Trends in Chinese Research on Modern Japanese History: The Fifteen-Year War

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Introduction

For the Japanese 1995 marked the fiftieth anniversary of defeat in World War II, but for the Chinese it marked the fiftieth anniversary of victory in “The War of Resistance Against Japan.” This fifty-year postwar period, however, has not seen steady development in Japanese studies within China. Civil war from 1945 to 1949 and the decade-long Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution starting in 1966 brought paralysis and stagnation not only to Japanese studies, but also to academic research as a whole. Chinese historians have been able to work on Japan in an atmosphere of calm only after Sino-Japanese relations normalized in 1972, after the Cultural Reevolution ended in 1976, and after the Third Plenum of the CCP’s Eleventh Party Congress launched a program to “pursue facts and liberate thought” in 1978.2

Thereafter, several universities and social science research institutes created centers for Japan studies, mainly in the northeastern provinces of Heilungkiang, Kirin, and Liaoning. Societies for the study of Japanese History, Sino-Japanese Relations, Japan-Northeast China Relations, and Japanese Studies in general have provided

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1 Translators’ note. This article, “Chūgoku ni okeru Nihon gendai shi kenkyū no dōkō: Jūgonen sensō ki no Nit-Chō kankei shi o chūshin ni” (日本における現代史研究の動向: 十五年戦争期の日中関係史を中心に), appeared in Awaya Kentarō 畑憲太郎, Toyoshita Narahiko 豊下樫彦, Mori Takeko 森武麿, and Yoshida Yutaka 吉田裕, eds., Nenpō: Nihon gendai shi 年報: 日本現代史 1 (May 1995), pp. 249-63. We wish to thank the editors and publisher, Azuma shuppan, for permission to translate the Japanese original. Throughout the article, Kobayashi follows the left-wing Japanese convention of placing quotation marks around the terms “Manchuria” and “Manchoukuo” in deference to the sensibilities of Chinese who may be offended. We have omitted these quotation marks in this English translation for the sake of simplicity.

2 See T’ang Ch’üng-nan 湯重南, “Jih-pen shih” 日本史, in Hsiào Li 胡黎, Chung-kuo i-shih-hsüeh ssu-shih-nien 中国歷史學四十年 (Shu-mu wen-hsien ch’u-pan-she, 1989); and Wu An-lung 武安隆 and Hsiung Ta-yün 熊電雲, Chūgokujin no Nihon kenkyū shi 中國人的日本研究史 (Rokkō shuppan, 1989).
scholarly forums for research.³ And, in general, when Chinese historians do study Japan, they are interested mainly in Sino-Japanese relations—not Japanese political history. That being said, the past decade has produced a remarkably changed climate for studies of modern and contemporary history.

First, the Chinese have eagerly hosted and attended international conferences where delegates from the Chinese Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Europe, and North America freely exchanged views. For example, in 1985 Peking hosted a conference to mark the fortieth anniversary of “Victory over Japanese Agression and of Worldwide Anti-Fascism.” In 1987 Tokyo, Kyoto, and Tsinan hosted conferences to commemorate the July 7th (Marco Polo Bridge) Incident. And in 1991 Shenyang (formerly, Mukden) hosted a conference to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the September 18th Manchurian Incident. Participants did not fully overcome differences in nationality, ideology, and political perspectives, but the conference still marked a big step forward in furthering mutual communication and identifying points of controversy.

Second, over the past ten years, many scholars from the Chinese Mainland and Taiwan have studied in Japan for extended lengths of time. There used to be severe restrictions on access to primary sources in China, so students of modern Japan had to rely mainly on secondary works. Now, studying in Japan permits them to gather primary materials and to establish personal contacts easily. As a result, they have to publish empirically grounded studies of high quality, some of which they even write in Japanese. These trends will surely intensify hereafter.

Below, I will survey trends in modern Japanese history and Sino-Japanese relations on the Chinese Mainland and Taiwan since the 1980s. These fields account for but a fraction of Chinese scholarship on Japan, but there are still a great number of books and articles to be consulted.⁴ So I do not presume to attempt a truly comprehensive


⁴ To review trends in Chinese studies on modern and contemporary Japanese history written in Japanese, see the following: Yu Hsin-ch’un 俞辛焞, “Chūgoku ni okeru Nihon gaikō shi kenkyū” 中国における日本外交史研究, Aichi daigaku kokusai mondai kenkyūjo kiyō 愛知大学国際問題研究所紀要 730 (June 1983); Yu Hsin-ch’un, “Chūgoku ni okeru kindai Chūgai kankei shi kenkyū no dōki” 中国における近代中外関係史研究の動向, Rekishi gaku kenkyū 歴史学研究 518 (July 1983); Liao Lung-kan 廖隆幹, “Chūgoku ni okeru Nihon kindai shi kenkyū no genkyō” 中国における近代日本史研究の現状, in Kindai Nihon kenkyūkai 近代日本研究会, ed., Nenpō kindai Nihon kenkyū 10: Kindai Nihon kenkyū no kentō to kadai 年報近代日本研究 10: 近代日本研究の検討と課題 (Yamakawa shuppansha, 1988); Wu Mi-ch’a 吳密察, “Taiwan ni okeru Nihon kindai shi kenkyū no seika” 台湾における近代史研究の成果, in ibid.; Yamane Yukio 山根幸夫, Fuji Shōzō 藤井昇三, Nakamura Tadashi 中村義, and Ōta Shōkō 太田勝光, Kindai Nihon kankei shi kenkyū nyūmon 近代中日関係史研究入門 (Kenbun shuppan, 1992); and Lu I 魯義, “Chūgoku ni okeru Nihon kenkyū” 中国における日本研究, Kokusai Nihon bunka kenkyū sentā kiyō 国際日本文化研究センタ紀要: 日本研究 10 (August 1994).

In preparing this article I consulted the following: Hsü Yung 徐勇, “Jih-pen ch’in-Hua shih yén-chiu tsung-shu” 日本侵華史研究総述, Shih-chieh shih yén-chiu tung-t’ai 世界史
bibliographic survey. Instead, I will focus on the Fifteen-Year War from 1931 to 1945 and the period leading to it.

**The 1920s**

Chinese studies of the 1920s center on Japan’s policies of continental expansion as pursued under Shidehara and Tanaka diplomacy, on railway negotiations, and on the South Manchurian Railway (SMR) in Northeast China.\(^5\) The so-called “Tanaka Memorial” remains a key topic of research.\(^6\) In Japan almost everyone agrees that the document is spurious, so few people discuss the issue. But in China, controversy over the document’s authenticity has been raging since the mid-1970s.

First, historians such as I. Hsien-shih, Shen Yü, Kao Tien-fang, and Liu T'ing-hua insist that the document is authentic and that Tanaka actually submitted it to Emperor...
Hirohito. For the most part, they base their assertions on memoirs left by Ts'ai Chih-k' an who reputedly stole his way into the imperial palace archives and made a copy of the document, or by Wang Chia-chen who reputedly smuggled the copy into China, and translated and edited it. This school stresses that Japanese actions after the Far Eastern Conference (1927) fully bear out the document’s contents. Or, they say that there was a separate “secret conference,” and that the Foreign Ministry did not record these discussions in its official proceedings.

By contrast, historians such as Yii Hsin-ch’un and Tsou Yu-heng agree on the aggressive aims of the Far Eastern Conference. But they nevertheless assert that the memorial was forged or that its authenticity cannot be proven. Yu studied Foreign Ministry documents of the period to prove that the Conference’s actual proceedings never reached positions outlined in the “Tanaka Memorial.” Tsou has made a detailed study of the text to show that it is not drafted in the form properly used in memorials submitted to the throne, and that it contains numerous factual errors which Tanaka could never have committed.

Although one can easily understand the difficulties created by poor accessibility to Japanese sources until recent years, I was still taken aback by the scant regard for empirical analysis shown by one school in this debate. Tsou Yu-heng points out these reasons to explain why Chinese hold fast to their belief in the document’s authenticity despite evidence to the contrary. First, Japan’s aggression in China, and especially in the Northeast, followed the “Tanaka Memorial” all too closely. Second, the existence of this document cannot be denied simply because of factual errors in it. Third, to reject its authenticity might lead to absolving the criminality of Japanese imperialism. Thus, the “Tanaka Memorial” controversy is deeply rooted in Chinese historical and national

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10 Tsou Yu-heng, “'T'ien-chung tsou-chang' chen-wei lun.”
consciousness. So, the “forgery thesis” will not attain the status of scholarly consensus in China for some time to come.

The September 18th Manchurian Incident

In 1991 international conferences commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of this incident. These meetings took place in Shenyang under the auspices of the Liaoning, Kirin, and Heilungkiang provincial social science academies, and in Taipei under the auspices of the Center for Historical Studies. Many publications appeared in what can only be described as a China-wide “September 18th boom.” And, adding fuel to the flame was Chang Hsüeh-liang’s sudden appearance before the media in December 1990.

Various studies of the September 18th Incident had appeared earlier, beginning with Liang Ching-ch’un 莊敬錦, Chiu-i-pa shih-pien shih-shu 丘一八事變史述 [An Account of the September 18th Incident], published in Taiwan by Shih-ch’ieh shu-chü in 1964 with a revised edition in 1968. Other works include: 1) I Hsien-shih 易顯石, et al., Chiu-i-pa shih-pien shih 丘一八事變史 [A History of the September 18th Incident], which has been translated into Japanese; 2) Ma Chung-lien 馬仲廉, ed., “Chiu-i-pa” tao “Ch’i-ch’i” 丘一八至七七 [From September 18th to July 7th] (Chung-kuo ch’ing-nien chu’-pan-she, 1985); Liu T’ing-hua 劉庭華, “Chiu-i-pa” shih-pien yen-chiu九一八事變研究 [A Study of the September 18th Incident] (1986); and Yü Hsin-ch’un 俞辛焞, Manshū jihen ki no Chū-Nichi goikō shi kenkyū 滿州事變期の中日外交史研究 [A Study of the History of Sino-Japanese Diplomacy During the Manchurian Incident] (Tōhō shoten, 1986). Yü Hsin-ch’un’s work made full use of not only Chinese Mainland and Taiwan sources, but Japanese Foreign Ministry and Imperial Army sources too. It is a tome that has yet to be surpassed on this topic.

Nevertheless, there is new scholarship that dates from the sixtieth anniversary, such as Chiu-i-pa shih-pien ts’ung-shu 丘一八事變叢書 [Compendium on the September 18th Incident] (Liao-nings jen-min chu’-pan-she, 1991)11 and Wu-wang kuo-ch’ih li-shih ts’ung-shu 母國恥歷史叢書 [Historical Compendium to Never Forget Our National Humiliation] (Chung-kuo hua-ch’iao chu’-pan-she).12 As well there is

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another Chiu-i-pa shih-pien ts'ung-shu—a six-volume series that includes two volumes of primary sources.

Most noteworthy is a collection of official sources put out by the Liaoning Provincial Archives. These are not just translations of published sources already available in Japan. Instead, they are Chinese translations of prewar Japanese sources housed in China. These include telegrams that reveal Chinese reactions to events from Chang Tso-lin’s assassination to the September 18th Incident, plus SMR telegrams, letters, and other sources dating from the 1910s to the mid-1930s. Not directly related to the September 18th Incident but nevertheless of great interest are SMR documents that include letters by Doihara Kenji, telegrams by Matsuoka Yōsuke, and Hōten tetsudō jimusho jikyoku nisshi. Not directly related to the September 18th Incident but nevertheless of great interest are SMR documents that include letters by Doihara Kenji, telegrams by Matsuoka Yōsuke, and Hōten tetsudō jimusho jikyoku nisshi.

Older source collections on the September 18th Incident published in Taiwan are: Lo Chia-lun, Ko-ming wen-hsien 革命文献 [Documents on the Revolution] (nos. 33-35, Chung-yang wen-wu kung-ying-she, 1978); Li Yün-han 李雲漢, Chiu-i-pa shih-pien shih-liao 九一八事變史料 [Historical Documents on the September 18th Incident] (Cheng-chung shu-chū, 1977). In 1988 the Chinese Mainland began publishing Jih-pen ti-kuo-chu-i ch‘in-Hua tang-an tsu-liao hsüan-pien 日本帝國主義侵略檔案資料選編 [Selected Edited Archival Documents on Japanese Imperialist Aggression Against China]. The Central Archives, China Second Historical Archives, and Kirin Social Science Academy edited this series, whose first volume deals with the September 18th Incident. Other volumes contain some shocking revelations by high Manchoukuo officials such as Kōmoto Daisaku 河本大作, Sasaki Tōichi 佐々木正一, Takebe Rokuzō 武部六蔵, and their Chinese collaborators. This includes affidavits, recorded testimonies, and confessions produced during trials for Japanese war criminals and “Chinese traitors.” Given their nature, we must submit these sources to critical scrutiny. Still, they are highly valuable since they do not exist in Japan. It is too bad that these records were not reproduced in their original form. Instead, the editors translated them into Chinese. That is understandable, since the intended audience is Chinese. But I remain eager to read them.

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13 Taiwan commemorated the sixtieth anniversary by publishing Chung-kuo Kuo-min-tang Chung-yang wei-yüan-hui tang-shih wei-yüan-hui, ed., Kuo-min cheng-fu ch‘u-li chiu-i-pa shih-pien chih chung-yao wen-hsien (Chung-kuo hsien-tai shih shih-liao ts‘ung-pien) 国民政府處理九一八事變之重要文獻、中國現代史料叢編 (series 12) (Chin-tai Chung-kuo ch‘u-pan-she, 1992). This work contains records of the political and special diplomatic committees of the KMT Central Steering Committee, primary sources published on the Chinese Mainland, and Taiwan academic articles related to the September 18th Incident.

14 In addition to this volume on the September 18th Incident, six others have been published to date: volume 3, Wei-Man k‘uei-lei cheng-ch‘uan 偽滿傀儡政權 (1994); volume 4, Tung-peii “ta‘ao-fa” 東北大討伐 (1991); volume 5, Hsi-ch‘ün-chan yü tu-ch‘i-chan 細菌戰與毒氣戰 (1988); volume 7, Wei-Man hsien-ching t‘ung-chih 偽滿統治政治 (1993); volume 8, Tung-peii li-ts‘u ta-ts‘an-an 東北歷次大慘案 (1993); and volume 14, Tung-peii ching-chi liue-to 東北経済掠奪 (1991). Portions of Hsi-chün-chan yü tu-ch‘i-chan have been translated by Eda Kenji 田代健治 as Seitai kaibō 生体解剖, Jintai jikken 人体実験, and Saikin sakusen 細菌作戦 (Dōbunkan, 1991-92).
in the original Japanese, and I look forward to the day when the archives housing them will open to the public.

Unlike the situation pertaining to Marco Polo Bridge, there is no doubt about who perpetrated the September 18th Incident. Hence there are only three real points of controversy: to clarify the causes and background to the incident, to determine if the Japanese state itself was behind it, and to decide if we should deem it the start of World War II in Asia. As the first issue, Chinese historians list the 1929 Depression, Japan’s “continental policies,” international relations of that day, and fascism. Here, I will introduce Chinese views on the last two issues.

In Japan, the scholarly consensus holds that the Kwantung Army officers instigated the incident, perhaps with tacit consent from a few superiors in Tokyo. But Japanese historians do not support the contention that central army headquarters directed the incident. By contrast, Chinese historians argue that army headquarters played the leading role.

Lii Wan-ho says that the incident was not an independent action taken by a small number of field officers. Instead, he claims that the whole imperial army was behind the conspiracy. Shen Yu contends that aggression in Manchuria formed the core of official army policy—not just the Kwantung Army’s. However, we should note that Shen Yu bases his views on a misreading of one key document, the “Manshū mondai kaiketsu hōsaku no taikō” 滿洲問題解決方策の大綱. This is the record of a conference that five Army Ministry section chiefs attended in June 1931. They resolved that, “as a measure to win support at home and abroad, we hope to implement this policy carefully for about a year; that is, until next spring.” Shen misconstrues the passage to mean that army headquarters was planning military operations that would last one year.

Lang Wei-ch’eng goes even further than Shen. Lang argues that the Kwantung Army was just carrying out a policy conceived by army headquarters and approved by the

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15 See, for example, Lang Wei-ch’eng 郎維成, “Ts’ung i-pu Jih-pen ti-kuo-chu-i ch’in-Hua shih k’an Jih-pen fa-tung chiu-i-pa shih-pien ti ken-pen yuan-yin”從一部日本帝國主義侵華史看日本發動九一八事變的根本原因, Wai-kuo wen-t’i yen-chiu 外國問題研究 3 (1991).
17 One Japanese historian, Fujimura Michio 藤村道生, does argue that central army headquarters directed the incident. See Fujimura, Sekai gendai shi I: Nihon gendai shi 世界現代史 I: 日本現代史 (Yamakawa shuppansha, 1981). However, Eguchi Keiichi 江口圭一, Tatamiya Eitarō 田畑英太郎, and others have pointed out Fujimura’s shortcomings. See, for example, Tatamiya, Kensaiku! 2.26 jiken 検索！ 2.26事件 (Yûzankaku, 1993).
cabinet. Thus, to Lang, the incident reflected the will of the emperor state.21 Opposed to the above views are Liu T'ing-hua and Yü Hsin-ch' un who argue that responsibility for the incident lies with the Kwantung Army.22

Until recently both Mainland and Taiwan specialists on modern Chinese history and the Chinese Revolution held that China's "Eight-Year War of Resistance Against Japan" began with the July 7th Incident. But from the mid-1980s, Mainland Chinese historians began to adopt the "Fifteen- (or Fourteen-) Year War of Resistance to Japan" thesis according to which the war started with the September 18th Incident. Since then, the Chinese have intensely debated this issue of periodization.23

By contrast, Chinese specialists on modern Japan take the "Fifteen-Year War" thesis as a given. They argue that Japanese imperialist aggression inevitably led to the war. This aggression began with colonial policies of expansion in the 1920s that necessarily led to the September 18th and July 7th Incidents.24 Indeed, the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences recently devised a framework for a "Seventy-Year Period of Japanese Aggression Against China" beginning with the Taiwan Expedition of 1874.25 It should be noted, though, that Taiwan historians are more wary about stressing continuity because it may have negative implications for the KMT government that concluded the Tangku Ceasefire Accords in 1933.

In Japan, Himeta Mitsuyoshi has submitted a "Fifty-Year War Thesis" that underscores the consistency of Japanese aggression against China from 1894 to 1945. So this issue of how to contextualize the Fifty-Year War within the overall history of modern Sino-Japanese relations will continue to be a major topic of debate. As for nomenclature, Himeta urges us to adopt the terms "Fifty-Year War of Aggression Against China" and "War of Aggression Against China."26

However, Chang Ching-t'ang stresses that the usual Japanese terms "Sino-Japanese War" and "Fifteen-Year War" do not convey an accurate sense of Japan's aggression which was the essence of the war. Chang, too, urges us to adopt more explicit

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22 See the works by Liu and Yü cited above.
23 See the detailed study by Yasui Sankichi 安井三吉, Rokkyō jiken 溝橋事件 (Kenbun shuppant, 1993).
25 See Jih-pen ch'in-Hua ch'i-shih-nien shih, op. cit.
terms, i.e., "the Japanese War of Aggression Against China" and "the Fifteen-Year War of Japanese Aggression Against China." From the Chinese standpoint, this represents the flip-side of "China’s War of Resistance to Japan."

**On Manchoukuo**

Chinese historians did some research on this topic before the Cultural Revolution. However, the first serious publication was Chiang Nien-tung 姜念東, I Wen-ch'eng 我文成, Hsieh Hsüeh-shih 解學詩, Lü Yuan-ming 呂元明, and Chang Fu-lin 張輔麟, *Wei Man-chou-kuo shih 僞滿洲國史 [History of the Collaborationist State, Manchoukouo]* (Chi-lin jen-min ch’u-pan-she, 1980). It covers a wide range of topics, such as the state’s foundation and pacification, activities of the Concordia Society, economic controls and plundering of resources, immigration policies, colonial control over culture and education, and resistance struggles by the local populace. If the two-volume *Manshūkoku shi 滿洲國史* [History of Manchoukuo] (Man-Mō dōhō engokai, 1970) reflects the ruling Japanese standpoint, *Wei Man-chou-kuo shih* presents the story from the occupied Chinese side. It is interesting to note that a revised version of the *Wei Man-chou-kuo shih* appeared from Ta-lien ch’u-pan-she in 1991. And, its “Afterward” states that systematic study of and publication on “this collaborationist state” has been obstructed for so long in China because “leftists” thought repudiated the worth of anything connected with Manchoukouo.

As mentioned above, the sixtieth anniversary of the September 18th Incident in 1991 led to a flood of publications. In 1986 historians from Heilungkiang, Kirin, and Liaoning formed a committee to compile the *Tung-pei lun-hsien shih-ssu-nien shih t‘ung-shu 東北淪陷十四年史叢書* [Historical Compendium on the Fourteen-Year Occupation of Northeast China]. It first met in 1987 and began publishing in 1990. Furthermore, as shown by Su Ch’ung-min’s 蘇崇民 tome on the SMR or Hu Ch’ang and Ku Ch’üan’s work on the Manchurian Film Industry, recent Chinese research has moved away from purely political, economic, and military studies so as cover other topics in great breadth and depth.

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28 See the revised edition, p. 664.
In Taiwan, volume 37 of Ko-ming wen-hsien, which contains sources on Manchoukuo, was reprinted in 1978. But publication of new primary materials has been a major achievement in Chinese Mainland Manchoukuo studies. As noted above the Central Archive in 1988 began to publish Jih-pen ti-kuo-chu-i ch'in-Hua tang-an tsu-liao hsüan-pien. This series contains volumes of source materials devoted to the September 18th Incident, biological and poison gas warfare, and Manchoukuo.

These volumes include not only official records, but also affidavits, recorded testimonies, and confessions by former high-ranking Manchoukuo officials such as Furumi Tadayuki and Takebe Rokuzō, as well as Japanese military personnel. These sources shed light on Manchoukuo administrative organs, Concordia Society activities, economic controls, immigration projects, opium policies, forced labor, purges of subversive activities, and rule through terror by the police and military police. There was not much on opium--my own area of interest. But one affidavit by Furumi Tadayuki is revealing. In it, he says that Manchoukuo started its opium monopoly in order to secure operating funds and that he played a key role in this venture. Most surprising of all, he claims that Manchoukuo sold 20,000 tons of opium to Japan, 70,000 tons to Germany, and 200,000 tons to the Wang Ching-wei regime.30

Some of the primary sources already have been cited by Chiang Nien-tung in Wei Man-chou-kuo shih. Still, their publication in separate document volumes is of great value. From now on, no one studying Manchoukuo will be able to ignore the Jih-pen ti-kuo-chu-i ch'in-Hua tang-an tsu-liao hsüan-pien.

There are two other source compilations that, although of less value, still warrant mention. One of these is the reprinting of Sun Pang, Wei-Man shih-liao ts'ung-shu 僑滿史料叢書 [Compendium of Historical Sources from the Collaborationist State, Manchoukuo] (Kirin jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1993). This is a topically organized ten-volume collection of memoirs and other literary sources.31 As well, 120 volumes of official government reports dating from 1932 to 1945 have been reprinted: Wei Man-chou-kuo cheng-fu kung-pao 僑滿州國政府公報 (Liao-ning ch'u-pan-she, 1993).

Recent industrial development in the Northeast has been amazing. But Chinese historians are openly chary of “modernization” theories suggesting that today’s development derives from SMR or other Japanese building in Manchuria. Hsieh Ming points out the danger in recent Japanese historians, such as Matsumoto Toshirō, who admit the fact of Japan’s colonial control and military aggression, but still discuss Northeastern “development” in terms of modernization theory.32 Hsieh Ming denies any
need for the concept of modernization to tell the “history of the SMR” or the “history of Japanese imperialist aggression in China.” Hsieh argues that Japanese “aggression” and “development” necessarily involved “plunder.” This is sure to become a major point of controversy henceforth.

**On the “North China Incident” [Undeclared War]**

Japanese historians debate whether the Fifteen-Year War was a single continuum, or if there was a decisive break between the Manchurian Incident of 1931-33 and the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. This intervening period has become the focus of much historical inquiry on the Mainland recently. In the 1960s, Taiwanese historian Liang Ching-ch’un 梁敬錦 produced basic studies such as “So-wei Ho-Mei hsieh-ting” 所謂何梅協定 [The So-called Ho-Umezu Accords], “Ch’in-T’u hsieh-ting” 秦土協定 [The Ch’in-Doihara Accords], “Kuang-t’ien san yüan-tse” 廣田三原則 [The Hirota Principles], and “Hua-pei tsu-chih yün-tung” 華北自治運動 [The Autonomy Movement in North China]. In 1982 Li Yü-han 李元瀚 edited KMT government sources in K’ang-chan ch’ien Hua-pei cheng-chü shih-liao 抗戰前華北政局史料 [Historical Materials on the North China Political Situation Before the War of Resistance] (Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1982). And, on the Mainland, a collection of 1935 newspaper and magazine articles, the Hua-pei shih-pien tsu-liao hsüan-pien 華北事變史料選編 [Selected Documents on the North China Undeclared
War], have appeared. As well, there are now studies by Li Wen-jung, Shao Yün-jui, and Yü Tzu-tao. 35

On the Chinese Mainland, historians use the term “North China Incident” (shih-pien or “undeclared war”) to describe the string of machinations perpetrated by the Japanese army in 1935: 1) the East Chahar or First Western Jehol Incident; 2) the Hopei Incident and so-called Ho-Umezu Accords; 3) the Chang-pei Incident; 4) the Ch’in-Doihara Accords; 5) the North China Autonomy Movement; 6) the establishment of the East Hopei Regime for Self-Government and Containment of Communism and the Hopei-Chahar Political Council; 7) the Independence for Inner Mongolia Movement; and 8) economic imperialism symbolized by smuggling under the East Hopei Regime.

This cumulative “North China Incident” is quite different in nuance from the September 18th and July 7th “Incidents”--though all three are called shih-pien. And, it may not be wholly valid to lump together a series of small-scale “affairs” (shih-chien or “incidents”) under the rubric of a shih-pien or “undeclared war.” However, this semantic device does permit Chinese historians to stress continuity between the September 18th and July 7th Incidents. As Li Wen-jung and Shao Yün-jui argue, these three “incidents” comprise a three-part strategy of imperialist aggression against China—with each stage leading inevitably to the next. Lang Wei-ch’eng, T’ung Tung, and Hsieh Hsiieh-shih share this view. 36

In Japan, there are almost no studies on the East Hopei Regime set up in November 1935. That dearth of scholarship makes the Chinese study Chi-tung Jih-wei cheng-ch’üan [The East Hopei Japanese Collaborationist Regime] (Tang-an ch’u-pan-she, 1992) all the more valuable. This exhaustive work, edited by Nan-k’ai University historians and Tangshan City archivists, has many relevant sources about the East Hopei regime, from its founding through 1946. It has excerpts from periodicals of that day, such as Manshū hō [Manchuria Weekly] and Kitō nippō [East Hopei Daily] as well as Tangshan archival materials. Especially valuable are materials on the activities of the East Hopei Renovation Society, on efforts to uphold order, and on education. These sources are just waiting to be exploited by researchers.


The July 7th (Marco Polo Bridge) Incident

In 1987, fifty years after the July 7th Incident, a Museum to Commemorate the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japan opened near Marco Polo Bridge on the outskirts of Peking. There occurred a nationwide “Resistance Against Japan” boom, and conferences were held all over China to mark the observance. But the resulting publications would not equal the similar boom in 1991 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the September 18th Incident.


The points of controversy center on the causes of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, its place in the War of Resistance Against Japan, and the significance that this incident has for World War II as a whole. But the really outstanding issue is the first one: who and what caused the incident? In other words, did the incident really “break out accidentally”?39 Which side fired the first shot?40


39 Translator’s note. E. O. Reischauer so describes the incident in Japan Past and Present. He maintained that position until his death, and it appears in the revised edition of that work—Japan: The Story of a Nation (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), p. 170. On the Diet floor in 1988, Cabinet Minister Okuno Seisuke quoted Reischauer verbatim to assert that the incident “broke out accidentally,” and he went on to argue that therefore Japan bore no responsibility for starting a war of aggression (shimbyaku sensō 侵略戦争) with China. This led to a diplomatic crisis with massive PRC protests that ended only with Okuno’s resignation.
On these points Mainland and Taiwan historians basically coincide. The only new bones of contention pertain to the “accidental outbreak” thesis, the KMT 29th Army Instigation thesis, and the CCP instigation thesis. For Chinese historians, the issue of “who shot first?” is “irrelevant and meaningless.” For them, the Japanese army occupied vast areas of Northeast and North China, so stationing troops and conducting field maneuvers on Chinese soil was illegal to start with.41

For Chinese historians, it is crystal clear that Japan’s North China Garrison Army or one of its Special Services Agencies—not the CCP or the KMT 29th Army—fired first. Allegations to the contrary, they retort, are belied by the following considerations. Japan had long planned to invade northern China. Japan increased the size of its North China Garrison Army in 1936. Japan had been frequently conducting maneuvers before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident broke out. Numerous rumors about an imminent clash had been circulating before July 7th.

One widely-accepted thesis is the one tendered by Taiwan historian Ch’en Tsai-chün 陳在俊. Ch’en holds that Shigekawa Hidekazu 茂川英和 perpetrated the incident.42 Shigekawa promoted Special Service Agency activities in the Peking-Tientsin area at the time, and paid CCP-affiliated Chinese students to fire the shot. Ch’en bases his thesis on a statement by Tanaka Ryūkichi 田中隆吉 in Sabakareru rekishi: Haisen hiwa 載かれる歴史：敗戦秘話 [History on Trial: Secrets about the Lost War] (Shinpōsha, 1948). However, Shigekawa later denied this allegation—though he did admit that he “had subordinates use fireworks to help widen the conflict.”43 Tanaka did not mention Shigekawa in this context when testifying to prosecutors at the Tokyo War Crimes Trials in June 1946.44 Hence this “Shigekawa thesis” seems to need reexamination.

In any case, Chinese historians assume that modern Japanese continental policies of expansion “inevitably produced” the string of incidents that began in September 1931, continued with the North China undeclared war of 1935, and led to the July 1937 clash at

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40 See the very detailed analysis by Yasui Sankichi, “Rokōkyō jiken no imeiji: Chūgoku no baai, Nihon no baai” 長崎橋事件のイメージ：日本の場合、日本の場合 Nihon shi kenkyū 日本史研究 (April 1994).


42 Yasui Sankichi, “Rokōkyō jiken no imeiji.”

43 See Hata Ikuhiko 泰郁彦, Nit-Chū sensō shi 日中戦争史 (Hara shobō, 1979), p. 209, for the denial; see Yasui, ibid., for the quotation about spreading the conflict once it had broken out.

44 Tanaka replied that Marco Polo Bridge, unlike the Mukden (September 18th) Incident, owed nothing to Japanese army planning. As well, he said, according to rumors at the time, “Chinese students associated with the CCP” fired the first shot which set off the incident. However, he insisted that this was just a rumor, not a fact. Thus, he contradicted the statement he would make in Sabakareru rekishi. In his 1946 testimony during the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, he claimed: “My specialty was to investigate incidents like that, and I never failed to get to the bottom of them—except for this one.” See Awaya Kentarō 當麻懸太郎, Adachi Hiroaki 安田宏昭, and Kobayashi Morohiro 小林元裕, eds., Tōkyō saiban shiryō: Tanaka Ryūkichi jimmon chōsho 東京裁判資料：田中隆吉尋問調書 (Ōsuki shoten, 1994), p. 226.
Marco Polo Bridge. Thus, they conclude, the “first shot” fired there had to come from or be instigated by the Japanese side.

As Yasui Sankichi has noted, “diverging Sino-Japanese views of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident apparently stem from a basically dissimilar understanding of modern Sino-Japanese relations that lies at an ethnic or national level.” Still, I believe such differences can only be overcome by continued efforts to uncover new source materials, and I hope that the sixtieth anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident will serve to spur that endeavor.

Many Chinese studies of the post-Marco Polo Bridge period, when the two nations were in a full-scale war, are devoted to Japanese atrocities such as that committed at Nanking. In recent years, there have been studies on poison gas, bacteriological warfare, opium and narcotics operations, and “comfort women” as employed by the Japanese army. In 1989, Wu T’ien-wei 吳天威, Hu Hua-ling 胡華玲, and Hsü Chieh-lin 許介麟 in Taipei established the Society to Study Japan’s Aggression Against China; and in 1990, they went about pursuing the problem of Japanese war crimes by founding the journal Jih-pen ch’in-Hua yen-chiu 日本侵華研究 [Studies in Japanese Aggression Against China].

Public opinion around the world is on the rise in favor of compensating those left scarred by the Japanese army—such as former “comfort women” and victims of other atrocities. And this factor underscores the need for studies of that sort. But in reality, many studies in both China and Japan are marred by governments who place state interests above scholarship. Still we should note the important work by Ch’ih Ching-te and Meng Kuo-hsiang on Chinese losses and damages. Finally, there are intriguing Chinese studies of Japanese army policies in occupied areas and of the “peace efforts” made by the two nations.

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45 Yasui Sankichi, “Rokokyö jiken no imeiji.”
48 On the occupied areas, see Hsing Han-san 東漢三, Jih-wei t’ung-chih Ho-nan chien-wen-lu 日僑統治河南見聞錄 (Ho-nan ta-hsiü ch’u-pan-she, 1986); Chung-kuo jen-min cheng-chih-hsieh-shang-hui-i Pei-ching-shih wei-yüan-hui wen-shih tzu-liao yen-chiu wei-yüan-hui 中國人民政治協商會議北京市委員會文史資料研究委員會, eds., Jih-wei t’ung-chih hsia ti
Concluding Remarks

From this brief overview of Chinese scholarship since the 1980s, we can see that, although historians in China and Japan have much in common, they base their views of the Fifteen-(or Fourteen-)Year War on sharply different historiographic assumptions. That is, Chinese historians overwhelmingly stress inevitability in history. They see modern Japanese continental expansion leading relentlessly to the September 18th Incident, to the North China Incident, to the July 7th Incident, and to Japan’s defeat; and they virtually ignore any other possible choices along the way that might have been, but were not, explored.

Their emphasis on historical inevitability cannot be fully explained by attributing it to political ideology; instead, it must also be understood in relation to nationalism. The reason that Chinese historians to this very day deem the “Tanaka Memorial” to be of vital importance is that it precisely fits the view of history derived from their national consciousness. The passing of half a century has relegated many—though by no means all—memories to the realm of history. But the scars left on those who have suffered imperialist aggression in their recent past do not soon disappear, and historical views premised on national feeling do not soon change.

Supplement

I wish to make a few additional observations about Chinese books, articles, and source materials published in 1995 after my above article appeared in print in Japan.

In 1995, many events were planned on the mainland to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan. These were carried out as semi-official state events in accordance with policies set down by the Communist Party and Government. It is said that over 400 books were published during this year on the War of Resistance; and in fact, most of these were presented to the people for use in “patriotic education.” However, many of these books lack footnotes or references and are

little more than historical novels. Unfortunately, there were no scholarly works among these works that present new historical views.

Amid this intellectual atmosphere, it is normal to expect that trends in Chinese studies of contemporary Japanese history should concentrate on: 1) reconfirming that Japanese aggression in China led to Japan’s defeat, and 2) clarifying the war crimes that prove that aggression. On war crimes, there is *Jih-chün ch’in-Hua tsui-hsing chi-shih* (1931-1945) 日軍侵華非行紀實 (Chung-kung-tang shih ch’u-pan-she), edited by the Scientific Research Management Division of the Historical Research Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, which introduces representative incidents of massacres, biological and germ warfare, slave labor, economic plunder, and cultural depredations. As well, there are: Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, ed., *Hsüeh-cheng: Ch’in-Hua Jih-chün pao-hsing chi-shih jih-chih* 血証：侵華日軍暴行紀實日誌 (Ch’eng-tu ch’u-pan-she) which lists Japanese army criminal acts in chronological order; the four-volume *Jih-chün ch’in-Hua pao-hsing shih-lu* 日軍侵華暴行實錄, ed. by the Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Pei-ching ch’u-pan-she) which organizes documents by provinces; and the three-volume *Jih-chün pao-hsing shih-lu* 日軍暴行錄, ed. Sun Yu-líng 孫玉玲 et al. (Chung-kuo ta-pei-k’o ch’üan-shu ch’u-pan-she). This last work is part of the *Tung-pei lun-hsien shih-ssu-nien shih ts’ung-shu* 東北淪陷十四年史叢書, mentioned above in my article; its three volumes list sources incident-by-incident for the provinces of Kirin, Heilungkiang, and Liaoning. The volume for Heilungkiang in particular goes far beyond simply presenting sources; it provides detailed analyses of the incidents themselves.

Su Ch’ung-min, Li Tso-ch’tian 李作權, and Chiang Pi-huo 蒋璧浩, eds., *Lao-kung ti hsüeh yü lei* 勞工的血與泪 (Chung-kuo ta-pei-k’o ch’üan-shu ch’u-pan-she) is extremely important especially because up to now there have been no comprehensive accounts of Japanese procurement of Chinese slave labor or Japanese controls on labor. This volume, too, is part of *Tung-pei lun-hsien shih-ssu-nien shih ts’ung-shu*, and it is a detailed quantitative study of the procurement of slave labor and controls in Manchuria. On slave laborers transported from north China to Manchukuo, see the figures in Chiu Chih-fen 劉之芬, “Jih-pen ch’iang-lüeh Hua-pei lao-kung jen-shu k’ao” 日本強撫華北勞工人數考, *K’ang-Jih chan-cheng yen-chiu* 4 (1995).

Next, I would like to mention the work of Pu P’ing 步平 on Japanese poison gas operations which has not been published in China but in Japan as translated by Yamabe Yúkiko 山邉悠子 et al., *Nihon no Chūgoku shinryaku to doku gasu heiki* 日本の中国侵略と毒ガス兵器 (Akashi shoten). There is no single comprehensive treatment of this topic even in Japanese. So, Pu’s empirical study using sources from both the victimized Chinese and victimizing Japanese sides is of immense value.

Regardless of whatever position the Chinese government adopts or continues to adopt, research on topics such as these cannot help but play a role in heightening demands made of Japan for postwar compensation.

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As well, I should note research on Manchukuo. The three-volume *K'u-nan yü tou-cheng: shih-ssu-nien* .best difficulties and contradictions: 14 years (Chung-kuo ta-pai-k'o ch'üan-shu ch'u-par-she), edited by Chao Tung-hui 趙 冬 昧 et al., should be thought of as the general introduction to *Tung-pei lun-hsien shih-ssu-nien*. It makes full use of recently published research and source materials. Hsieh Hsiieh-shih, one of the main authors of *Wei Man-chou-kuo shih*, has now written *Wei Man-chou-kuo shih hsin-pien* 假滿洲國 史新編 (Jen-min ch'u-par-she). He began this new work from the premise that, given the advances in historical research since the reform and liberalization of recent years, the historiographic value of *Wei Man-chou-kuo shih* is at an end. Earlier, Hsieh had also written *Li-shih ti tu-liu: Wei-Man ch'eng-chüan hsing-wang* 歷史的毒瘤: 假滿政權興亡 (Kuang-hsi shih-fan ts-hsieh ch'u-par-she). But in *Wei Man-chou-kuo shih hsin-pien*, he used even more Japanese sources and recent studies to produce this painstaking masterpiece. Hsieh’s book and the aforementioned three-volume *K'u-nan yü tou-cheng: shih-ssu-nien* will set the standard for Manchuria studies for some time to come.

As for publication of document sources, four new volumes have been added to the aforementioned *Jih-pen ti-kuo-chu-i ch'in-Hua tang-an tzu-liao hsia-pien*, edited by the Central Party Archives among others: *Hua-pei li-tzu ta-ch'an an* 華北歷次大災案, *Nan-ching ta 'u-sha* 南京大屠殺, *Jih-Wang ti ch'ing-hsiang* 日汪的清倉, and *Ho-pen Ta-iso yü Jih-chüan Shan-hsi 'ts'an-liu* 河本大作與日軍山西殘留. We should also note in the series *Chung-kuo k'ang-Jih chan-cheng shih ts'ung-shu* 中國抗日戰爭史叢書, which began in 1995. *Jih-pen tui Hua-pei ching-chi ti liieh-tuo ho t'ung-chih* 日本對華北經濟的掠奪和統制 (Pei-ching ch'u-par-she), edited by the Research Group on the History of China’s War Against Japan and the Memorial Office of the Chinese People’s War Against Japan. It collects materials concerned with economic matters in the areas under Japanese military occupation following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.

Finally, on Taiwan, the Committee on Party History of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang has published a nine-volume work, *Chung-Jih wai-chiao shih-liao ts'ung-shu* 中日外交史料叢書, edited by the Research Group on Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China. This is not a new publication, but was published between 1964 and 1967 in a limited edition distributed to a small number of institutions and researchers. We now welcome its reissue so that the general public can easily use its many sources.

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