

Review

China's First Dictionary of Japanese History

Riben shi cidian 日本史辞典, edited by Wu Jie 吳傑 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, October 1992). 921 pp. with over 4000 entries, compatible Japanese readings, and indexes (by stroke count and by historical era). 35 yuan.

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Five years ago, when I was delivering a lecture on recent PRC scholarship on Japanese history at several university centers for East Asian studies in the United States, I used as part of my hand-outs a list of the thirteen-volume series, Higashi Ajia no naka no Nihon rekishi 東アジアのなかの日本歴史 [Japanese History in (the Context) of East Asia], which was then being published by Rokkō shuppan 六興出版 in Japan. This Rokkō series, as reviewed later in nearly 30 articles in Japanese journals and newspapers and by a panel chaired by Professor Joshua A. Fogel at the 1992 annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Washington, D.C., provides an overview of the major accomplishments of Japanese history in China.¹

Compared with the Rokkō series, however, this single-volume Dictionary of Japanese History is in a sense a more comprehensive and succinct reflection of the general state of Japanese historical studies in China. A total of 79 contributors from major universities and research institutes, including such established scholars as most of the fifteen authors in the Rokkō series and other recent Ph.D.s, participated in this project which started in 1984. Since a contributor was usually responsible for the entries relevant to the field of his or her expertise--namely, in which he or she had publications--the large body of selected contributors represent a variety of specialties and perspectives that, in a sense, ensured the quality of the dictionary. There are as well some examples of collaboration in the writing of a single entry, such as that for Riben guo zhi 日本国志 (the famed history and study of Japan by Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲, 1848-1905) by Professor Sheng Banghe 盛邦和 of East China Normal University and Professor Xia Yingyuan 夏應元 of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Every entry is followed by the

names of its author(s), and thus such coauthorship apparently is meant to increase credibility.

The editors of the dictionary include Professor Wu Jie of Fudan University, Professors Wang Jinlin 王金林 and Lü Wanhe 吕万和 of the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences, Professor Shen Ren'an 沈仁安 of Beijing University, and Professor Zhang Yuxiang 張玉祥 of Liaoning University. As editor-in-chief and Honorary President of the Chinese Society for the Study of Japanese History (CSSJH), Professor Wu played a key role in this compilation. Because of his reputation as a senior scholar and his persistent endeavors in spite of recent ill health, Professor Wu succeeded in bringing out this dictionary at a meaningful time, the twentieth anniversary of the normalization of Sino-Japanese official relations.²

This dictionary contains over 4000 entries covering Japanese history from antiquity to the postwar period as late as June 1991. It aims at providing China's general readers with basic knowledge about Japan's past and present. The index classified by historical periods indicates an overall balance between historical eras and areas. The selected entries on institutions, events, and figures for each period are helpful for a reader trying to grasp the outline of Japanese history. The medieval period, which is a weak field in China, is given equal attention here, and perhaps we can say that without the participation of Professors Tong Yunyang 童雲揚 and Zhao Baoku 趙宝库 of Wuhan University, the entries in this field might not have been as accurate as they are.

One of the distinctive qualities of the dictionary is the emphasis on the postwar period. Great changes in the early phase of this period, such as the reforms under the American occupation and the high growth rate of the economy in the 1960s, are introduced. The prominent economist Shimomura Osamu's 下村治 (1910-89) career and theories (which became the basis for the Ikeda Cabinet's famous income-doubling plan) are detailed in two separate entries (pp. 46-47).

As part of postwar history, Sino-Japanese non-governmental or semi-official contacts are carefully recorded. For example, the entry for "Qianfan santuanti" 遣返三团体 (J. Hikiage sandantai) recounts the story that in 1953, with joint arrangements made by the Red Cross associations in both countries, about 30,000 Japanese civilians and soldiers who had remained in China were peacefully repatriated to Japan (p. 802). The entry "Liao-Gao maoyi" 廖高貿易 (J. Ryō-Taka bōeki or "L-T Trade") similarly evaluates the 1962 memorandum on Sino-Japanese trade signed by Liao Chengzhi 廖承志 and Takazaki Tatsunosuke 高崎達之助 (p. 850).

To justify the inclusion of entries of this sort, Professor Wu, who served concurrently as chairman of the Division on the Postwar Period of the CSSJH when he was a vice-president of the society, points out that because Sino-Japanese official relations were restored in 1972, people are less knowledgeable about the situation before the 1970s. In addition, he realized that the dictionary had to include those events and figures often neglected by dictionaries edited by Japanese and to update recent developments in Japan and new scholarship in both countries so as to make it a unique contribution (see his "Preface"). His opinions may thus have influenced the structure as well as the appearance of the dictionary.

Professor Wu was not only the designer but also one of the main contributors to the dictionary. He offers insights on a broad range of topics in over 280 entries. One of the methods he employs in viewing Japanese is to look into the nobility system and the lineages, marriages, and education of key modern figures. He discusses "Seikake" 清華家 and "Matsudaira-shi" 松平氏 in greater detail, for example, than the well-known Kadogawa Nihon shi jiten 角川日本史辞典 [The Kadogawa Dictionary of Japanese History] (ed. Takayanagi Mitsutoshi 高柳光寿 and Takeuchi Rizō 竹内理三, Tokyo: Kadogawa shoten, 1974, 2nd edition). Concerning Abe Shintarō 安倍晋太郎 (1924-91), the recently deceased LDP leader, Professor Wu notes that his father was a House representative and he himself was a graduate in political science from Tokyo University and son-in-law of Kishi Nobusuke 岸信介 (p. 406). Such background information helps the reader understand why Abe's political career had such a solid foundation.

Whenever possible Professor Wu tries to profile historical figures by adding episodes from their careers. For example, in his entry on Ōkawa Shūmei 大川周明 (1886-1957), he points out that as a graduate in Indian philosophy from Tokyo University this famed ultra-rightist managed to escape standing trial before the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal by using his yogic skills to feign madness (p. 54). Similarly, in his discussion of the noted writer Inoue Yasushi 井上靖 (1907-91), Wu mentions that Inoue completed his final best-selling novel, Kōshi 孔子 [Confucius] (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1989) when he was an inpatient for esophageal cancer (p. 134). Details of this sort help bring such portraits to life.

The entries on the history of Sino-Japanese relations in this dictionary are particularly worthy of note. For instance, Professor Wu presents valuable information in his entries on "Taiqin-shi" 太秦氏 (J. Uzumasashi), "Xu Fu" 徐福 (J. Jo Fuku), and "Pei Shiqing" 裴世清 (Hai Seisei), all based on documentary findings by Chinese

scholars. Other contributors quote key data in their entries which help readers to understand particular issues in their historical contexts. Thus, for example, in the entry "Qian-Tang shi" 遣唐使 (J. Ken-Tō shi, or the official Japanese embassies to the Tang court, p. 802), the author cites the Nihongi to the effect that "the Japanese visitors were the most distinguished among the tributaries who attended the court"; in the entry for "Yamada Yoshimasa" 山田良政 (Ch. Shantian Liangzheng, 1869-1900, p. 84), the author cites Sun Zhongshan 孫中山 (Sun Yat-sen) to the effect that Yamada "was the first foreign volunteer to sacrifice himself for Chinese republicanism"; and under "Nanjing datusha" 南京大屠殺 ("Nanjing Massacre," p. 602), the author cites a 1937 report by a German official in Nanjing to his government to the effect that "the criminal is not this or that Japanese person but the whole Japanese Imperial Army, an operating machine of wild beasts."

While merits are many, there are also a number of limitations in this first dictionary of Japanese history to come out of China. Due to a lack of research and care, some entries are merely translations of those in Japanese historical dictionaries, and some include a few errors.³

To some extent the dictionary appears to have combined the compilatory skills of the Cihai 辭海 dictionary of Chinese and the Ajia rekishi jiten アジア歴史事典 [Historical Encyclopedia of Asia] of Japan. It gives the Japanese reading and author's name for every entry, which are arranged by stroke count of simplified Chinese characters. This makes it easier for a reader to trace an entry's compatible Japanese reading and to identify its author. The volume also has an index classifying entries by historical period to help the reader locate particular items. These measures may seem insufficient for those who are impatient counting strokes or surveying the classified index, those who are not familiar with simplified characters, or those who already know something of Japanese history. My suggestion for the subsequent, revised edition of this dictionary would be to include a pinyin index, a regular (fanti 繁體) character index, a Japanese character index, and a romanized index by Japanese readings for the convenience of the reader. It might also be wise to add the most important references in Chinese, Japanese, English, or other languages for each entry so as to provide avenues for further study. In this way the dictionary might become even more useful not only for the mainland Chinese, but also for readers in Taiwan, overseas Chinese, and Japanese and Western scholars as well.

Notes

1. In my presentation at the 1992 AAS panel, I tried to generalize in the following manner about recent Chinese scholarship on the basis of the authors in the Rokkō series and the contents of their works.

(a) Because a large number of Chinese speakers of Japanese, research institutions, and library holdings are located in the northeastern provinces as well as metropolitan Beijing and Tianjin, scholars from these areas continue to comprise the core of Japanese researchers in China. Most contributors to the series are scholars from these areas.

(b) Chinese Japanologists can roughly be divided into three generations by the year of graduation from college or graduate school. The first generation of scholars finished their higher education before 1949; the second generation between 1949 and the Cultural Revolution; and the third generation after the Cultural Revolution. By this division, three of the fifteen contributors belong to the first generation, ten to the second generation, and two to the third. It should be noted that two volumes were co-authored which accounts for fifteen authors of thirteen books. Third generations have already begun to play an important role in advancing Chinese scholarship on Japanese history.

(c) The modern period of Japanese history, rather than medieval times, has caught the interest of more Chinese scholars. This research orientation reflects China's quest for modernization and China's continued remembrance of the Japanese invasion. The ancient period of Japanese history also attracts a number of scholars, for much of the historical material used comes from records in the early Chinese dynastic histories. No single volume in the series deals with the Kamakura or Muromachi period. By contrast, six of the thirteen volumes are about modern times, two about antiquity, and two about the early modern era.

(d) Generally speaking, Japanese historical studies in China are at a stage of digesting the large number of scholarly works of Japanese historians and rendering them from a Chinese standpoint or perspective in which one can sometimes identify Sinocentric implications, Marxist theories, and even "modernization" theory. In some areas and in key points, however, Chinese scholars have offered original views based on their discoveries of new sources and reinterpretations of well-known documents.

2. Professor Wu was trained as an undergraduate at Kyoto Imperial University and as a graduate student at Tokyo Imperial University a half century ago, and he is well known as a leading scholar of East Asian studies in China and Japan. His numerous publications include: Zhongguo jindai guomin jingji shi 中国近代国民經濟史 [History of the National Economy of Modern China] (Beijing: Beijing renmin chubanshe, 1958); Zhongguo jingji shi kaozheng 中国經濟史考證 [Textual Research in Chinese Economic History] (Shanghai: Shanghai yinshuguan, 1962-64, a translation of a similarly titled work by Katō Shigeru 加藤繁); Jintian Mao zhuan 吉田茂傳 [Biography of Yoshida Shigeru] (Shanghai: Shanghai yiwen chubanshe, 1985, a translation of a work by Inoki Masaki 猪木正道); Riben diguozhuyi qin-Hua shiliao huibian 日本帝國主義侵華史料匯編 [Collection of Historical Documents on the Japanese Imperialist Invasion of China] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1986); "Riben jiqi gongye fazhan chuqi de tedian" 日本機器工業發展初期的特點 [Distinctive Elements in the Early Period of the Development of the Japanese Machine Industry], in Mingzhi weixin de zai tantao 明治維新的再探討 [Reexaminations of the Meiji Restoration]; and "Zhongguo qiaoren de yanjiu" 中国僑人的研究 [Studies of Overseas Chinese], in Riben shi lunji 日本史論集 [Essays in Japanese History].

As a graduate student at Fudan University, I was always greatly impressed by Professor Wu's comments on the necessity and importance of Japanology in China. Although many Chinese scholars are prone to consider Japanese culture a watered-down version of two great foreign civilizations--ancient China and the modern West--in fact, he asserted, the Japanese did have their own originality and creativity not to be ignored, and therefore we Chinese must take Japan seriously. I believe that his sustained efforts in compiling this dictionary were motivated by this enthusiasm and sense of responsibility for promoting Japanese studies in China. It should also be mentioned that the publication was supported by the Japan Foundation and Fudan University Press. The latter's backing is noteworthy, because it is not easy for an academic press to accept a publication of this kind in such a period of money worship as the present.

3. For example, Nakai Chikuzan 中井竹山 (1730-1804) is said to have succeeded Miyake Sekian 三宅石庵 (1665-1730) as the head professor of the Kaitokudō 懷德堂, a Neo-Confucian academy in early modern Japan (p. 146), but in fact Nakai was the fourth head professor and his predecessor was Miyake's son Shunrō 春樓.