappled with its search for modernity, showcasing the efforts of a new generation of intellectuals to save the Chinese nation by rediscovering traditions and enlightening the common people. Folklore studies were, however, handicapped from its inception by continuing political and social upheaval, and then the Japanese invasion threatened its existence.

Despite adverse conditions, intrepid scholars persisted with their work under Japanese occupation in Beijing and Shanghai, producing a large volume of work that had lasting significance. These scholars looked to folk culture as a means of building bridges across class and regional divides by weaving together a new discourse that promoted national unity. Many were aware of the vital contribution folklore had played in national liberation movements in Europe in recent decades and hoped to emulate this model. Their research

15 Such as: Huang Hua's four volume *Folktales* (Minjian gushi 《民間故事》), Hu Junqian's (胡駿千) *Satiric Stories of Gods and Spirits* (Shenguai fengci gushi 《神怪諷刺故事》), and Xie Songgao's (謝頌羔) *The Story of Leifeng Pagoda* (Leifeng ta gushi 《雷峰塔故事》).

16 China's traditional culture cannot be solely equated with Confucianism. However, during the May Fourth Movement, the slogan of anti-tradition mainly referred to anti-Confucianism.

activities served the purpose of rallying the nation and fed a growing popular demand for more and deeper investigations into China's folk traditions. Ultimately, the Second Sino-Japanese War brought focus to what had been a somewhat abstract academic campaign to promote an open, big-tent nationalism, forcing practitioners to shift their aims from establishing folklore as an academic enterprise in China to the more immediate matter of forging a cultural identity that inspired the anti-Japanese resistance.

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