

# *Contending Issues in Sino-Japanese Relations: toward a History beyond Borders*

(*Kokyōo Koeru Rekisi Ninsiki: Nichū Taiwa no Kokoromi*)

國境を越える歴史認識: 日中對話の試み

by Liu Jie, Mitani Hiroshi & Yang Daqing[eds.], University of Tokyo Press, 2006.

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## I. Introduction

The large scale “anti-Japanese protest” surrounding the history textbook of Japan, which arose in the spring of 2005 in China, stirred Japanese society. The Japanese textbook distortion of history and the Chinese aggravated xenophobia nationalism froze the relationship between Japan and China in 2006. Such mutual reactions that aroused anti-Japanese and anti-Chinese sentiments may have contributed because of the development of the Internet upon the Chinese imposing the Open Policy. The purposes of publishing *Contending Issues in Sino-Japanese Relations: toward a History beyond Borders*, authored by Liu Jie, Mitani Hiroshi and Yang Daqing in 2006, suggest academic explanations and solutions on the conflict of the historical issues between China and Japan, and also to propose a medium of reconciliation to the younger generation of both countries which is essential for communication. The authors think that the grounds of conflict between China and Japan lies not in the “history of wars,” but in the way in which both countries

“memorize” and “inherit” history and concluded that such attitudes make the relationship more distant.

Although a variety of recent history textbooks intended to reduce the gaps in interpretations on history were published in East Asia. This book is written for an adult audience and for the promotion of an environment in which the people of both nations could start a respectful conversation. This book was published by the University of Tokyo Press (renowned for academic quality) and it contains the accomplishments of numerous researchers. It is anticipated that it would be influential for researchers and history educators. This book was simultaneously published in both Japanese and Chinese versions by Zhongguo shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe (中國社會科學文獻出版社).

This book consists of 13 articles that explain what differences caused the controversies between China and Japan in the respective view of history from the end of the 19th century to the modern age. This book deals with the topics of current issues on history, how they are discussed, and how they will overcome differences in mutual views on history in order to broaden the scope beyond borders. Such issues are also closely related to Korea that has gone through similar conflicts with both China and Japan. This review examines the contents of this book and the suggestions of the historical perspectives that extend beyond the borders as an endeavor of communication. The different perspectives that exist between Korea, Japan, and China will be closely studied, as well as other issues that are not addressed in this book. These studies are helpful for those who are interested in East Asia conflict resolution.

## **II. The Problems on Factual Accounts in History and its Interpretations**

The articles in the first half are focused on the historical controversies from the Sino-Japanese War at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to Chinese-Japanese War (1937-1945). They also analyzed the historical events that

are positioned as an under-structure of the present Chinese and Japanese relationship. The first controversial point of the historical conflict is the Sino-Japanese War. Modeki Toshio<sup>1</sup> claims that it is not reasonable to view the history of the relationship between China and Japan as a formulation of contrasting concepts: conservatism versus civilization, tradition versus modernization, and resistance versus invasion when examining the respective historical materials of the time. Modeki indicated that the ideas that Japan resembles modern while China portrays tradition, were formed in the period of Sino-Japanese War. Consequently, the cultural identities between them were reversed far after the Sino-Japanese War. Also explained is that the application of this idea not only traces back to the early Meiji period, but also is influential until now. However, this book fails to mention the Japanese expansionist policy and the real history of the war. As well there is no comment on the Japanese political and military interventions on Korea. There is a limitation in explaining the Sino-Japanese War solely as a confrontation between China and Japan.

Another author, Kawashima Shin<sup>2</sup> views that the turning point of the modern relationship between China and Japan is when Japan requested for 21 articles until 1915 after the Sino-Japanese War. Around this period Japanese sentiment to contempt Chinese aroused from not only the unequal treaty but also the Japanese competitive psychology to beat China that formed Asianism. Kawashima mentioned that when Japanese accomplished modernization, and they identified China as a non-civilized nation in comparison. This continued to form the modern Japanese national trend of “degrading” China. After 1910 while the Chinese were attempting to civilize the country it identified Japan as a

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<sup>1</sup> Modeki Toshio (茂木敏夫), “Nichū kankeishi no katari kata-19seiki kōhan,” (「日中關係史の語り方- 19世紀後半」).

<sup>2</sup> Kawashima Shin (川島眞), “Kankei kinmitsuka to tairitsu no genkei - seinichisensō atokara 21kajyo yōkyūmade,” (「關係緊密化と對立の原型 - 清日戰爭後から21カ條要求まで」).

barbaric nation that should be contained because it relied on military power without following international laws. It is in this period that a strong feeling of animosity developed and affected the international relationships of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Kawashima also points out that due to the accelerated economic development and raised international status of China, the established formula of “Japan equals a civilized nation” and “China equals an uncivilized nation” became vulnerable. For this reason, Kawashima considered the fact that Japan became more concerned on losing the identity as a civilized nation as a Japanese identity crisis.

The second controversial point is the Manchurian Incident. The problematic point can be seen in this controversy is that Japan considers Manchuria as a lost territory. Liu Jie<sup>3</sup> thought of the possibility that could have avoided this crisis through diplomacy. At that time the government of China thought of restoration movement with diplomatic efforts. Nevertheless, Japan concluded the anti-Japan nationalism was the result of the anti-Japan policy of the Chinese government. Accordingly, fearful and hatred propaganda on the Chinese was promoted and it began to spread. Liu Jie regards this phenomenon as an intrinsic structural problem between China and Japan that has lasted since the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement until today. Higuchi Hidemi<sup>4</sup> analyzed the changes occurred in the Northeast society of China resulted from the establishment of the Manchuria State and the political policies. Higuchi claimed that the initial goal of founding the Manchuria State was to construct a utopia where the rule of right and an ideal land [王道樂土] on the basis of the fact that all Japanese who resided in Manchuria were considered citizens of the Manchuria State and were independent from not only China but also Japan. However, Higuchi overlooks the fact that the Multi-nation

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<sup>3</sup> Liu Jie (劉傑), “Hannichi-hanchū junkan no nakano nichūkankai - manshu jihen zenya,” (「‘反日’・‘反中’循環のなかの日中間係 - 満州事變前夜」).

<sup>4</sup> Higuchi Hidemi (樋口秀實), “Manshūkokusi no sōten – dōjidai to gose no sikaku,” (「満州國史の争点 - 同時代と後世の視角」).

Harmony[民族協和] slogan of the Manchuria State failed to implement a practical policy, as Liu Jie indicated.

The third controversial point is the Chinese-Japanese War. Yang Daqing<sup>5</sup> mentioned that although it is difficult to accurately conclude the execution method and the number of victims of the ‘Nanjing Massacre’, the difference in perspectives can be overcome. Yang contends that in order to have a sincere conversation beyond the borders, first, it is important for them to have to strive to explore the evidence of the Nanjing Massacre by utilizing the witnesses and make it public, and second, research on war crimes and the advancement of globalization is beneficial. (p.165) Yang points out that even if historians formed a common historical perspective, more effort is needed to further develop an understanding into a ‘collective memory’ of both societies. Liu Jie<sup>6</sup> analyzed the differences between China and Japan in understanding the issues surrounding the Nanjing government which cooperated with Japan in the time of Chinese Japanese War. Liu Jie questions whether Wanzhaoming (汪兆銘) in China called Wangjingwei (汪精衛) was a treacherous subject to Han (漢奸) and the regime of Wang was a puppet government. The term ‘偽’ is pointed out (which Chinese use as a prefix to indicate the regime of Wang) as it has a meaning which devalues it as illegal, illegitimate, and unapproved. For this reason Japanese academia avoids this term (pp.173~177). As such, the different perspectives in evaluating the regime of Wang led to the difference in both groups in ways of thinking toward interpreting historical issues.

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<sup>5</sup> Yang Daqing (楊大慶), “Nanjing atrocities - kensetsutekina taiwaha kanōnanoka,” (「南京アトロシテイズ - 建設的な対話は可能なのか」).

<sup>6</sup> Liu Jie (劉傑), “Wangzhaoming to Nanjing Kokumin seihu - kyōryoku to teikō no aida,” (「汪兆銘と‘南京國民政府’ - 協力と抵抗の間」).

### III. Historical Perspectives for Seeking Reconciliation

The second part of this book deals with the issues such as the Japanese history textbook, Taiwan, the Yasukuni Shrine, and post-war compensation under the topic of understanding the historical perspectives for seeking reconciliation. First, Mitani Hiroshi<sup>7</sup> who dealt with the issues of Japanese textbooks claimed that China and Korea should not weigh the significance of Japanese history textbooks as much as that of Chinese and Korean textbooks which are adopted as a national textbook since Japan does not use a national history book. Also Mitani recommended that the issues on historical perspectives should be discussed as moral principles instead of a method of power struggles. Although the Chinese and Korean memories on the abuse of power by Japan in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century remain a traumatic event, Mitani warned that it is dangerous to use such historical incidents that occurred 60 years ago as a political strategy. In addition, most Japanese who were born after World War II are having nothing to do with past issues. Accordingly he recommends that it is wiser to construct a practical perspective in understanding the history by maintaining a psychological distance and only focusing on the future of Northeast Asia. Also he emphasizes that the differences in historical perspective cannot be solved by history textbooks, since the current historical dispute emerged due to adults and political leaders, not by the children being taught by the history textbooks. The continued arguments on history textbooks are inappropriate; Mitani emphasized the understanding by adults should take precedence over the textbooks.

Ibaraki Satoshi<sup>8</sup> analyzed the mutual understandings of Chinese and

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<sup>7</sup> Mitani Hiroshi (三谷博), “Nihon no rekisi kyōkasho no seido to ronsō kōzu,” (「日本の歴史教科書の制度と論争構図」).

<sup>8</sup> Ibaraki Satoshi (茨木智志), “Rekisi kyōkasho ni miru nichū no sōgo ninsiki,” (「歴史教科書にみる日中の相互認識」).

Japanese in their history textbooks. Ibaraki points out that currently Japan teaches the history in favor of Japan and that likewise China teaches history in favor China. This simply shows the difference in the name of people listed in the textbooks. Japanese textbooks only include heroes from ancient China, while Chinese textbooks only explain about the modern Japanese invasion history (p.248). In order to overcome this problem he suggests to contain amicable exchanges of the two countries and characters and events who contributed to the promotion of friendly relationships, constructing a national history in the frame of world history and northeast history so that history lessons would deepen the knowledge of the history based on the relationship between China and Japan that promote mutual understanding.

The next issue is about Taiwan: Japan claims it contributed to the modernization of Taiwan. Asano Toyomi<sup>9</sup> states that Taiwan is a compelling example which shows how ‘modernization’ had progressed in East Asia. The Japanese conservative asserted ‘development’ was made for ‘modernization.’ Considering Taiwan as a good research material which can overcome the frame of national perspectives, it should be recognized with multi-level aspects of the northeast area, beyond the scope of the history of ‘China and Japan relationships’. The issues that cannot be eliminated when it comes to the modern history of Taiwan are the issues of the aboriginal Taiwanese and their burial at Yasukuni Shrine. It is unlikely to solve this problem by only emphasizing ‘development’ in the frame of the Japanese national perspective.

The third issue is the veneration of the Yasukuni Shrine which is crucial to the extent that the Japanese prime ministers’ veneration at the Yasukuni Shrine was the direct cause of the Chinese anti-Japan protest in 2005. Murai Ryota<sup>10</sup> explained the issues regarding Yasukuni Shrine with

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<sup>9</sup> Asano Toyomi (淺野豊美), “Taiwan no Nihon jidai wo meguru rekisi ninsiki,” (「臺灣の日本時代をめぐる歴史認識」).

<sup>10</sup> Murai Ryota (村井良太), “Sengo nihon no seiji to irei,” (「戦後日本の政治と慰霊」).

multi-level aspects and pointed out the following issues. (1) Historical issues on ‘Evaluations on Tokyo Judgment, Resurrection of Imperialism’, (2) Constitutional issues on defining Yasukuni as a religious ritual or tradition, official praying at the Yasukuni Shrine, (3) International issues on ‘building trust with neighboring countries’ the San Francisco Treaty: eleven articles, (4) Veneration the souls of the dead. Japan is to make a decision for the most practical solution from among the many possible solutions for such problems. Japan questions as to whether it should endorse Yasukuni as an independent religious organization in order to maintain a certain distance from the government, or removing Class A war criminals buried at the Yasukuni Shrine based upon a voluntary agreement, or continue official veneration at the Yasukuni Shrine; otherwise, new facilities need to be constructed for praying for the souls of the dead. It is likely that Japan will stop official veneration, move the Class A war criminals graves to another shrine, and establishing a national memorial facility that is independent from any religion and association in order to resolve the conflicts with neighboring countries.

The last point is the after-war compensation issue. Yang Zhihui<sup>11</sup> explained that the essence of the request for compensation is not to ask monetary restitution, but to require Japan to reflect on the atrocities committed during the war. Yang also states that the declaration by the Chinese government proclaimed at the *China Japan Joint Statement of 1972* that ‘China will give up any compensation for the war that Japan is responsible in order to promote amicable relationships between both people’ left the following problems: first, in the process of restoring the international relationships between two nations, the issues of compensation after the war was only reviewed from a political determination; accordingly there was a gap between the political and

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<sup>11</sup> Yang Zhihui (楊志輝), “Sensō baisyō mondai kara sengo hosyō mondai he,” (「戦争賠償問題から戦後補償問題へ」).

legal perspectives. Secondly, the hasty agreement by the politicians rested on a limited understanding of the historical perspectives on the war. Third, the arbitrary agreement by the Chinese government officials disregarded the voice of the oppressed for compensation. At that time the Chinese government thought that requesting compensation from Japan would not be beneficial for China to pursue amicable relationships with Japan in the long term and it defined both Chinese and non-military Japanese civilians as the victims of the imperialists.

Those who have kept silent since then did not press the complaint that there is no restitution at all, despite of tremendous damages and voiced opposition to the Japanese view of history. As a result, lawsuits were filed for after-war compensation. Upon filing a number of lawsuits domestically and outside of China, the national lawyer association of China established a fund to continue legal action. Accordingly in the Japan legal system there is an increase in the number of individual lawsuits for requesting after-war restitution, though it is very strict on the plaintiffs. Those who support to claim individual compensations assert that what is more meaningful and symbolic for them is not the monetary compensation but the impartiality in the truth of history. In this situation, it is probable that Chinese government officials will not endeavor to reduce the number of individual lawsuits for compensation until Japan shows a sincere ‘apology and reflection’ on past crimes committed during the war.

#### **IV. Implication of this Book**

Kawashima Shin indicated that the issues in the difference of historical perspectives between China and Japan were a crucial task that East Asia had to resolve through the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> Both China and Japan were not

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<sup>12</sup> The textbook issue did not start in 1980’s, but in 1910’s it first became a diplomatic issue as a

able to construct a common historical perspective under the cold war system and accordingly, they failed to have sufficient time to discuss issues with equal standpoints. In this sense, the last decade was the time in which both endeavored to learn the discussion method and solutions for overcoming the difference in understanding history. This book suggests that Japanese history should be further researched with an unbiased perspective toward China. In Chinese academia, the shape of the discussion has expanded with various topics researched to form a common ground for conversation and cooperative research. Compared to this, the eleven authors of this book are mostly Japanese scholars or Chinese scholars who do research in Japan. Since no Chinese authors working in China were included in this book, it could have limitations in objective observations.

The authors claimed that Japan must take action towards showing the proper attitude of a former imperialistic invader. At the same time, this book is concerned about the after-war generation in Japan, who is not responsible for the war crimes. Mitani stated that the after-war Japanese generation who did not experience the war or believe that no war will emerge in the future are astounded by the persistent protest of the Chinese and Koreans. In this situation, in order to respond to such critical events wisely, it proposes to end the vicious cycle of historical perspectives that has lasted for more than 100 years. Mitani also recommends that in order to help the post war generations overcome the psychological burden that they have to be responsible for the negative inheritance of the abuse by ancestors during the war, they have to understand the Japanese invasion of China and the domestic loss and damage. To prepare for not only the

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Japanese protest against the anti-Japan education of China. In China patriotic and anti-Japan education was first established in the beginning of the communist era. In the time of national party ruling and the Peking government of the Republic of China that requested 21 articles, anti-Japanese sentiment was aggravated in the textbook. Kawashima Shin (川島眞), "Rekisi taiwa to rekisi kenkyū," (『歴史對話と史料研究』), p.347.

problems of East Asia but also the global environment problems is a desirable way to heal the scars of the past and to construct an amicable future relationship.

This book contends that bringing out the Nanjing Massacre and the comfort women issues is not a wise way of dealing with current issues in history because it may provoke severe opposition. But Chinese feelings against Japan are a crucial problem that appeared over time and space through the ‘memories and descriptions’ of the war. Chinese memories of the past are a scar that remains from the war but was opened due to the official Japanese visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and incorrect history textbooks. It has been known as a ‘living history’. Since the 1980’s, China constructed war memorial buildings to preserve memories of the war and by establishing the anti-Japan War Research Association it strives to reveal the abuses done by Japanese military by estimating the number of victims. It is obvious that the Chinese government intends to preserve and pass on the recorded abuse as ‘official memories’. Although in 2002, the Chinese government suggested to maintain a friendly relationship to improve the current “politically frozen but only economically fervent” (政冷經熱) relations with Japan in the 30<sup>th</sup> *Ceremony of Opening Diplomacy with Japan*. The history issues remain the basic principle against Japan.<sup>13</sup>

In the beginning of 2000, behind the aggravated Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment there was a diversified situation in which Chinese society changed after opening, the internet nationalism wave also was the excuse for confrontation by the Japanese government. Japan should endeavor to draw a minimum consensus among the public by seriously questioning as to how it should define the wars in the Pacific and how to

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<sup>13</sup> In the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Nominalization of China Japan Diplomatic Relation the Chinese government proclaimed the diplomatic policy of ‘one idea’ (China-Japan coexistence and amicable generation), and ‘two principles’ (issues on history and Taiwan) and ‘one foundation’ (the political foundation of the relationship between both nations).

accounts for them. For that reason, in China and also in Japan ‘the war has not completely ended.’

## V. Conclusion

China has become Japan's most powerful neighbor for the first time in 100 years, redefinition on historical issues was required between China and Japan. Publication of this book can be assessed as a common effort made in response to the changing times. The issues analyzed in this book and the suggestions are valuable, sincere, and encourage the exchange of conversations beyond borders. Koreans also have to share the methods suggested for the resolution of historical conflicts. The opinion of professor Mitani that in order to encourage historical reconciliation in East Asia is correct; both nations should publish not only textbooks for young people but also those for adults. However, this book was not written for common readers to promote the understanding of history, and it may best be viewed as a research paper that requires immense professional knowledge. Especially, the Chinese anti-Japanese protest of 2005 that spread in a few moments over the Internet and cellular phones showed as a result that the Chinese government was not able to control the public. It provoked the Japanese society with a new radical theory of a Chinese threat. The situation has changed from the governmental level to the individual level in the relationships between China and Japan. Now scholars and researchers should seek a resolution on historical conflicts taking such changes into account.

In regards to the textbook issue, professor Mitani (the editor of the book) pointed out that since Japan does not have a national history book compared to the national history books of China and Korea, the issue of textbooks is not powerful. However, when considering that the Japanese conservatives took the same standpoint that textbooks do not have a lot of influence compared with the example of ‘Korean national history book’, his conclusion seems unconvincing. The Japanese textbook issue

can be resolved by addressing the perspectives of minorities who were excluded in history books or those of the public or women. The Japanese Liberal View of History Study Group asserted that the history of 'comfort women' was manipulated by the anti-Japanese group and deleted the term 'comfort women' from textbooks approved for publishing in 2005. Considering this situation, it is unexpected that this book takes little attention on the 'comfort woman' issue, contrary to the intention to repair Japanese relationships with China for the truth in history. Under the leadership of the U.N., the 'comfort woman' issue developed into a human right issue. If this book intended to explain history from multi-level approach, the problems on race, women, and nation should be further discussed. If the author intentionally edited this book by excluding the 'comfort woman' issue it would be a problem that should be countered by further works.

All the issues that this book deals with, the controversies ranging from Sino-Japanese war and Chinese Japanese war, is difficult to be studied without taking the Korean peninsula into consideration. The number of Koreans buried at the Yasukuni Shrine is more than 20,000. All the controversial points of the Yasukuni Shrine, after-war compensation, comfort women for the Japanese military are common issues for the three nations. The conversations between China and Japan have limitations. It is likely to arouse 'nationalists' without accomplishing any results. Constructing the shared historical perspective and prospect for the future would be effective in alleviating the tensions in Northeast Asia. For a example, in order to publish a universalized history textbook together, organizations like the Korean, Chinese, and Japanese Common Committee can be a choice for the task. Also as an approach to reconciliation the establishment of the 'East Asia Community' is suggested. The various methods to observe East Asia in the frame of East Asia or World View, will provide sincere conversations on history beyond the borders of China and Japan. When this cooperative work is done the effort by academics will be a positive asset for all.