

Republican China (1927-37) as Reflected in Literature

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“The Nanjing Decade” (1927-37) of the nation-building Republican China has been a focus of study, especially in the fields of history and political science. The aim of this paper was to examine how Chinese writers observed and reflected upon this period. Based on an analysis of modern literature, three aspects are identified: (1) The writers noted serious social and economic problems, including poverty, hunger, atrocities of officials and rich people, and moral decay. (2) The political situations were grave due to the threat from Japan and civil military conflicts between the Nationalists and the Communists. The morale of soldiers was low. These problems could hardly be resolved due to corruption among the bureaucrats. (3) With regard to culture, the writers saw many conflicts between traditional thoughts, such as superstitions in rural areas and discrimination against women, and modern ideas, such as freedom of love and women’s rights. Also, intellectuals portrayed in literature were generally sympathetic to communism, although this emerging ideology and its activities were harshly suppressed by the Nationalist government. To conclude, twenty years had passed since the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, but modern Chinese intellectuals, as represented by the writers, believed that the country had remained poor, weak, and backward, and the suffering of people was intensified towards the Sino-Japanese War in 1937.