

Report on an International Conference Sponsored by the
China Association for the Study of Sino-Japanese Relations,
Beijing, October 24-28, 1988

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As one of the three North American participants at these Sino-Japanese meetings, I would like to offer my version of the events of these five days and my impressions of the state of Sino-Japanese studies in China, of Sino-Japanese scholarly communication at present, and of the opportunities for further projects and interaction for scholars interested in Sino-Japanese topics in the West.

As the previous issue of the SJSN stated, this Association in China is not new. It was founded in 1984 and has met in Beijing annually since that time; it also publishes a periodical featuring papers presented at these meetings. We received all the back issues of the journal and have found that they contain much useful material. Even more valuable, we (here I refer to all the waibin 外賓 or "foreign guests," whether North American, Japanese, or from other parts of Asia) received quantities of publications issued by members of the Association, many of them books or articles with a great deal of scholarly depth and detail. Thus, my most important and lasting impressions are that scholars in China today are indeed actively working and publishing as much as possible and that there are many valuable publications to be found in whatever area of Sino-Japanese studies one is pursuing. Perhaps this discovery on my part is naive, but I have relied on Japanese sources for nearly all of my research thus far and consider myself more a historian of Japan than of China. It is exciting now to plan to undertake projects that reverse the literal Nit-Chū 日中 to Zhong-Ri 中日, with the knowledge that there is a great deal of interest and support for future projects of this sort in China today.

I was invited in October by chance and a great deal of luck. I learned of the conference in July from Josh Fogel, naturally too late to resort to all the proper channels for funding or paper proposals and the like. But, with the help of the Association, McGill University, and Professor Tam Yue-him 譚汝謙 of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, it worked out that in the eleventh hour I was able to go. While many of the participants knew of this conference far in advance, for nearly all there was a fairly high level of confusion in arrangements and funding. The Association is a private or minjian 民間 scholarly organization in China and cannot request the issuance of government letters of invitation for the authorization of visas. We all had to obtain tourist visas for China. Most of us arrived at the Beijing airport on the 24th (although to this day I still think of the three Japanese participants stranded by CAAC for two full days

en route from Tokyo to Beijing due to mechanical problems) and connected with each other in the baggage lobby, as masses of tourists and other arriving passengers with us waited--and waited and waited--for the conveyors to spill out our belongings. I was perhaps never so relieved as to see faces I recognized in line with passports in hand after our respective flights dumped us into the aforementioned masses of humanity that afternoon, because I had no idea where we would be staying that night or even if the Association or its head, Wang Xiangrong 汪何榮, was certain I was coming.

The point of this discussion is: It is hard for groups like this one to organize themselves in advance to the degree one might like, but this should not stop one from going to such a conference by whatever means necessary. Because: As soon as we stepped out of the customs area into China proper, everything regarding our stay was in perfect order, or as "perfect" (if not more so) than we could ever expect. The Association had a large sign and three or four members there to greet and escort us back to our hotel, the Minzu fudian 民族飯店. We foreigners were treated far too much like visiting royalty; it became embarrassing. In the future we need to make efforts to let our Chinese hosts know that they do not have to put themselves out so much for us. Perhaps, this is merely a point of cultural divergence in guest-host relations. My fear was that this hospitality would exhaust our Chinese hosts, and we would receive few invitations in the future. We must make efforts to reciprocate as well and minimize the expense and energy expended from both sides. Our treatment included arrangements for meals and transportation by minibus. A day trip to the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall included more of the general Chinese participants, but we foreigners were treated far and away better than they were. We owe more than thanks to our hosts and especially to Professor Wang.

On the 25th the opening ceremonies for the conference were held in the Great Hall of the People off Tiananmen 天安門 Square. We noted the Association's official importance on this occasion, although it intruded little. This meeting coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Sino-Japanese Friendship Treaty of 1978 and thus called for more official celebration than in previous years. The podium of speakers facing the participants included leaders of the Association, important Chinese officials, and the Cultural Attaché of the Japanese Embassy, but most of us had our eyes glued on one extraordinarily dignified old gentleman: Aixinjueluo Pujie 愛新覺羅 浦杰, age 82, younger brother of the last emperor of China and still (or again) serving as a symbol of Sino-Japanese "friendship" or cooperation, although one could hardly ignore the radically different context this time. Speeches were consecutively translated with the expertise of a superb interpreter, Miss Yang 楊, who is in fact not a professional interpreter but a student of modern Japanese history.

As formal or informal China-watchers, we all wondered how this conference was being politically manipulated behind the scenes; yet,

it all seemed fairly straightforward. The Japanese and Chinese governments wished to give some publicity to the conference as a sign of their mutual goodwill and cooperation, but this veneer in no way seemed to influence the regular proceedings of this scholarly body which meets now annually. Aside from the presence of foreigners in numbers larger than usual, the Association members seemed to indicate that all was business as usual. Delegates came from all over China, from Qiqihar to Guangzhou, and used the opportunity to visit the capital for a variety of reasons.

In the afternoon, the conference proper convened with papers presented by Wang Xiangrong and others, most notably Japanese scholars Futami Takeshi 二見剛史 (who is even more memorable to me for his excruciating and endless stream of puns in Japanese, straining my linguistic capacities), Mizuno Akira 水野明, and Tanaka Masatoshi 田中正俊. While the conference was officially held in Chinese, Futami and Tanaka spoke through interpreters. Many of the papers had been received as early as July and were awaiting us in a handy volume of conference proceedings, which allowed the listeners to follow the talks, sometimes word for word. In addition, other papers kept arriving, it seemed, by the hour and were being distributed as the afternoon progressed. To our (North American) surprise, the order of the printed program was barely a suggestion of the actual program; presentations had been rescheduled over lunch and pressures applied to move papers forward or back as new circumstances arose. I held firmly for Friday morning, the last day of the conference, hoping to use the time to practice my own speech so that it would be in intelligible Mandarin. Many who had submitted papers were not called upon to present them orally. Time pressures tended to favor the foreigners.

By the evening of that day, when we (the foreigners) along with representatives of the Association were eating a banquet of Beijing duck, some of the groupings of scholars in China were becoming clearer to us. Scholars had come from all over China, and many were engaged in teaching and research about Japan and/or Sino-Japanese studies. The Association it must be noted distinguishes itself from others which are concerned primarily with the study of Japan. In addition, some of the scholars we met were historians of China who wrote articles in this area. We actually met innumerable people, as the stacks of name-cards collected amply demonstrates. The Chinese tend to include each and every scholarly and political affiliation on their cards, and these provide a kind of encapsulated resume, often lengthy and indeed inspiring. Certainly, many of them wore many hats and seemed to be actively pursuing research. I had the impression that publishing in China is not always easy, but that somewhere there would be someone researching and writing on almost any given topic.

We also owe a great debt to Tam Yue-him of the Chinese University of Hong Kong for helping us to gain a better comprehension of so vast a terrain and a better grasp of what is going on where in China.

He introduced us to scholars, for example, from Beijing and from the Northeast, where research institutes for the study of Japan are most numerous (they are also in Tianjin, Shanghai, and Beijing). We heard of some future conferences with more topical foci. We were overwhelmed with what appeared to be genuine invitations to return to China to pursue our research, which will be the next step in my own work.

During the more recreational hours of the conference, we had plenty of time to eat and drink with Chinese scholars and hear their stories of life today and their more vivid memories of experiences during the Cultural Revolution, a time when most were forced to cease doing research and take up hard labor. Some explained that they are working feverishly now to make up for those lost years. During our day-long excursion to the Great Wall, we discovered another distinguished delegate, a 96-year-old gentleman from Sichuan, Liu Gangpu 刘刚甫, who had been among the first Chinese to study in Japan in the Meiji period. At the other end of the scale, Yung Ying-yue 容应蕓, a Sino-Japanese historian from Singapore, brought along her six-week-old baby as part of her entire family of five that made the trip to Beijing. There were many other occasions to remember as well. Left to our own devices on the last afternoon of the conference, Doug Reynolds, Professor Futami, and I travelled by subway and bus to visit Beijing University for some further talk with Chinese participants there.

Japanese participation in the Association began with its inception in 1984, and until his death shortly after then Sanetō Keishū was the organization's nominal leader, largely a recognition of his pioneering work in the field. It was apparent that there was a fair level of communication between Chinese and Japanese scholars that had preceded us. Futami's paper on Matsumoto Kamejirō 松本亀次郎, an early Japanese educator in China, certainly had been solicited to fit in with an ongoing body of work in China, including that of Wang Xiangrong (one of Matsumoto's last Chinese students, as it turned out) on Japanese teachers in China during the Meiji period. Tanaka Masatoshi's paper about Japanese capitalism and wartime munitions was vividly interlaced with his own autobiographical details from military service during the war. Mizuno Akira, who had lived in China until the age of 29 and spoke Mandarin fluently, was apparently a familiar figure to many Chinese participants. Ōba Osamu 大庭脩, a scholar of Sino-Japanese cultural interaction and trade in the Edo period, attended the conference without giving a paper because he had done so the previous year. Ishii Akira 石井明 of Tokyo University, who presented a paper on Japan's Taiwan policy during the Cold War which made use of newly-available diplomatic documents, also visits China regularly both for scholarly exchange and China-watching activities. All in all, levels of contact and exchange between these two neighbors was enviable, to say the least.

A rich assortment of papers and other printed materials came

into my hands during these five days. Papers from the conference volume ranged from studies of the prehistoric era through modern times. For example, a young woman scholar from Suzhou presented a solid paper on the mutual interaction in styles and technology of embroidery in China and Japan from Tang times forward; she stressed the importance of manuals on embroidery in both cultures. Literary papers included one comparing the Tale of Genji with the Dream of the Red Chamber. For myself, with interests in Japanese imperialism in the 1930s, there were a few tantalizing papers, including one by a woman of Korean extraction on prewar Japanese-language education in the Sino-Korean border region. Like Tanaka's paper, it was quite moving.

The reactions of Chinese and Japanese scholars to my own short paper on Kawashima Yoshiko 川島芳子 and to my own hopes for further research on her life and times in China were tremendous. Everyone knew far more about her than I would have thought. The other papers by my two colleagues from North America, Josh Fogel on Japanese literary travellers in China and Doug Reynolds on the "Golden Decade" (see SJSN 1.1) were also received with enthusiastic response. Our participation marks a good beginning to what I hope can become lasting exchange and contacts in China; and I hope to return to China, perhaps to Beijing and the Northeast, before too many more months pass.

On Friday night (October 28) I ate dinner in the hotel in a state of exhaustion after this busy week. Language difficulties and, particularly, the necessity of switching between two foreign languages made this conference the most challenging I have ever attended. I had a pleasant meal with another fatigued participant, from Japan, and then slept as soundly as I imagined possible. The following morning, after a torrent of good-byes, I was hauled off to the airport under the care of one of the Association's personnel.

Editor's note: What follows is a list of the papers and their authors.

Monday, October 25:

1. Wang Xiangrong, "The Past and the Future in the History of Sino-Japanese Relations" 中日关系史过去和未来
2. Futami Takeshi, "Matsumoto Kamejirō at the Jingshi fazheng xuetang" 京师法政学堂时代的松本龟次郎
3. Tanaka Masatoshi, "The Sino-Japanese War and Munitions under Japanese Capitalism" 日本资本主义下之军队的武器与中日战争
4. Mizuno Akira, "An Analysis of Japanese 'Views on China'" 日本的《中国论》的验证

Tuesday, October 26:

5. Xie Xueshi 解学诗, "Setting the Historical Record Straight" 弄清史实, 深入探讨
6. Douglas Reynolds, "A Golden Decade Forgotten"
7. Bao Shixiu 鲍世修, "Japanese Influence on the Late Qing Military Reforms" 日本对中国晚清军队改革的影响
8. Ishii Akira, "An Analysis of the Process Leading to the Conclusion of the 'Japan-Taiwan Peace Treaty': Several Issues Concerning the Japanese Draft" 《日台和约》的締結过程之分析——关于日方草案的若干问题——
9. Liu Xuezhao 刘学照, "The Place of Shanghai in the History of Modern Sino-Japanese Relations" 上海在近代中日关系史中的地位
10. Zheng Yunging 郑云卿, "Past and Present in Sino-Japanese Relations, as Seen from the Use of Japanese in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region" 从延边朝鲜族自治州的日语使用状况看中日关系的过去和现在

Wednesday, October 28:

11. Joshua Fogel, "Japanese Literary Travelers in Prewar China"
12. Barbara Brooks, "Kawashima Yoshiko" 川岛芳子
13. Wei Rongjie 魏荣吉, "Several Issues in Research into the History of Transportation in East Asia" 东亚交通史研究的几个问题
14. Sun Peilan 孙佩兰, "Embroidery Techniques in Sino-Japanese Cultural Interactions" 中日文化交流中的刺绣艺术