Paper Monuments to the Loyal War Dead: Local Memorial Magazines to the Campaigners

ICHINOSE Toshiya

This paper examines the contents of "Memorial Journals of Men in Service" which were published in the various cities and villages before WW II. These memorial journals were created in large numbers mainly by the community posts of the Civilian Militia (Zaigo Gunjin Kai) after WWI with the highly political intention of reconfirming military servicemen's sense of raison d'etre through recording and committing to memory past glories and making an appeal to society in this age of anti-militaristic peace-seekers.

The old soldiers who disclosed their memoirs of the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese Wars in these memorial journals took on the role of storytellers, telling stories of the heroic deaths of fallen soldiers and giving concrete detail to "memories" of war so as to draw sympathy from readers. This type of storytelling suited well the sentiment of the people who sought to find "heroes from their own hometown". When these old soldiers reminisced about their time in service, it is true they spoke also of horrible experiences, however they basically portrayed war as an opportunity to satisfy one's sense of honor. When these "stories" by the former servicemen were edited in their "hometowns", the editors avidly sought to make clear the positions and roles that these storytellers had occupied in the large sweep of history. This was done in order to make clear the "significance" of the deaths of those who died but, at the same time, it also was a way for the entire society to reconfirm and accept the values that war proposed to the state and to individuals.

Through the above process, the logic that Manchuria was, even before the Manchurian Incident broke out, land "paid for with blood" and that interests in the region should therefore be protected, as well as the threat of socialism and communism, were repeatedly confirmed at the endmost level of society, in the communities. It is well known that in order to gather the people's support, at the outburst of the Manchurian Incident, the military and the Civilian Militia emphasized the people's "memories" of the Russo-Japanese War. The various examples given in this paper offer insights on details as to when such "memories" began to be shared by the communities of the time.