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**Desire Sung with a Lisp:
Chinese Women Represented in Japanese Popular Songs During Wartime**

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Desire Sung with a Lisp: Chinese Women Represented in Japanese Popular Songs During Wartime

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Abstract

This paper examines gender role expectations in relation with colonial gaze[‡] and critical listening in wartime Japan, notably from the viewpoint of linguistic imperialism by investigating popular songs sung about and by Chinese women. In the Second Sino-Japanese War, Chinese female characters in Japanese films or popular songs were portrayed as obedient and able to speak Japanese, for Chinese women who couldn't speak Japanese were regarded as a potential threat. Such representations strengthened the image of the ideal Chinese woman, who was gaining pro-Japanese sentiments, typically by becoming acquainted with Japanese soldiers. Chinese actresses and singers gave stage performances, appeared on radio, or released records in Japan, where they sang songs in Japanese. It is noteworthy that they were expected to sing in broken Japanese with a thick accent, i.e., use stereotypical 'role language'. Thus, this paper ascertains how Chinese women's 'imperfect' speech was interpreted as a manifestation of their immaturity and otherness to the Japanese own advantage.

Keywords: popular songs; gender role expectation; colonial gaze; critical listening; linguistic imperialism

You see this creature with her kerbstone English: the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days.

———*Pygmalion*, Act 1, Henry Higgins about Eliza Doolittle

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[‡] In this context, the expression 'colonial gaze' refers to the way, often discriminatory, a specific group of people is aware of the others (Fanon 1952). Colonial gaze also encompasses the colonizer's awareness of the colonized, specifically with the aim of legitimating power.

Introduction

In George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and its musical adaptation, *My Fair Lady*, the protagonist Eliza Doolittle speaks with a strong Cockney accent and a lisp, which is intended to portray her poverty, ignorance and vulgarity, causing the upper-class intellectuals to develop outright contempt for the character. The idea that the poor girl's 'kerbstone' English is gradually being 'corrected' by Professor Higgins, a white male authority in phonetics, well demonstrates such supposed speech superiority in a hierarchy based on gender and class bias. Eliza's speech exemplifies 'role language', a characteristic speech with 'a special set of spoken language features that include vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation' (Kinsui 2017, iii). The attractiveness of such role language is especially exaggerated by the inclination of the narratives of fictional characters towards linguistic stereotypes, as seen with Eliza. All of which raises the question of how has speech influenced gender role expectations in Asian languages. Based on the above-mentioned perspective, this paper will investigate popular songs sung about, and by, Chinese women, in relation to linguistic imperialism and colonial gaze/critical listening in wartime Japan.

It might also be interesting to note that in addition to plays, films, and literature, role language can be found in song lyrics as well. Popular songs in modern Japan have been profoundly influenced by Western music. After more than 200 years of isolation, Japan has rapidly imported Western products of civilization and invited Western experts from various fields to 'enlighten' the Japanese on the latest technologies and culture, music included. Take the national anthem for example, the first version was composed by John William Fenton, a bandmaster of a British military band, invited as a foreign government advisor to form and teach Japanese brass bands. The lyrics of popular, or popularized, Western songs were commonly translated into Japanese or simply replaced by Japanese lyrics unrelated to the original. Foreign singers who recorded and released songs in Japan were no exception.

Here I would like to refer to the analytical frame of *Katakoto Kayō* (popular songs in broken Japanese), defined by a musicologist Yusuke Wajima as 'Japanese songs sung with linguistic features spoken by non-native speakers' and typically using role language (Wajima 2014). Referring to postwar songs in broken Japanese, Wajima states that there have been two different trends: on the one hand the

English-speaking male Anglo-Saxon rock musicians, such as The Police and David Bowie, often praised because such Western artists, at the top of the international music hierarchy, ‘thankfully’ sang in Japanese for ‘inferior’ Japanese fans and on the other, from neighbouring Asian countries, female idols such as Agnes Chan and Girls’ Generation, whose linguistic imperfection, sometimes represented by their pronunciation akin to baby talk, has been described as attractive to Japanese audience (Wajima 2011). Wajima’s bold frame, uncovering gender bias and ethnic stereotypes in *Katakoto Kayō*, will be efficient in examining cases during the war as well, in order to clarify the root of current issues concerning cultural (un)awareness of gender.

Wartime Cultural Policies: Background of Songs in Broken Japanese

The extreme inclination to Westernization in everything from social systems, cultural and artistic activities, to lifestyles, led to a reactionary trend toward nationalism and a return to tradition. Having just gone through the Russo-Japanese War and World War I, Japan began to spread propaganda related to imperialism and Pan-Asianism. Between 1930 and 1945, Japanese empire sought to achieve political and cultural ‘unity’ of the East Asian territories under its occupation. While rapidly promoting Imperialism, Japan colonized Taiwan in 1895 and Korea in 1910, further expanded its mandated and leased territories throughout Asia and the Pacific, and founded a puppet state Manchukuo in Northeast China in 1932. In November 1938, during the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Cabinet of Japan issued a statement advocating ‘links of mutual assistance’ and ‘good neighborly friendship’ between Japan, Manchuria, and China, in order to justify the invasion of China and to win the favour of anti-communist pro-Japanese factions. With the beginning of World War II, this culminated with the slogan of ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Daitōa Kyōeiken* in Japanese)’ and many cultural activities, including music making, were caught in its Pan-Asian ideology. All of which goes to show that while simultaneously stressing the need for harmony and unity among Asian countries, Japan endeavoured to become the dominant force in the region.

As a part of its assimilation policies in colonized Taiwan and Korea, Japan advocated linguistic imperialism, under which the local languages were suppressed and Japanese language was forced upon the people instead. In contrast to it, Japanese language education in China and Southeast Asia was

promoted under the guise of foreign language education (Komagome 1996). Considering Japanese history before the modern period, there is no doubt that Asian continental cultures, languages included, have, over a long period of time, exerted tremendous influence on Japan, and it would have been extremely irrational if Chinese language had been completely replaced by Japanese one. In North China, Japanese language classes were introduced into the elementary school curriculum in August 1938, and the textbooks for Chinese were successively published from February 1941 under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, and from December 1943, the textbooks for Southeast Asian students were also brought out.

This promotion of Japanese language education was obviously intended to make Japanese the dominant language in Asia. Diplomat Akio Kasama, who served as a board member of the Pacific Association, pointed out that in The Dutch East Indies, people were divided into three social class groups, ranked according to their status: Westerners and Japanese, Chinese and Arabs, and lastly indigenous people. According to Kasama, indigenous people who spoke Dutch and the Japanese who spoke Malay were frowned upon, since the distinction between social class and language was definite, and the communication between said groups that did not adhere to the established societal norms was greatly disapproved of. Furthermore, while Kasama was open about his cautious attitude about forcing the language on the natives, within the context of a cultural policy, he did assert that the time must come when Japanese will become the lingua franca of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

This linguistic imperialism can also be seen in songs of the time, with the aim of furthering language education alongside ideological education. Rakugo artist by the name of Bunraku Kanagawa, for instance, came up with an interesting idea to teach Japanese language to the Chinese people. The idea was that one would read *katakana* in a sing-song tone and rhythm. Based on this idea, a record was produced for the Chinese market under the auspices of the Ministries of Education and of the Army in 1938. On the A side of the record, linguist Kaku Jinbō recited the correct pronunciation, while on the B side, Michiko Dan, a singer for children, sang AIUEO (Japanese alphabet) song, for the sake of ‘true partnership between Japan and China’¹. Using this strategy, Kanagawa felt characteristics of

¹ “Katakana onpu de tairiku e wataru Nihongo: Chikaradsuyoi Rajio Taisō chō [Japanese Language Introduced to the Continent with a Record: In The Energetic Tone like Radio Calisthenics].” in *Yomiuri Shimbun*. November 23, 1938, 2:2 (in Japanese).

Japanese music were put to good use. To put it briefly, Japan has historically had a variety of sung narratives, which he expected were going to help foreigners master the language.

In addition to the fact that Japanese language education was promoted in foreign countries with the aim of boosting Japan's dominance and its language, it was propagated to the Japanese that their language was being used in Asia as lingua franca. This is evidenced by the example of a propaganda animated film *Momotarō: Sacred Sailors* (1945), produced under the auspices of the Naval Ministry, with a six minute musical scene in which the Japanese Navy, stationed on the island of Celebes, sings a song to teach the locals Japanese alphabet. Thus, songs have been used not only as a propaganda medium to transmit messages, but also as language education tools to manipulate the occupied people's speech.

'You're Quite Fluent for a Chinese Girl!'

Certain other language policies also produced Japanese songs sung by Chinese singers in the name of 'goodwill' between nations. The policy of 'goodwill' was the cornerstone of Japan's wartime cultural policy toward other Asian countries, and notable examples of that were the so-called 'Japan-Manchuria goodwill films' produced mainly by Manchukuo Film Association, which was founded jointly by the Manchukuo government and The South Manchuria Railways, and held exclusive privileges in film production and distribution in Manchuria to win over the locals. Michael Baskett, a scholar in Japanese film studies, states that the concept of 'goodwill' emphasized Japan's erasure of cultural and linguistic differences through the promotion of 'imperialization', rather than mutual understanding between Japan and China (Baskett 2008). These goodwill films comprised many instances of what Baskett called 'transformation-enlightenment', which caused the Chinese with anti-Japanese sentiments to admit their 'misunderstandings' of the Japanese people. From this point on, it is evident that in goodwill films, which strived to develop imperialist identity, the structure of 'domination/subjugation' was actually being depicted.

In the aforementioned films, the character of a 'Chinese girl' played a significant role, since romances where an anti-Japanese girl fell in love with a Japanese soldier were quite popular. Li Xianglan, who went by the name of Shirley Yamaguchi in the U.S., was the representative actress that

played the role of a Chinese girl subservient to the Japanese. Though she was originally China-born Japanese named Yoshiko Yamaguchi, she made her debut at Manchukuo Film Association, as a Chinese actress and using her Chinese screen name, of course, with her identity concealed. Moreover, up until then, she has often been referred to as ‘goodwill actress’ or ‘goodwill ambassador’ between Japan and Manchuria, which seems inseparable from the fact that she was regarded as a ‘Chinese who speaks fluent Japanese’. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, however, her fluency was perceived as a sign of Japan’s superiority and Japan’s language, rather than that of friendly attitude. Later in life, she recalled her visit to Japan with a Chinese actress Meng Hong in October 1938 as ‘goodwill ambassadors between Japan and Manchuria’: ‘Someone called out, “Your Japanese is good!”, and I was left feeling empty. The Japanese felt a sense of superiority when they heard “the Chinese” speaking and singing in Japanese’ (Yamaguchi and Fujiwara 1987, 119). In other words, the display of Japanese-dominated goodwill served as patriotic propaganda aimed to appeal to the Japanese audience’s ego, rather than to indoctrinate the Chinese.

In her analysis of Li Xianglan’s films, a historian Masumi Matsumoto notes the importance of ‘women in the occupied areas who were fluent in and obedient to the Japanese’, referring to a phrase in a textbook for Japan’s national elementary schools at that time: ‘Once you are in the occupied areas, you will be at a loss as long as you can’t communicate with the locals’. In addition, she states that Li Xianglan’s flawless Japanese enabled the audiences to be under the illusion that the people of Japan and the occupied areas sympathized with each other (Matsumoto 2008, 94). Therefore, Chinese women who spoke only ‘Chinese’ were an undisciplined, potential threat for the Japanese, because they could neither communicate with the Japanese nor adhere to Japanese gender norms embedded in feminine speech.

The heroines portrayed in the goodwill films indeed represented the idealized local women in the occupied areas, idealized as far as communication went that is, though the same communication could have been achieved by the Japanese who spoke Chinese as well. The lack of positive portrayal of ‘the Japanese speaking Chinese’ in comparison to ‘the Chinese speaking Japanese’ can be explained by the following description by Sakae Takeda, who was a professor at Tokyo Imperial University at the time, specializing in Chinese literature and language:

It is said that people who don't have many opportunities to hear Chinese cannot help but laugh when hearing a Chinese broadcast. [...] If you hear Chinese with an open mind, you will not find it to be a funny language. The fact that it is perceived as silly and funny is a result of the preconceived contempt that those in this country generally have for China.²

Li Xianglan also experienced this kind of 'disdain for Chinese culture and language' during the above-mentioned visit to Japan as the goodwill ambassador. A Japanese policeman checked her passport, found out that she was Japanese, and slandered her: "Japanese are first-class citizens. Aren't you ashamed of yourself for wearing the clothes of third-class Chinks and speaking Chinese?" This anecdote truly reveals how bigoted some Japanese were towards those of their compatriots who spoke Chinese, while simultaneously welcoming the Chinese who spoke Japanese (Yamaguchi and Fujiwara 1987, 119). Ironically, however, Li Xianglan, with her hidden origins, was not an exception, and it was Japanese actresses who played the role of such Chinese women to please Japanese audience's sentiments of the time.

Next, let us listen to Chinese women's voices delivered through the media. In November 1940, a song titled *Kōa Sannin Musume* [Three Girls of Asia Development] was released by Columbia Records, sung by three female singers, each representing their own respective region, as the title suggests: Saiko Okuyama (Japan), Li Xianglan (Manchuria), and Bai Guang (China). The lyrics were all in Japanese, and the three singers sang each verse in turn.

1. Saiko Okuyama (Japan): *Iro mo kaori mo kanbashiku yasashii kiku no hana*. [With sweet colour and aroma, gentle chrysanthemum flowers.]
2. Li Xianglan (Manchuria): *Yume ni sae ukabete ureshii ran no hana*. [Even in dreams, happy to float orchid flowers.]
3. Bai Guang (China): *Shimo wo ukete yuki wo mogurite ume no hana*. [Covered with frost and a blanket of snow, plum flowers.]

² Takeda, Sakae. "Shinago no hitsuyō wo kanshō su [Urging the Necessity of Chinese Language]." in *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*. March 5, 1938, 7 (in Japanese).

The song compares Japan, Manchuria, and China to chrysanthemums, orchids, and plums, respectively. In the end, the three of them sang along: ‘Three flowers getting close, holding hands together’. It should be noted that the Chinese accent was clearly audible in the singing of Bai Guang, who was actually the only Chinese among the three girls and the only foreigner among them.

Bai Guang, a Beijing-born actress, made her screen debut in *The Road to Peace in the Orient* (1938), which was made as a ‘Japan-China goodwill film’. Concurrently with the release of the film, she visited Japan for the first time with its director Zhang Misheng and her co-stars, in February 1938. In July of the same year, Bai Guang came to Japan again to study vocal music as a scholarship student of The New People’s Association. In September, she applied to be an apprentice to Tamaki Miura, the most successful Japanese opera singer, and enrolled in Miura Tamaki Opera School as a preparatory student. The following month, Bai Guang asked the director of the Cultural Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial assistance, and the existing application form says, ‘I have made up my mind to work hard in the field of music to promote goodwill between China and Japan, but I am afraid that, at this rate, I am failing in my intentions’. This meant that in order to receive scholarship from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bai Guang deliberately emphasized that the purpose of her study in Japan was to contribute to ‘China-Japan goodwill’, which turned out to be effectual, since she did manage to receive financial aid from the Ministry. On March 27 of the following year, Bai Guang participated in the performance of Tamaki Miura’s opera *Madama Butterfly* at Hibiya Public Hall. A photo of her wearing a traditional Japanese wig and *kanzashi* (ornate hairpin accessory) appeared in a newspaper, along with the following phrase: ‘*Guniang* (unmarried girl in Chinese) dressed as a pretty young geisha’. In the Italian opera *Madama Butterfly*, Pinkerton, an easy-going U.S. naval officer stationed in Japan, marries a naive 15-year-old Japanese girl, Cio-Cio (Butterfly in Japanese), and they have a child together. After Pinkerton returns to the U.S., Cio-Cio waits patiently for him, but on his next visit to Japan, he brings his new American wife with him and desires to take his and Cio-Cio’s child to the U.S. In desperation, Cio-Cio accepts the offer and commits suicide. Japanese female characters in this story depend on the caricatured image created by Western gaze. Ironically enough, in the American novel on which this opera is based, Cio-Cio speaks in broken English. In short, Bai Guang embodied such Orientalist image of the Japanese in *Madama Butterfly*,

in order to entertain the Japanese with a kind of ‘mocking mimicry’ of ‘a Chinese girl disguising herself as Japanese’.

While continuing her studies, Bai Guang became a singer under contract to Columbia Records in May 1939, as well as a temporary employee of the International Department of AK (Tokyo Central Broadcasting), where she worked as a Chinese announcer for international broadcasting and also appeared in radio song shows. Noticeably, each radio programme included singing in both Chinese and Japanese. She mostly appeared on song shows set in China: for example, in a show based on the story of an actual Japanese military doctor who went to North China, she played the role of *Guniang* showing gratitude to the doctor for his treatment, by singing both Japanese and Chinese (AKBK radio programme ‘Evening of Comfort for Families of Soldiers’, August 23, 1939). She also recorded popular songs in Chinese, which were released in May 1940, prior to *Kōa Sannin Musume*. It can be inferred that Bai Guang was continuously asked to sing in both Chinese and Japanese, because her Japanese was not ‘too fluent’ as was the case with Li Xianglan, who was, in fact, Japanese. Considering the circumstances of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Chinese singers’ singing in broken Japanese would have implied linguistic domination, particularly for Japanese listeners. Furthermore, their accent could evoke exoticism as well as the immaturity of the singers. Unlike Li Xianglan, an unequalled singer who sang not only in Japanese and Chinese but also in Korean and Russian and who has sometimes been connected to multinationalism or cosmopolitanism, Bai Guang presented herself as a Chinese who kept learning both music and language from the Japanese. In other words, her bilingualism symbolized ‘the goodwill between Japan and China’ for Japan’s convenience, albeit in a different way from Li Xianglan.

Gender Biases in Lyrics

During the Second Sino-Japanese War, there was an increase in Japanese popular songs about China and the Chinese, which were called *Tairiku Kayō* [continental melodies]. These songs were sung and listened to mostly by the Japanese (both men and women). Besides, Japanese female singers with such a repertoire, like Hamako Watanabe and Tomiko Hattori, sometimes performed sporting Chinese dresses and hairstyles. Michael K. Bourdaghs, a scholar of modern Japanese literature, pointed

out that, unlike Li Xianglan, these singers could not have been mistaken for the Chinese, so they were ‘engaged in a game of masquerade’ (Bourdagh 2012). In particular, the women’s singing had a pattern of high-pitched, smooth transitions between distant notes, reminiscent of the traditional Chinese opera *Kunqu*, which seems to reproduce ‘the imagined Chinese women’s voice’³.

Let us examine the lyrics of these songs. They mainly described (1) ideologies such as ‘the Five Races Under One Union’ and ‘the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere’, (2) praise of military personnel and their exploits, (3) Chinese customs as exotic cultures, and (4) interaction between the Japanese and the Chinese. These were often expressed simultaneously in a single piece, indicating a complex desire for assimilation and dissimilation. Underlying many of the songs was a story of ‘goodwill’. Here are some examples: ‘*Ri-san mo, Wan-san mo, minna nihon ga daisuki yo. Watashi mo nihon ga daisuki yo. Oyome ni iku nara nihon e. Dakedo watashi wa chūgoku musume.* [Mr. Li, Mr. Wang, and we all love Japan. I love Japan too. If I get married to someone, I want him to be Japanese, but I’m a Chinese girl.] (*Shina Musume no Yume* [A Chinese Girl’s Dream], 1939)’ The girl in the lyrics innocently expresses her fondness for Japan and the Japanese. The use of the terms ‘Chinese girl’ and ‘*Guniang*’ instead of ‘Chinese woman’ in the song title and lyrics also specifies that these women were objectified as immature and naive virgins rather than mature individuals. The lyrics saying, ‘I want to marry in Japan but I can’t, because I’m a Chinese girl’, emphasize the narrative that the Chinese positively accept the Japanese and that Japan and China have a friendly but Japan-dominated unequal relationship.

Now that I have mentioned the representation of, and by, Chinese women, what kind of gender role expectations can be seen of Chinese men? Language as a communication tool between Japanese and Chinese could be the clue to unraveling this. The aforementioned writings by the linguist Sakae Takeda were intended to encourage ‘the Japanese to learn precise Chinese language’. The factor

³ As mentioned in previous studies (Pope 2005; Hosokawa 2012; Kasai 2017), the audible characteristics of Japanese popular songs about China/the Chinese were frequently dependent on the techniques which had already been patternized in Western popular songs. The melody of *Chino Soy* (1935) by Spanish ‘rumba king’ Xavier Cugat, for instance, has been repeatedly used in Japanese songs such as *Shina Runba* [Chinese Rumba] (1936) and *Guniang Kawai Ya* [Lovely *Guniang*] (1939) as a representation of ‘China’. As heard in kung fu movies, the so-called Oriental riff, typically composed of the combination of a gong, a rhythmic pattern of four sixteenth notes and two eighth notes, and a pentatonic (five-note) scale, have also stereotypically appeared in Japanese popular songs.

associated with the situation was not Japanese indifference to the Chinese language, but the abuse of inaccurate Chinese language which was overspecialized for military and commercial communication. At that time, Japanese soldiers in China and the immigrant settlers in Manchuria used a kind of pidgin language in their daily conversations with local people, which was a mixture of Japanese-style accented Chinese and Chinese-style accented Japanese. This in itself wasn't that uncommon since there was quite a number of pidgin languages sprouting up in territories which Japan had occupied but the one which is of special interest to us is 'Aruyo Language' which was a tad more stereotypical than the others. In the said language 'the rich conjugations of the predicate and a plethora of auxiliary groups in Japanese are dramatically simplified and substituted by the affixation of aru (yo/ka)' (Kinsui 2017, 111).

Japanese male singers sang the lines of Chinese male characters, in a sense overtaking their voice. They purposely sang in 'Aruyo Language' when playing the role of Chinese men, which made the characters appear both ludicrous and harmless. Taking *Chin Rai Bushi* (1939) by Japanese lyric writer Otoha Shigure as an example, the word 'Qing Lai' repeated in the hook means 'please come' in Chinese. The song begins with typical 'Aruyo Language' expressions: '*Tejina yaru aru. Mina kuru yoroshi* [It's magic time. Here comes everybody.]'. The lyrics go on to say, '*Umaku yuko nara kawaigatte okure. Musume nakanaka kirei kirei aruyo*. [If we do the trick, treat with affection. My daughter is quite pretty, pretty.]'. The language sounds broken because it is, and here, again, the Chinese girl is being objectified, but this time, through the eyes of a Chinese male character speaking the role language. It could even be supposed that the Chinese father offered his daughter to the Japanese⁴.

There are many other examples of the Chinese characters speaking 'Aruyo Language' in the lyrics, such as: '*Nihon bakudan yoku ataru. Kowai aruna*. [The Japanese bombs hit well. I'm scared.]'

⁴ In the Act 1 of the opera *Madama Butterfly*, Cio-Cio and Pinkerton sing a duet titled '*Vogliatemi Bene* [Want Me Well]' on their wedding night. This title comes from Cio-Cio's plea with Pinkerton and the English title is translated as '*Love Me, Please*', while, interestingly, the standard Japanese translation is '*Kawaigatte Kudasai Ne*', in which the same verb '*Kawaigaru*' as in *Chin Rai Bushi* is employed. This verb means 'treat with affection' and is generally used for someone small or weak, such as a child. When it is used by a man to a woman, it can also carry sexual connotations. In a word, the relationship between the Chinese girl and the Japanese male audience supposed in *Chin Rai Bushi* can be equated with that between the Japanese girl and the Western man in *Madama Butterfly*.

(*Shina no Heitai-san* [Chinese Soldier], 1937), ‘*Kore musume aru. Pokopen na.* [This is my daughter. She is of no use.]’ (*Heitai Tokoya* [Soldier’s Barber Shop], 1938), and ‘*Ureshi aruyo Chaina-taun.* [Happy in Chinatown.]’ (*Pekin Taka-ashi Odori* [Beijing Tall Legs Dance], 1938). In addition, Japanese popular male singer Haruo Oka sang a song titled *Nankin no Hanauri Musume* [Flower Girl of Nanjing]: ‘*Sukoshi oboeta nihongo. Anata arigato ohana wa ikaga.* [A little bit of Japanese I learned, thank you, how about some flowers?].’ Contrary to the cases of the Chinese singers who sang in Japanese, this can be regarded as ‘mocking mimicry’ by the Japanese of the Chinese who were despised in Japan at that time. The act of Japanese singers’ singing in Japanese mixed with Chinese represented an aggressive and discriminatory violation of the Chinese language.

Conclusion

A postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha states that ‘colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite’, and the ambivalent mimicry can be ‘at once a resemblance and a menace’ and threaten the binary power structure, since regardless of how approximating the colonizer is, the colonized is not integrated into the colonizer. However, cultural mimicry under the influence of imperialism was not necessarily meant to shake the binary power structure from the side of the colonized, but was sometimes committed to reinforcing it. In fact, the Chinese singing in Japanese sounded as a proof of superiority for the Japanese, rather than a downfall of the Japanese status caused by the Chinese.

Li Xianglan, who acted as a Chinese girl, was so fluent in both Chinese and Japanese that her very identity became unclear, which led her to develop an exotic image in both Japan and China. Chinese singers, like Bai Guang, on the other hand, sang in Japanese with a distinct Chinese accent and in combination with Chinese songs inevitably gave away their Chinese origins and made their differences all the more apparent. In the Empire of Japan, speech in broken Japanese, especially by people from other Asian countries, expressed ‘immaturity’ and ‘inferiority’, which in turn made the Japanese feel superior and dominant. Drawing a boundary line between ‘the Japanese’ and ‘the Chinese who mimicked the Japanese’ could reflect Japanese desire to dominate the Chinese women as ‘submissive others’, as in the goodwill films of Manchukuo Film Association. In other words, the

wartime tendency to make female singers from other Asian countries sing in imperfect Japanese is inseparable from Japanese gaze toward the objectified others.

At the same time, it should be noted that the stereotypical characters of ‘Chinese women who learned and spoke Japanese’ and ‘Chinese men who spoke pidgin Japanese’ have been reproduced in Japanese songs. Secondly, in some cases, we had the situation where Japanese singers, like matryoshka dolls, sang the lines of Chinese female characters who mimicked the Japanese. In both cases, we can see that the Chinese women speaking in imperfect Japanese and mimicking the Japanese were foregrounded. On the other hand, Chinese male characters in popular songs speaking ‘Aruyo Language’ depicted an inherent structure of discrimination similar to that of minstrel shows, in which white men in blackface satirically mimicked black men⁵. To put it another way, it was a representation of ‘castrated’ Chinese men as objects of ridicule.

Despite all of this, after World War II, singers from other Asian countries have kept singing in Japanese. In the 1970s, ‘Asian diva’ Teresa Teng from Taiwan and Lee Seong-Ae from Korea were exemplified as financially successful role models. Such singers went down well with the Japanese audience by singing Enka, a popular genre of Japanese music frequently connected to ‘the soul of Japan’ (Wajima 2018). Nowadays, both male and female K-POP singers commonly release translated Japanese versions of their songs. On the other hand many Japanese singers have sung in broken English after the defeat which is quite paradoxical, considering the circumstances explained by this paper.

The representation of the Chinese sought by the Japanese was a kind of Orientalization of the self by the Orientals, which overlaps with the objectification of Oriental women by Western men, as discussed in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. Chinese men were deprived of their voices and dubbed in ‘Aruyo Language’ by the Japanese, while Chinese women were objectified by being forced to sing in Japanese with a lisp. Such performances of, and by, the Chinese were seen with the Orientalist gaze

⁵ I would like to refer to the related arguments by Bourdaghs, in which he positions the Japanese of that time as ‘the honorary whites’ of East Asia. He also mentions the case of American blackface minstrelsy, in which white men played both black men and black women, and ‘the white spectators could fantasize about spying on black figures’ by watching the staged ‘parodic and grotesque romances’. He juxtaposes this with the romances between Chinese men and women sung by Japanese singers (Bourdaghs 2012).

borrowed from Western men, and heard with Japanese ears in which the formats of role speech/language were pre-installed.

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