

On the Term *Guominxing* (National Character): Its Current Status, Etymology and Related Issues in the History of Modern Chinese and Japanese Thought

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Abstract: The term *guominxing* (国民性, national character) is undoubtedly an important term in both the history of modern thought and the history of modern vocabulary. However, it seems that the term has never been specifically explored as an object of study in the field of lexical history whereas in the field of intellectual history, the emphasis has often been on the ideas represented by the term as opposed to the term itself, which is in fact marginalised. This article focuses on the Chinese word *guominxing*, examining both the process of its production and dissemination as well as its current usage, in order to reveal its significance for the history of modern intellectual exchanges between China and Japan and the history of modern Chinese thought.

Keywords: *guominxing*, Lu Xun, Meiji Japan, late Qing and early Republic of China

INTRODUCTION

The term *guominxing* is undoubtedly an important word in the history of both modern thought and modern vocabulary. However, in the history of both of these fields, the term has never become prominent enough to attract attention and investigation, resulting in considerable ambiguity and confusion about how *guominxing* is understood and used as a term/thought.

In response, this paper offers the first significant extended investigation into the term *guominxing* (Li, 2007, 2019). Various aspects of the term are considered, including its meaning, lexical structure, etymology, the process of creating the term, and the evolution of its meanings. However, instead of treating the term *guominxing* as a purely linguistic issue, a modern perspective that includes language and thought is applied. This enables an exploration of the ideological conditions and thought processes behind the term *guominxing* and, in turn, its role in the language of modern life. As related below, a discussion of the term *guominxing* is undoubtedly of significance to the fields of linguistics and the history of thought.

I. THE ASYMMETRY OF THE TERM *GUOMINXING* IN CURRENT CHINESE AND JAPANESE DICTIONARIES

During investigations into *guominxing* (nationality) as an issue in the history of modern Chinese thought, it became apparent that the word *guominxing* is treated differently in current Chinese and Japanese dictionaries. This asymmetry is the focus of this research. Before discussing this as a thought issue, however, it is necessary to discuss *guominxing* in terms of vocabulary. It is of great significance that such a prominent buzzword in the history of thought is not to be found in dictionaries.

Guominxing is not present in various universal dictionaries in mainland China. It is not present in the latest editions of *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (*Xiandai Hanyu Ci Dian* 现代汉语词典), *Xinhua Cidian* (新华词典) and *Applied Chinese Dictionary* (*Yingyong Hanyu Cidian* 应用汉语词典), nor in the high-circulation *Xinhua Dictionary* (*Xinhua Zidian* 新华字典). It is also absent from “professional” dictionaries like *Ci Hai* (辞海) and *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (*Shehui Kexue Dacidian* 社会科学大词典). In sharp contrast, the word *guominxing* is included in contemporary Japanese dictionaries. It is included in *The Great Chinese–Japanese Dictionary* (日本国語大辞典) compiled by Morohashi Tetsuji, and in *Nikkoku* (*Shogakukan's Japanese Dictionary* 諸橋轍次大漢和辞典). The *Kojien* (*Wide Garden of Words* 広辞苑), the *Daijirin* (*Great Forest of Words* 大辞林), *New Lucid Japanese Dictionary* (新明解国語辞典), *Gakken's Great Japanese Dictionary* (学研国語大辞典) and other universal dictionaries all include the word. But the most striking contrast lies between the Chinese-Japanese and the Japanese-Chinese dictionaries. The *Japanese-Chinese Dictionary* (日中辞典 Shogakukan Inc., 1987) and the *Chinese-Japanese Dictionary* (中日辞典 Shogakukan Inc., 1992) co-edited by Japan's Shogakukan Inc. and the Commercial Press are currently the most common Japanese-Chinese and Chinese-Japanese dictionaries in Japan. In terms of the word *guominxing*, the two do not correspond with each other. The former included the entry, but the latter did not, and this remains the case today. The bestselling *Japanese-Chinese Dictionary* (日汉辞典) published by the Commercial Press (1st edition in 1959, reprinted in 1979) in China in the 1980s included the term *guominxing*, but in the *Chinese-Japanese Dictionary* (汉日辞典) compiled

by Jilin University (published by Jilin People's Press, 1982), there is no such term. When presented as starkly as this, the existence or nonexistence of *guominxing* in Japanese-Chinese and Chinese-Japanese dictionaries is therefore of great significance.

The term *guominxing* originated in modern Japan, and can be regarded as one of the large number of Japanese neologisms based on Chinese characters. The term was subsequently adopted in China, and became a part of Chinese modern language and modern Chinese vocabularies. There seems to be a consensus among Chinese and Japanese scholars about this. However, this consensus stems from experience rather than from research-based conclusions. The question that needs to be researched now is if a word does not exist in current Chinese dictionaries, how can its origin be found? But does the term *guomingxing* really “not exist” in Chinese dictionaries? The answer to the latter question is that it once existed, and still does, but its existence is now conditional.

Take Zhonghua Book Company's *Ci Hai* (辞海, 1936) as an example. *guominxing* was included as an entry: “*Guominxing* refers to the characters of a country's nationals, which are the universals for the populations of the country and the peculiarities for the outsiders.” (*Ci Hai*, 1936, 1981, 1987) It is likely it was also present in earlier Chinese dictionaries. While it was present in the past, it has since disappeared in later general dictionaries. At present, the term *guominxing* can only be found in two mammoth reference books: the 13-volume *Xiandai Hanyu Dacidian* (现代汉语大词典 *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*), finally published in 1993, and the 74-volume *Chinese Encyclopedia* (中国大百科全书), completed and published in 1994. Since neither of these books is easily accessible to general readers, it is not an exaggeration to say that the word *guominxing* is essentially “non-existent” in modern Chinese dictionaries.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM *GUOMINXING* AND ITS RELATED DISCOURSE

As there are two reference books that include the term *guominxing*, it is incorrect to refer to it as “a word that is no longer used”. This is indeed a contradiction: the term exists and does not exist. In dictionary publications, there are two forces in opposition over the term *guominxing*: one striving to delete it from the collective memory embodied in dictionaries, and the other striving to retain the word as a memory of thought. Through an

analysis of the contents of the *guominxing* entries in the two aforementioned reference books, as well as from the investigation and statistics of the *Renmin ribao* (*Renmin Ribao* 人民日报) from 1946 to 2004 (Li, 2007), it is clear that Lu Xun (1881-1936) carried the connotation of the entry and the discourse memory of “*Guominxing*” in real life.

Xiandai Hanyu Dacidian 现代汉语大词典 gives two usage examples for *guominxing*, one of which is Lu Xun’s original words, and the other relates to “Ah Q” in Lu Xun’s work. The entry for *guominxing* included in the *Chinese Encyclopedia-Sociology* (*Zhongguo Dabai Quanshu Shehuixue* 中国大百科全书·社会学) volume introduces the *Chinese Characteristics* published by the American missionary Arthur H. Smith in 1894, which is a direct reference to the research into the relationship between Arthur H. Smith and Lu Xun at that time. Between 1946 to 2004, the term *guominxing* did not appear in the *Renmin ribao* for 25 years whereas in the remaining 33 years, it was used in 115 articles, among which 102 were related to Lu Xun. Among these 102 articles, 52 used the term *guominxing* directly or indirectly in a context related to Lu Xun, while in the remaining articles involving “literature”, “culture” and “society”, the context in which *guominxing* was used was mostly an extension of Lu Xun’s motif of *guominxing*. Usage of the term in *Renmin ribao*, despite the most repellent orthodox discourse against it, is therefore still apparent because the reception of Lu Xun’s writings has objectively continued the memory of *guominxing* discourse.

Through the continuation of Lu Xun’s *guominxing* discourse, Chinese intellectual circles enjoyed a period of self-reflection after the end of the Cultural Revolution, encouraging ideological emancipation and providing the nation with a climate for the reform and opening up of the 1980s. Consequently, there are two key things to note. The first is that the Institute of Literature of Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences and Tianjin Language and Literature Association held a “Symposium on Lu Xun’s Transforming of Thoughts on Nationality” in Tianjin to commemorate the centenary of his birth, and published a collection of the resultant papers (Bao, 1982). This symposium was a product of reflection on the nationality issue exposed during the Cultural Revolution, and fully affirmed the *guominxing* discourse represented by Lu Xun. This meeting meant that Lu Xun’s “transformation of thoughts on nationality”, “had finally obtained civil rights,” (Kitaoka, 2001) and implied that the issue of *guominxing* had been comprehensively raised in terms of ideology and

social culture. The frequency with which the term *guominxing* appeared in the *Renmin ribao* during this period also supports this point. In the 10 years from 1980 to 1989 (this is in fact eight years, as the term did not appear in either 1982 or 1983), there were 58 articles in the *Renmin ribao* where the term appeared, more than the total number of articles where it was featured in the previous 48 years (57 articles) (Li, 2007).

The publication of two monographs related to the discussion of *guominxing* was also significant. “Transformation of Nationality in China”, published by Hong Kong Shuguang Book Company in 1988, was authored by (among others) Wen Yuankai, a model figure of China’s 1980s reforms. The other monograph of consequence was the two-volume work *Chinese Nationality*, which was the achievement of the national key research project “Chinese National Characters and the Social Reform in China” led by Sha Lianxiang. Published by China Renmin University Press in March 1989 and July 1990 respectively, the goals of these two volumes are very clear: to determine the characteristics (mainly weaknesses) of China’s nationality through research and analysis, and to arouse people’s attention in order to alleviate the obstacles posed by national psychology and traditional culture for reform and opening up. Sha Lianxiang later wrote the entry for *guominxing* in the *Chinese Encyclopedia*, and her team’s research results were also reflected in the *Xiandai Hanyu Dacidian* (*Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*, 现代汉语大词典).

If the “Symposium on Lu Xun’s Thoughts on Nationality” and the national project and dictionary compilation of “Nationality Research” in the late 20th century reflect the rediscovery and memory of “nationality” discourse at the national level, then its influence on the later period is a question of great interest. *Guominxing* is not just a historical term, but a word that infuses the thought of the past into the present, and thus it still participates in and affects speech, thought and cultural life. In this regard, Lu Xun is still an “active” writer. Assuming this premise, we can assess where the term *guominxing* comes from.

III. THE AMBIGUITY OF KNOWLEDGE: THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM GUOMINXING - JAPAN

The etymology of the term begins in Japan, and it is important to understand its original Japanese context. The term *kokuminsei* 国民性 was included in various Japanese dictionaries. Although different in

wording, they all point in the same connotations: the characteristics common to the nationals of a country, which can be embodied in values, ways of action, ways of thinking, temperament and other aspects. Take *Kōjien* (5th edition, edited by Shinmura Izuru, Iwanami Shoten, Publishers., 1998) as an example: “こくみんせい [国民性] (nationality): The characters of a country’s nationals. They are universally shared by the citizens of a certain country, in terms of their peculiar values, behaviors and temperament.” And so on.

However, even in Japan, there has been no diachronic linguistic study of the term *kokuminsei*. Moreover, in the field of linguistics or lexicology where the research into modern vocabulary is still growing, the word has never been the subject of special research. Furthermore, in the ideological fields in which the issue of *kokuminsei* was specifically discussed as a term for expressing (naming) this ideology, the matter of the word has actually been held in abeyance or ignored. There is plenty of evidence in this regard, but only two of the more readily available materials are used to illustrate the point here.

The first is the *Encyclopedia of Kanji* (*Kanji Hyakka Daijiten* 漢字百科大事典) (Meiji Shoin, 1996 edition), which was collaboratively compiled by seven famous contemporary Japanese lexicologists, including Kiyoji Satō. The book is 1,730 pages in length, and is Japan’s first and most authoritative large-scale professional encyclopedia on Chinese characters and Chinese language. There is no entry for *kokuminsei* in the catalog of “Character Classification” arranged word by word in the “Data” section of the book. The “Modern” part of the “A Guide to the Japanese-made Chinese-character-based words” (edited by Yoshifumi Hida) section includes 519 words, in which *kokuminsei* is present, but the “Notes, etc.” section is blank, meaning the “source word”, “word creator” and formation process of the word as the “target language” are unknown.

The second is Hiroshi Minami’s *Theories on the Japanese: from Meiji Restoration to Modern Times* (*Nipponjinron Meiji kara Konnichi made* 日本人論 明治から今日まで Iwanami Shoten, Publisher, 1994). A discussion of the issue of “national character” in modern Japan mainly focused on so-called “theories on the Japanese”. Hiroshi Minami’s research on “the genealogy of theories on the Japanese” is currently a representative achievement on the issue of national character. Sha Lianxiang’s “Chinese National Characters and Social Transformation in China” (*Zhongguoren*

Minzu Xingge yu Zhongguo Shehui Gaizao 中国民族性格与中国社会改造) project has also been supported by Japanese scholars such as Hiroshi Minami. His work mainly focuses on the discussion of national character in the history of thought in Japan since modern times, and presents a clear presentation in the arrangement and explanation, listing nearly a hundred monographs and articles related to the Meiji era alone. However, since it focuses on the content of “thought” itself, rather than the noun that expresses thought, the term itself did not result in issues. This is not just the case of Hiroshi Minami. Similar works have generally not involved matters such as etymology, nor the process of creating the term and the evolution of its meanings.

IV. THE TERM *KOKUMINSEI* IS ABSENT FROM VARIOUS DICTIONARIES PUBLISHED IN THE MEIJI ERA

“The term *kokuminsei* (translated as national character or nationals’ characters and morals, etc.) first came from the Meiji Restoration period in Japan ...and was the Japanese translation of national character or national characteristic in English.” (Liu, 1995) This statement is not supported by empirical data, so it is hard to take it as a reliable conclusion. The Meiji Restoration generally refers to the restoration of imperial rule” in 1867-1868, or to around 1889, when the Meiji Constitution was promulgated. Was the term *kokuminsei* really coined during this period? How did the kanji term *kokuminsei* evolve from “national character or national characteristics in English”? These questions remain unanswered.

Kokuminsei is unlikely to be found in the various dictionaries published in the Meiji era. While a search through the major dictionaries published in the Meiji era under the three systems was conducted for this paper, no entry could be found. The three systems of dictionaries refer to (A) Chinese dictionaries, (B) English learning dictionaries, and (C) Japanese dictionaries.

(A) The main reference is the 65-volume *Chinese Dictionaries Series in the Meiji Era* (明治期漢語辭書大系 supervised and edited by Shigekazu Matsui, Toshihiko Matsui, and Shin’ichi Tsuchiya, Tokyo Ozorasha Shuppan, 1995-1997). The series is a collection of 140 Chinese dictionaries published from 1867 to 1906.

(B) This category of dictionaries includes 29 dictionaries from 1867 to 1911 (see section V of this article for details), not limited to “English-

Japanese” or “Japanese-English”, but also including “English-Chinese” and “Chinese-English” dictionaries that are considered to have an influence on the former, including *An English-Japanese Dictionary of the Spoken Language* (日本近代英学資料) and *the Integration of Modern English-Chinese and Chinese-English Dictionaries* (近代英華・華英辞書集成), which are regarded as basic English learning dictionaries.

(C) The article mainly refers to *the Japanese Dictionaries Series in Meiji Era* (明治期国語辞書大系 edited by Yoshifumi Hida, Shigekazu Matsui, Sakaida Toshinobu, Tokyo Ozorasha Shuppan, 1997-1999), which includes 23 dictionaries from 1871 to 1902, and Book Records and Research under the same series, named “Another Volume” (別巻).

According to even the strictest definition, the Chinese word *guominxing* should belong to Japanese neologisms based on Chinese characters (Chen, 2001) because it is a Chinese word produced in Japan. Suppose this term was created by the Japanese in the Meiji period using Chinese characters to translate and naturalize an English word (such as nationality) as “national language”. The most likely forms for it to be collected as an entry or as a term for the explanation of an entry are the three types of dictionaries - (A), (B), and (C) - mentioned above. These three types of dictionaries comprise the basic corpus of the Meiji period, and are the vocabulary materials behind the process of “the establishment of modern language” in Japanese, constituting the lexical basis of the modern Japanese national language. However, it can be seen from the above investigation that the term *kokuminsei* is not found in this basic corpus composed of these three types of dictionaries in the Meiji period. In addition, *The Meiji Language Dictionary* (明治のことば辞典 edited by Masaaki Sogo and Yoshifumi Hida, published by Tokyodo Shuppan Co. Ltd., 1986) also omitted *kokuminsei*.

V. THE TERM KOKUMINSEI APPEARED IN DICTIONARIES AFTER THE TAISHO PERIOD

The next question to be addressed is when *kokuminsei* began to be included in dictionaries. Within the scope of this investigation, the earliest this entry has been found is in the *Modern New Japanese Dictionary* compiled by the Times Research Society. The edition seen was the seventh printing of Kōbundō in 1919. According to the copyright page, the dictionary was

first printed in 1918, and is a “post-Meiji” dictionary. *The Dictionary Collection of Modern Terms* (Supervised by Matsui Shigekazu, Hiroyoshi Sone and Yukiyo Ōya, Tokyo Ozorasha Shuppan, 1994-1996) has included 42 reprints of “Modern Terms” dictionaries from 1912 to 1933, and *Modern New Japanese Dictionary* was one of these. Here the term appears in kanji form (*kokuminsei* 国民性) with a hiragana transliteration (*kokuminsei* こくみんせい), as well as with a katakana transliteration that marks this term as a foreign word: *nashonariti* ナシヨナリテイー. The latter is a Japanese transliteration of nationality in English. In other words, both *kokuminsei* and *nashonariti* coexisted in the same dictionary as “new Japanese” entries. Putting two forms of one entry into a dictionary accounts for nine examples in *The Dictionary Collection of Modern Terms*. The derivation order of the term can be inferred as follows: the English term *nationality* → the katakana transliteration *nashonariti* ナシヨナリテイー → Japanese kanji *kokuminsei* 国民性. This is a process from transliteration to free translation.

Further, the *Origin of Foreign Words* (外来語の語源 written by Norio Yoshizawa and Toshio Ishiwata, Kadokawa Shoten Publishing Co., Ltd., first edition published in 1979) includes *nashonariti* and determined the “borrowing period” of the term to the Taisho period, (Norio & Toshio) falling between 1912 and 1926. Per the above-mentioned derivative relationship, the Chinese form appeared slightly later than the former, but also appeared during the Taisho period.

Based on these revelations from the dictionary investigation, it can be judged that *kokuminsei* first appeared in dictionaries in the Taisho period, as did *nashonariti*. However, this alone is insufficient for determining whether it is a word created during this era.

VI. THE BIRTH OF THE TERM KOKUMINSEI

There are considerable limitations to relying on investigating dictionaries one by one. There is an obvious time difference between when a term is actually used and when it is included in a dictionary - though in general a dictionary always acts as a record of the language actually being used in an era. *The Dictionary of New Words and Colloquialisms in the Meiji and Taishō Periods* (明治大正新語俗語辞典 edited by Tadao Kabashima, Yoshifumi Hida, and Akihiko Yonekawa, published by Tokyodo Shuppan

Co. Ltd., 1984) identified the earliest use case of the term *kokuminsei* as 1906. The *Shogakukan's Japanese Dictionary* (*Nippon Kokugo Daijiten* 日本国語大辞典) suggests an earlier date, of 1898. By retrieving the latest relevant “Sun Corpus” (Taiyō kōpasu 太陽コーパス) language database (edited by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics, Hakubunkan Shinsha Publishers, 2005), we can advance the use of *kokuminsei* by another three years, to Meiji 28 (1895). The article “War and Literature” by Yuzo Tsubouchi (1859-1935) was published in the *Taiyō* magazine (*The Sun* 太陽) Vol. 1, No. 2 issued on February 5th that year, in which the term *kokuminsei* was used: “しかしながら国民其の者が性の罪にして、文學其のものゝ科にあらざるや勿論なり、以て國民性の涵養の極めて大切なるを見るべし。” (However, this is the fault of the national character, and the literature is not to blame, so it can be seen that the cultivation of national character is very important.) This is the earliest use case discovered during investigations for this paper.

Two articles using *kokuminsei* found through “handwork” happen to be the same as the use cases in the *Nippon Kokugo Daijiten* (*Shogakukan's Japanese Dictionary*), both of which appeared in 1898. One is “National Character and Literature” (國民性と文學) by Tsunashima Ryosen (1873-1907). It was originally published on May 3rd in Meiji 31, in *Waseda Literature* (早稲田文学) No. 8 of the seventh year. Another is “On Walt Whitman” (ワルド・ポイツトマンを論ず), published by Takayama Chogyu (real name Takayama Rinjirō, 1871-1902), originally published on June 5th in “Meiji 31” in the *Taiyō* magazine (*The Sun*) volume 4, No. 12. The two articles were published at similar times, with commonalities between the issues discussed by the two commentators. They used the term *kokuminsei* in their articles at almost the same time, not by accident, but as part of the term's birth.

Takayama Chogyu was a well-known critic who had a great influence on Japanese literature of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. From April 1895 to November 1902, he published nearly 70 articles in the influential *Taiyō* (The Sun) magazine, and “On Walt Whitman” was one of them. In the article, he notes “終りに彼はげに一個の亜米利加人として其國民性を最も明晰に、最も忠実に唱へたる詩人なり。” (Finally, as an American, he is a poet who can eulogize the national character the most clearly and faithfully.)

While *kokuminsei* is mentioned only once, this suffices for Takayama Chogyu to be considered an initiator of the term. As reflected in his comment on Whitman, he advocated “Japonism” and believed that literature should express “national temperament”. He not only lived up to his criticism himself, but also required other literary critics be up to this standard, able to “criticize the literature and art of a country from the perspective of national character.” (Takayama, 1897) He used words such as “國民的性情” (national temperament), “國民の性質” (national characters) and “國民的特性” (nationals’ characteristics) in a series of articles, which are not only very close to *kokuminsei* in form, but also in meaning (Li, 2008). It was after these words were used extensively in almost all of his articles that Takayama Chogyu used *kokuminsei* in “On Walt Whitman” for the first time.

However, Takayama Chogyu himself does not seem to have wholly extracted the term *kokuminsei* from the above-mentioned word forms. That honor goes to his opponent in debates, Tsunashima Ryosen, whose “National Character and Literature” article was written precisely to refute the viewpoint held by Takayama Chogyu that literature should express “national temperament.” Including the title, Tsunashima Ryosen used *kokuminsei* 48 times in his article, the sole example of such high frequency of use among articles of the same period. The article was targeted at Takayama Chogyu, with the use of “describing national character to satisfy the national temperament” summarizing his viewpoint. It is therefore sufficient as contextual proof of when the term *kokuminsei* came into being. When Takayama Chogyu calls Whitman “a poet who can eulogize the national character the most clearly and faithfully” in the subsequent “On Walt Whitman” article, he has accepted the word “derived” from his earlier statements by his opponent. For the time being, it can be assumed that Tsunashima Ryosen is the first person to consciously use the term *kokuminsei* after Yuzo Tsubouchi.

When Haga Yaichi (1867-1927)’s *Ten Essays on National Character* (國民性十論) was published by Fuzambo Tokyo in December 1907, the use of the term *kokuminsei* in the Japanese context was not only quite common, but also, as mentioned above, “state system and national character have been upheld as immovable standards.” If the direct historical background of the articles of Yuzo Tsubouchi and later Takayama Chogyu and Tsunashima Ryosen was the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, then the direct background of Haga Yaichi’s book was the Russo-Japanese War

(1904-1904), and Japan's victory in these two wars, ten years apart, gave rise to increasing nationalism. *Kokuminsei* went from the title of Tsunashima Ryosen's article to Haga Yaichi's book title, perhaps the best example of this process. The publication of *Ten Essays on National Character* caused a storm that not only promoted the popularization of the term *kokuminsei*, but also marked how widely the term was used after the Russo-Japanese War. It was only a matter of time before its inclusion in the dictionaries of the Taisho period.

VII. CONSCIOUSNESS OF *KOKUMINSEI* AND ITS TRANSLATION—*MEIROKU JOURNAL* AND THE ENGLISH LEARNING DICTIONARIES

In their observations of the West, Japanese thinkers of the Meiji era focused on material civilization and spiritual civilization. They raised questions about human spirit, consciousness, thought, temperament, character, and common practice, and gave them significant attention. This was reflected in the Meirokusha (the Meiji 6 Society)'s bulletin *Meiroku Journal* (*Meiroku Zasshi* 明六雜誌). From its inception in March 1873 to its being forced to stop publication in November 1874, the magazine published 43 issues and more than 150 articles. It was known for propagating enlightenment thought, which often discussed the character, common practice and spirit of people, such as Nakamura Masanao's "On Transforming the Character of People" (人民ノ性質ヲ改造スル説 Issue 30), Nishi Amane's "On National Common Practice" (国民気風論 Issue 31), and Shiroshi Sakatani's "On Nurturing the Human Spirit" (養精神一説 Issue 40, 41). As for Fukuzawa Yukichi, he was notable in expounding on the issue of *kokuminsei*. This involved translation of the concept of *kokuminsei*. In Nishi Amane's "On National Common Practice", the pronunciation of Western language words are clearly marked next to the title. The so-called "ナシオナルケレクトル" (osionarukerekutoru) marked in Japanese katakana, "National Character" in English, is translated as the term *kokuminsei*.

If national character is considered as a phrase rather than a word, then we can also consider the translation of a single word: nationality. There are 29 types of English learning dictionaries in the Meiji era, of which 24 types include the concept of nationality and provide explanations. By

sorting out the forms of its definition, it is made clear that in the process of translating the concept of nationality (or national character), 16 translations of the word have been created in the English learning dictionaries of the Meiji era: 國風 (kokufuu, national custom), 民風 (minpuu, folk custom), 人民之性質 (jimin no seisitsu, people's character), 民情 (minjou, conditions of the people), 民性 (minsei, people's nature), 國 (koku, nation), 國體 (kokutai, state system), 民生 (minsei, the people's livelihood), 愛國 (aikoku, love one's country), 人民 (jimin, the people), 人種 (jinshu, ethnic group), 本國 (hongoku, one's own country), 國粹 (kokusui, the quintessence of a country's culture), 國民主義 (kokuminshugi nationalism), 建國 (kenkoku, found a state) and 國籍 (kokuseki, nationality) (Li, 2008). In the context of these translations, the word forming structure of “國”(koku) + “民性”(minsei) must also be considered.

VIII. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TERM *GUOMINXING* 國民性 INTO CHINA IN THE LATE QING DYNASTY AND THE EARLY REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Although the term *kokuminsei* had not yet been formally included into Japanese dictionaries, by the first decade of the 20th century it had become a relatively mature and stable concept in Japan. Given this, how was it introduced into Chinese language? This is a complicated question, for which the key points are summarized as follows (Li, 2008).

In addition to Lu Xun, his predecessors and teachers Liang Qichao, Yan Fu and Zhang Taiyan are all of significance to the issue of *guominxing* (national character) in China. They each came up with “people” or “nationals,” and expounded on *guominxing*. However, they are not the earliest users of the term. Liang Qichao first used the term *guomin* 國民 (nationals) in 1896, and first used the term *guominxing* in 1911. During this period, he more commonly used the term *minqi* 民氣 (the people's morale). Yan Fu also used *minqi* at this time, but it was not until 1914 that he first used *guominxing*. As for Zhang Taiyan, it is not easy to come to a thorough conclusion, but it is clear that there is no instance of the term *guominxing* in *The People's Journal* (*Min Bao* 民報) (December 1905-October 1908, a total of 26 issues).

At present, it can be presumed that Liang Qixun's "The Relationship between Nationals' Psychology and Education" (*Guomin Xinlixue yu Jiaoyu zhi Guanxi* 國民心理學與教育之關係) published in the *New Citizen Journal* (*Xinmin Congbao* 新民叢報) No. 25, March 1903, was the first article in which the term *guominxing* was used. (Yubai, 1987, 1991) *New Erya* (*Xin Erya* 新爾雅) was the first dictionary of neologisms to include the term: "各群所固有諸性質。謂之群性。群變為國。則群性亦變為國性。或曰國粹。或曰國民性。" ("The various characters inherent in each group are called the group nature. As a group becomes a country, the group nature also becomes the national nature. It's called the quintessence of the country's culture, or its national character.") (Shen, 1995) These two use cases show that compared with the great masters like Liang Qichao, Yan Fu and Zhang Taiyan, the students studying in Japan at that time were likely more active users and spreaders of this term, and Lu Xun was one of them. Further, there was a similar usage in his "On the Demoniatic Poets" (*摩羅詩力說*) written in 1907: "Byron greatly raged and tried to slander the vulgar and inferior character of that country"; "someone says it's the difference in national character." (Luxun, 2005)

Through *New Erya*, the term *guocui* 國粹 (the quintessence of the country's culture) was also introduced as a synonym for *guominxing*. This word mainly appeared in the nationalism discourse centered on *Japanese* and *Japan* in the early Meiji 1920s. It was the Chinese character form of the Japanese translation of "nationality" at that time. *Guocui* and *guominxing* entered China one after another in the same order as they were born. After a period of concurrence, they split into two different words, resulting in the Chinese *baocun guocui* 保存國粹 (preservation of quintessence of the country's culture) and the Japanese 國粹主義 ((*kokusuishugi*, nationalism) - widely divergent in terms of ideological content.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of *kokuminsei* as a word in Japanese lagged far behind the consciousness (concept) expressed by this term, which is the result of Japanese long-term translation (digestion and absorption) of the English-language concept of *nationality* (or *national character*). Ever since the 1910s and the end of the Taisho period, the word has been officially included in various modern dictionaries. But its translation has not yet ended, and two

forms remain: the kanji term (*kokuminsei* 国民性) and the katakana term (*nashonariti* ナシヨナリテイ). This article confirms that the earliest use of the term in Japanese was in 1895, and it was then popularized during the dozen years from “the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895” to the “Russian-Japanese War (1904-1905),” which are respectively marked by “National Character and Literature” (*Kokuminsei to Bungaku* 国民性と文學, 1898) and *Ten Essays on National Character* (1907). The war further strengthened the consciousness of “國家 (kokaa, nation)”, “國粹 (kokusui, the quintessence of a country’s culture)”, “國權 (kokken, national sovereignty)” and “民族 (minzoku, nationality)” after the Meiji era, with so-called Nationalism awareness expediting the birth of the term “國民性 (kokuminsei, national character).” The notion of nationality denoted by the term “national character” after the Meiji period was not directly expressed by the term *kokuminsei*, but in other ways. From a morphological point of view, this can be divided into two categories: one is the descriptive phrases that were used extensively in the style or manner of writing, as seen in the *Meirokei Journal* or the articles of Takayama Chogyu; the other is in words, as in English learning dictionaries. Before the word *guominxing* was created and widely used, there had been a large number of various forms of the terms expressing its meaning. While the finalization of the term *guominxing* entails the integration of previous forms, this does not suffice as “the birth of the thought”.

With this in mind, discussions on the issue of *guominxing* in China since the end of the Qing Dynasty and actual use of the term are easy to understand and sort out. In the first decade of the 20th century, the discourse represented by the word *kokuminsei* expanded rapidly in Japanese. Students studying in Japan became spreaders who enthusiastically brought the term into Chinese. However, whether or not *guominxing* was used does not necessitate that people were conscious of the issues surrounding the term. Liang Qichao, Yan Fu and others used the term not only later than *New Erya*, but also later than Lu Xun, but it cannot be said that they understood this issue later than the students studying in Japan. As a matter of fact, both Liang Qichao and Yan Fu were earlier progenitors, but they did not initially use the word *guominxing*, using other words instead. Their different inclinations for selecting foreign words is also a phenomenon worth exploring: before they used the term *guominxing*, they were more willing to use words with classical meanings, such as *minfeng* 民風 (folk

custom), *guocui* 國粹 (the quintessence of the country's culture), *minxing* 民性 (people's nature) and *guofeng* 國風 (national custom). The use of these words and the term *guominxing* were not mutually exclusive in either *New Erya* or in Lu Xun's articles. This meant that the new generation of students had begun to acquire new knowledge through studying abroad at the same time, or after being enlightened by the previous generation. This does not mean the negation and abandonment of their forerunners, but that they are more "extensive" in "their knowledge of the world" than the older generation, and that they go further in breaking off the shackles of classical language. Since modern times began, the Chinese language has evolved into modern Chinese by absorbing and integrating various foreign words.

The general background of Japan's rise and China's decline can help us understand why terms like 國粹 (*kokusui*, the quintessence of the country's culture) or *kokuminsei* 國民性 in Japanese have a positive (or at least a neutral) emphasis toward Japan, while similar terms in Chinese have a negative or critical tendency toward China. The "rise" was marked by the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the Russian-Japanese War (1904-1905), while at the same time, China was experiencing the severe crisis of being carved up. Therefore, when talking about the differing semantic connotations between *kokuminsei* and *guominxing*, the semantics of the strong and the winner is naturally very different from that of the weak and the loser. As for how much of the discussion of national character among Japanese scholars involved "China's national character" during the Meiji era, how this discussion related to that of national character in Japan, and how it affected the discussion of the national character issue in China, these are issues of concern to be considered in future work.

Guominxing was introduced into Chinese at the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, but was then stifled after 1949. The right to speak of *guominxing* was resumed in the 1980s. However, it still remains a challenge to find this term in dictionaries. This is not only an interruption of the development of a word, but also a gap in consciousness between the modern era and the present day. Isolation from a term does not mean that the present surpasses modern times. If there was a chance to set things right in the 1980s, then this article serves as a reminder of the issues that have arisen since then.

Notes

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