Review


This slender volume is a most remarkably introduction to the general field of Sino-Japanese cultural encounters. Its very inclusion in this lengthy series (110 volumes planned) marks an important step in the development of the field of cultural history in China. That is, mutual Sino-Japanese influences in the cultural realm are effectively recognized as basic to the growth of Chinese culture, and not just in the last century where this contribution has long been recognized. As the general editor of the series notes, "Chinese culture is a developing, historical category, possessing both inclusiveness and continuity."

Wang divides his work into fifteen chapters, all but one of which feature an individual or group who played prominent roles in this interaction between China and Japan. He begins with the elusive Xu Fu and concludes in the early twentieth century. Although the work is top-heavy toward the more modern end of the historical spectrum, there is still considerable attention to events in Tang, Song, and late-Ming through early-Qing.

In his introduction, Wang attempts to come up with a periodization for the history of Sino-Japanese relations that takes full account of cultural developments in both countries. As is rapidly becoming the standard terminology of periodization in research in the P.R.C., Wang divides history into three eras: ancient, modern, and contemporary. Some time over the past few years, the "middle ages" simply disappeared in China. For that reason, gudai is probably best translated not as "ancient" but as "pre-modern" in this context. The dividing point between "pre-modern" and "modern" history is, not surprisingly, 1840. Some things never change. The division between modern and contemporary is 1945. Wang subdivides all of his periods further and is clearly attentive to change within his eras; it is just what he has deemed the major divides that may evoke a yawn in most readers.

Let me now just list the chapter titles:
1. The Legend of Xu Fu: The Contributions of Chinese Migrants in High Antiquity
2. The Mystery of the Gold Seal: Proof of Interaction in the Han Dynasty
3. Official Missions to Tang China: The Heyday of the Study of Chinese Culture
4. Abe no Nakamaro: A Japanese Student Whose Bones Were Interred in the High Tang
5. The Buddhist Monk Ganjin: High Priest in Tang China Who Traveled East to Spread Scripture
7. Chōnen: The Monk in Song China Whose Name is Recorded in History
8. Zhu Shunshui: Refugee from the Ming Dynasty Who Came to Live in Japan
10. Luo Sen and His Riben riji: Pioneer of Modern Sino-Japanese Cultural Interchange
11. Huang Zongxian and Minamoto Teruna: Interactions and Brush Conversations between Chinese and Japanese Men of Culture in the Qing Period
12. The High Tide of Study in Japan: Chinese Students in Japan in the Early Twentieth Century
13. Lu Xun and Fujino sensei: Deep Friendship between a Chinese and a Japanese
15. Li Dazhao and Yoshino Sakuzō: Sino-Japanese Cultural Interchange in the May Fourth Era

I found particularly interesting the chapter on Chōnen, about whom so little has been written in any language. Wang goes beyond the fairly well-known entry in the Song dynastic history in which Chōnen appears because of his audience with the Chinese emperor; he notes the various books brought to China from Japan, as well as brought back to Japan from China, and he examines some of Chōnen's own writings. He also mentions the little known fact that in 988 one of Chōnen's own disciples, Ka'in, traveled to China two years after Chōnen's return as part of a trade mission.