

Guiding Hand: Hattori Unokichi in Beijing¹

Paula Harrell

My discussion of Hattori Unokichi 服部宇之吉, one of Tokyo University's leading Sinologists, is part of a larger study on Japanese advisors in China in the two decades after the first Sino-Japanese War. In terms of the collaboration-conflict dichotomy, this period of advisory assistance is a unique instance of Chinese collaborating with Japanese, not in the pejorative sense of consorting with the enemy but in the sense of cooperating or working jointly.

In the years after 1895, the Chinese central and provincial governments hired hundreds of Japanese in a range of fields to advise them on institutional and technical matters. Two-thirds of these advisors, who lived and worked in China often for some years, were general educators and teachers. Others were in legal, military, and technical fields, including finance and railway building. The high point of Japanese advisory assistance was probably 1909 when official figures show 550 Japanese experts at various posts in China. From the vantage point of 1909 and to some extent even to 1915, one could characterize the Sino-Japanese relationship as balanced and constructive, based on mutual self-interest. Collaboration appeared to be workable. The lurking, inevitable question, then, is how to reconcile this period of normal bilateral relations with the years of escalating tensions and violent conflict that followed. Why, at the end of the day, was there no effective Japanese opposition to expansionist policies on the mainland?

These are big questions. I am trying to come to some understanding of the shift from collaboration to conflict by examining the China careers of about ten particularly interesting Japanese advisors, including Hattori Unokichi. In Hattori's case, China--Beijing in particular--figured in his life in three different periods. He was first in Beijing from 1899-1900, officially designated a *ryūgakusei* 留学生 (overseas student), though he was in fact an assistant professor at Tokyo Imperial University. His second stay in Beijing was from 1902 to 1909 when he served as educational advisor to the central government. Finally, Hattori made several official visits to China in the 1920s as a senior scholar involved in bilateral efforts to promote research projects in the sciences and humanities. In his career at Tokyo University, he taught courses on Confucian thought and Chinese history and helped establish the university's first China research center. China was central to his life.

But it was not an exclusive focus. Like most of his generation, Hattori was essentially cosmopolitan in his orientation. Throughout his life, the West was also a constant reference point intellectually and a part of his lived experience. He studied at the University of Berlin; he even taught for a year at Harvard. In the sense that his

¹ This paper is drawn from a draft chapter of a forthcoming book tentatively entitled, *Asia for the Asians: Japanese Advisors in China, 1895-1915*. An earlier version was given as a talk for the March 1998 Association for Asian Studies panel entitled "Humanizing Sino-Japanese Relations: Collaboration and Conflict Reconsidered."

relationship with China *and* the West helped define his identity as a Japanese, Hattori, who was born in 1867, was very much a product of the early Meiji period.

After graduating from Tokyo University in 1890, Hattori spent a few years as a Ministry of Education bureaucrat and a few years teaching, which he much preferred. In 1899, in what turned out to be a defining moment in his career, Hattori received one of the Ministry of Education's coveted study abroad assignments, a year in China followed by three in Germany. He started off for Beijing in October 1899 eager to study China's culture firsthand and meet with scholars in his field.

But the real China proved a rude awakening. As soon as he arrived in Beijing, Japan's top diplomatic representative told him: "You've really arrived at a terrible time. Prominent Chinese are avoiding contacts with foreigners. I can introduce you to people and you can probably meet with them, but chances are they'll be annoyed and in the end you won't be able to make close contacts."² He was right. After the failure of the reform initiative the year before, official China was less receptive to foreign visitors. The Chinese scholars Hattori contacted made excuses not to see him, either out of genuine antipathy to foreigners or simply fearful of being labeled pro-foreign.

Being snubbed by an anti-foreign elite was a setback. But a far more serious problem was emerging for Hattori and the other foreign residents of Beijing in early 1900: that was the growing threat to their personal safety coming from an anti-foreign element at the lower end of the social scale, the Boxers. Though the Boxers initially directed their attacks against Christian missionaries and their converts, as the movement gathered force and broke out of its base in Shandong province, it became indiscriminately anti-foreign. By the time Boxer gangs infiltrated the Beijing-Tianjin area in the spring of 1900, Japanese as well as Westerners were targets of intimidation. As they traveled about the city, Hattori and his friends were bullied by ruffians and pelted with roof tiles. From his lodging house, Hattori could hear Boxers yelling: "Crush the foreigners."³ The message Hattori was getting after eight months in China was that there was no special category of Asian friends in the eyes of most Chinese; he was as much a *yangren* 洋人 (foreigner) as any Westerner--and foreigners were generally disliked.

In mid-June, Beijing erupted in mob violence as Boxers and Chinese provincial troops attacked Chinese Christian converts and members of the foreign community. After the government declared war on the powers, foreigners took refuge in the legation quarter, a 200-acre area east of Tiananmen Square, where they were under siege for nine weeks. What was, in effect, the modern world's first hostage crisis, riveted international attention on Beijing and the actions of the central government. The 900 foreigners, including 60 Japanese, who were under fire in the legation quarter were a high profile group of top diplomats, longtime missionaries, teachers, and journalists.

The outcome of the "summer's madness" as the foreigners called the Boxer siege is well known. The legation defenders were rescued in mid-August by an international force of about 20,000 men, including 8,000 Japanese. But for those under constant fire as the weeks dragged on from June through July, it was a terrifying and unimaginable

² Tô-A Dôbunkai 東亜同文会, comp., *Zoku Tai-Shi kaikoroku* 続対支回顧録 (Supplement to Memoirs About China) (Tokyo: Hara shobô, 1941), p. 745.

³ Shiba Gorô 紫五郎, *Pekin rôjô* 北京籠城 (Siege of Peking) and Hattori Unokichi, *Pekin rôjô nikki* 北京籠城日記 (Diary of the Siege of Peking) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1965), pp. 201-04.

experience, particularly to someone like Hattori who was in Beijing not as a military attaché or a journalist but to further his scholarship on China. In his diary account, he described a city ablaze with fires set by the Boxers, heartrending screams for help from the dying, day after day of attack and counterattack, and living with the terrible uncertainty as to whether everyone in the foreign community would be massacred by the Chinese.

When the siege began, Hattori was struck by the irony of Japan's role as legation defender. "I would call it a very strange turn of events," he said, "that our non-Christian nation has been sucked into the center of a disturbance in which Christianity is the issue, and that we have found ourselves the protectors of Christian converts."⁴ By the end of the siege he came to share a spirit of unity with the other besieged foreigners. What left a lasting impression on him was the disaster the Chinese had brought upon themselves by their violent anti-foreignism. In the forefront of his mind as he left Beijing in September of 1900 were images of the city in ruins and of brutalities the Boxers had visited upon their fellow Chinese. Summing up his Boxer experience later, he wrote: "Making a show of anti-foreign thought is dangerous for East Asia as a whole. Japan must *guide* the Chinese so they don't make this mistake in the future."⁵

In the preface to his diary, which he published as soon as he got back to Japan, Hattori tried to explain to his readers the Chinese mindset that bred anti-foreign thought. It was a harsh review. He characterized Chinese generally as being so materialistic, so profit-driven in their thinking, that they were utterly incapable of understanding people like the Christian missionaries whose work in China was motivated by idealism rather than personal gain. As he put it, "when the Chinese who do not understand doing favors for others without recompense, see the missionaries striving to raise large sums for hospital construction, to provide free medical care, and to support foster care for infants, they inevitably find it suspect." The fact that Chinese would give credence to rumors of missionary atrocities--that they murdered infants and used their organs in drug manufacture, for example--was in Hattori's view clear evidence of the scientific backwardness of the Chinese. This deficiency he attributed to intellectual arrogance. Most educated Chinese, he said, "satisfy themselves that science in the Western sense all originates from China, in works like the *Book of Changes* and Mo Zi's writings.... With this kind of mindset, the Chinese thus blindly take themselves as the measure of all things; they are unaware of *my* weaknesses and *his* strengths. The concept of taking the self as insufficient and trying to learn from others is weak." In fact, Hattori said, the Chinese were inherently racist, treating all outsiders as culturally inferior. He added that taking this attitude towards the Europeans with their indisputably superior technology was a losing proposition.⁶

Hattori was in Japan less than three months when he began packing his bags for a study trip to Germany. He was settling into a schedule of working with German China scholars at the University of Berlin when the real China was on the horizon again. In June

⁴ Hattori, *Pekin rôjô nikki*, p. 159.

⁵ Ono Kazuko 小野和子, "Shimoda Utako to Hattori Unokichi" 下田歌子と服部宇之吉 (Shimoda Utako and Hattori Unokichi), in *Kindai Nihon to Chûgoku* 近代日本と中国 (Modern China and Japan), ed. Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好 and Hashikawa Bunzô 橋川文三 (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1974), p. 214.

⁶ Hattori, *Pekin rôjô nikki*, pp. 120-24.

1902, he received a cable from Japan's Ministry of Education. The Chinese government wanted to recruit a Japanese educator to head a new teacher training division at Beijing University. Was he interested? Hattori replied in the affirmative--it was a good job with a good salary. In mid-July, he started the month-long trip back to Tokyo via Paris, London, New York, and Seattle. In early September, Hattori, aged 35 and recently made a full professor at Tokyo University, departed for Beijing, his home for the next six years.⁷

This was a different Beijing from what he had encountered three years before. It was a city diminished, the ruins from the siege still much visible. It was a city under foreign occupation. Buildup of security at the legations and an increased foreign troop presence in China--by the end of 1900, 45,000 foreign troops were in North China--were sanctioned by the terms of the Boxer Protocol, which also saddled China with a \$330 million indemnity. Along with imposing punitive measures, the international community was successful in pressuring China's leadership to endorse fundamental institutional reforms using foreign models. The centerpiece of the new policy was the educational development program, which among other things called for establishing a nationwide system of public schools. All of this was in the works when Hattori, just after his arrival, signed a contract with China's Ministry of Education to help build a teacher training program at Beijing University.

Beijing University had officially opened in the spring of 1899, with some 400 students and 25 faculty members, seven of them foreigners. A year later, the new institution fell victim to the Boxer turmoil. The Boxers murdered a British faculty member, and the central government executed a top Chinese administrator as a foreign sympathizer. The university's head professor, W. A. P. Martin, a veteran of nearly 50 years of missionary work in China, spent the summer under fire in the legations. Then, after the siege, Russian and German troops vandalized the university's buildings and equipment.⁸

In embarking on a new program of university development, China's new Minister of Education, Zhang Baixi 張百熙, invited Japanese influence. He abruptly dismissed the Westerners on the original Beijing University faculty and hired nine new professors, five of them Japanese, including Hattori.

Zhang's moves were smart politics. Starting with a new roster of teachers made it more likely that Zhang as the new Minister could control the direction of educational development. Getting rid of Martin, the old missionary, and bringing in professionally-trained Japanese made educational restructuring more palatable to politicians with anti-

⁷ *Hattori Sensei koki shukuga kinen ronbunshû* 服部先生古希祝賀記念論文集 (A Commemorative Volume of Essays in Celebration of Professor Hattori's 70th Birthday) (Tokyo: Fuzanbô, 1936), pp. 15-16. Ôtsuka Yutaka 大塚豊, "Chûgoku kindai kôtô shihan kyôiku no hôga to Hattori Unokichi" 中国近代高等師範教育の萌芽と服部宇之吉 (The Beginnings of Modern Higher Normal Education in China and Hattori Unokichi), in *Kokuritsu kyôiku kenkyûjo kiyô* 国立教育研究所紀要 115 (March 1988), pp. 52-53.

⁸ Ôtsuka, p. 49; Nakayama Yasuaki 中山泰昌, ed., *Shinbun shûsei Meiji hennenshi* 新聞集成明治編年史 (Meiji History through Newspapers) (Tokyo: Zaisei keizai gakkai, 1936), vol. 10, p. 348; Hattori, *Pekin rôjô nikki*, p. 135; Xiao Chaoran 蕭超然, *Beijing daxue xiaoshi 1898-1949* 北京大學校史 1898-1949 (A History of Beijing University, 1898-1949) (Shanghai: Education Press, 1988). pp. 10-11.

Western views, who feared that Europeans and Americans would dominate the reform process. There were reasons for hiring Japanese other than the desire to blunt Western--particularly missionary--influence. Most important, the Japanese had recent experience in dealing, apparently successfully, with the same dilemma facing the Chinese: how to integrate Asian values and Western technology in building a system of schools from the ground up. Second, for a Chinese government burdened with reparations payments, hiring Japanese teachers and advisors was fiscally appealing in that salaries and transport costs were lower than for their European and American counterparts. Finally, prominent Japanese were actively competing with Westerners to be invited to fill the high visibility, potentially influential teaching positions at China's new university.

Hattori apparently had a free hand in setting up the new teacher training division. There was nothing in his contract in the way of a job description nor did he report meeting with Chinese educators to discuss the specifics of his assignment. By Hattori's own account, Minister Zhang and his staff "knew nothing whatever about the new education" and were content to let Hattori set the agenda.⁹

Hattori had a challenging job and a heavy workload. In addition to organizing the four-year teacher training program and supervising staff, he had to prepare all the teaching materials for the courses he himself offered in education, psychology, and logic. This was a pioneering task. Discussion of new concepts sometimes left Hattori's listeners confused and upset as happened to governor-general Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 when he decided to sit in on one of Hattori's psychology classes. The topic for the day was the function of memory and Hattori explained to the group that as one got older one's memory of events from childhood grew sharper but one's ability to remember recent events was apt to be fuzzy. The eminent governor-general, who was around 70 at the time, took this as a personal insult, stomped angrily out of the room, and threatened to strike the course from the curriculum.¹⁰

Overall, Hattori's hard work paid off. The first graduating class of 106 emerged in 1907 and another 206 graduated in 1908--not a large number but an important step, particularly since all graduates, as recipients of a four-year subsidized education, were required to return to their home provinces to serve as teachers and administrators. Hattori's contribution to getting teacher education launched in China was acknowledged some years later by the president of Beijing Normal University, who had worked with Hattori in the early days and praised his "dedicated service" during this initial phase.¹¹

But Hattori was less successful in dealing with the internal politics of the Education Ministry bureaucracy. In the fall of 1906 when his contract was up for annual review, he tried through diplomatic channels to convince the Chinese government to expand his scope of influence by making him an advisor not simply to Beijing University but to the Education Ministry as a whole. The timing seemed reasonable. By 1906, the year after Japan's victory in the war with Russia, Sino-Japanese exchanges were at an all-time high. Nearly 10,000 Chinese students were in Japan. China had hired hundreds of Japanese advisors and teachers to work in China. In China's provinces, it had become

⁹ *Hattori kinen ronbunshū*, p. 18.

¹⁰ Ôtsuka, pp. 55-58.

¹¹ Ôtsuka, pp. 60-61; *Jiaoyu zongkan* 教育總刊 5.2 (1924), p. 1.

standard practice to send education officials on study tours to Japan. But the Chinese turned Hattori down, citing their reluctance to exceed the terms of his original contract.¹²

Again, in 1908, when the government announced its decision to establish a teachers college independent of Beijing University, Hattori pushed a proposal to staff the new college with Japanese. The Chinese government was initially receptive, then withdrew support, claiming it was unable to finance the salaries of foreign teachers. Hattori and his six colleagues in the teacher training division returned to Japan in January 1909. In an article in *Chûô kôron* 中央公論 shortly after his return, Hattori suggested that the Japanese government was remiss in not funding China education projects at a level that would allow Japan to compete with the Western Yale-in-China types of efforts. We have become mere bystanders, he warned, while the Europeans and Americans build schools all over China and aggressively promote sales of educational materials and equipment.¹³

Already by February 1909 Hattori had made the shift from teaching Chinese youth the rudiments of psychology and logic to lecturing Tokyo University students on Chinese philosophy and history. Now in his forties, he had on his resume a decade of China experience, not simply as an academic and an observer of the China scene, but as a participant in China's post-Boxer reform experiment. He represented a new breed of Japanese China expert. His research and teaching about China's past were grounded in his firsthand knowledge of the real, working China just as his everyday, sometimes frustrating, encounters with Chinese bureaucrats had been tempered by his deep interest in Chinese culture.

Hattori returned home ambivalent about China's long-term development prospects. On the one hand, he felt that some of China's top leaders were showing a genuine commitment to reform. On the other, he complained that the government was not utilizing its newly trained people and that the pace of change was too slow.

What was slowing down the reform process, Hattori believed, was a fundamental Chinese close-mindedness to outside ideas, a smug certainty that anything worthy in human culture had a made-in-China label on it. He had made this point earlier in his analysis of the Boxers and was to return to it again and again in his writings on China after 1909. But he saw China's difficulties as more than a problem of mindset. He recognized that even Chinese who supported reform in the best of faith faced enormous obstacles in communication. He cited the example of the new Chinese criminal code drafted at the central government level with Japanese advisory help and distributed to local offices in 1906. Enforcing the code was difficult, not because those in charge were unwilling, but because they were confused by Japanese versions of Western legal terms adopted in the absence of Chinese equivalents. In other words, while a common language based on Japanese neologisms had the potential to solidify Chinese and Japanese cultural ties,

¹² Cable from Minister to China Hayashi Gonsuke to Foreign Minister Hayashi Tadasu, confidential document no. 9 (February 16, 1907), in *Gaikô shiryôkan* 外交史料館 (Foreign Ministry Archives).

¹³ *Hattori kinen ronbunshû*, p. 19; *Beijing shifan daxue xiaoshi* 北京師範大學教史 (A History of Beijing Normal College) (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 1984), pp. 16-20; Japanese Foreign Ministry Archives, Consul Ijûin Hikokichi to Foreign Minister Komura Jutarô (December 31, 1908); *Chûô kôron* 24 (1909), pp. 36-42.

Hattori questioned whether the Chinese really understood the new concepts being introduced and the lessons they could learn from Japan's development experience. After all, he said, referring to language barriers among China's provinces, "the Chinese don't even understand each other, much less have a true view of Japan."¹⁴

China's failure to understand the real Japan was a regret Hattori voiced again and again. He was especially concerned about the younger generation studying in Japan. Chinese students must stop viewing Japan, he claimed, as nothing more than a handy source of Western technology. They needed to examine Japanese society from within, asking what unique factors accounted for Japan's successful growth. The Japanese had a responsibility here, too, he said, to ensure that Chinese youth were well-treated and got more from their Japan experience than a love of Japanese pop culture. Hattori was critical as well of some of his Japanese compatriots working in China, whose arrogance had engendered distrust of Japan among Chinese. But he felt such distrust was unwarranted. In his university lectures for 1914, he dismissed Chinese fears that Japan's recent arms buildup was directed at China. Chinese suspicions, he said, only showed how little they understood the Japanese.¹⁵

At Harvard, where he taught during the academic year 1915-1916, Hattori had a chance to talk about the Japan side of things. Harvard provided a new forum for Hattori's increasingly influential view that Japan was the originator of a revitalized Confucian ethic, which had helped propel Japan to economic success and political strength. Confucianism in its Japanese version, he said, meant getting back to the real meaning of the ideals of humanity, responsibility, and dedication to learning, while their Chinese context had become a sham, nice sounding rhetoric designed to turn attention from corruption and disorder.¹⁶

Ironically, the Boxer events, the source of Hattori's conviction that China needed outside assistance, played a role in his final phase of working with the Chinese. In 1923, the Japanese government decided to apply the unpaid portion of the Boxer indemnity to Sino-Japanese cultural projects. Hattori was one of a handful of senior academics selected by the government to oversee project preparation.

This was the reason for Hattori's trip to China in 1924, his first visit since his departure in 1909. As Hattori recalled it, he was welcomed everywhere he went by his former students at Beijing University, many now in high positions. He spent twenty days in Beijing working with Chinese academics on plans to establish a humanities institute and a library using remitted Boxer funds. The only jarring note came in a speech made by one of his oldest Chinese friends, now president of Beijing Normal, who warned that some Chinese were uneasy about Japan's handling of the new, purportedly joint, cultural program.

¹⁴ Hattori Unokichi, *Shina kenkyū* 支那研究 (Studies of China) (Tokyo: Kyōbunsha, 1926), pp. 300-02; Hattori Unokichi, *Shina no kokuminsei to shisō* 支那の国民性と思想 (The National Character and Thought of China) (Tokyo, 1926), pp. 124-25.

¹⁵ Hattori, *Shina kenkyū*, pp. 302, 306-07, 315; *Chūō kōron*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁶ *Kokuminsei to shisō*, p. 132, passim. At Harvard, Hattori taught "Confucian Ethics and Japanese Life," "Confucius, his Life and Teachings," and "Schools of Confucian Thought in Japan." (Harvard University Catalogue, 1915-16, HV 20.413). For the exchange of letters on Hattori's contract, see President A. Lawrence Lowell's papers, UAI 5.160, folder 71.

Indeed, there was considerable Chinese opposition to the proposed program. To many Chinese intellectuals, Japan's insistence on total control of funds sounded suspiciously like cultural imperialism, not a commitment to bilateral cooperation. Despite such objections, the Chinese government in 1925 authorized formation of a binational advisory committee to finalize plans for the institute in Beijing and a joint research institute in the natural sciences to be located in Shanghai. Hattori made two additional trips to China, in 1925 and 1927. It took all of his persuasive powers to keep the fractious committee together and move forward with project planning.

But power politics intervened. In the spring of 1928, in protest over Japan's dispatch of troops to Shandong (the Jinan Incident), all of the Chinese members of the binational advisory committee resigned, bringing official support for joint projects to an abrupt end. Deeply disappointed at the collapse of his efforts, Hattori faulted not his Japanese compatriots for their aggressive acts but his Chinese colleagues on the committee for their failure to separate politics and culture. In his mind, no doubt, were sentiments he had expressed earlier, after his six-year stint in Beijing trying to "guide" the Chinese. "I lived for a fairly long time in China and came into contact with all sorts of people, but at a certain point I couldn't help but feel that there were obstacles to proceeding further." Now in his sixties, Hattori turned his organizational energies to establishing a China research center--a predecessor of the present Tôyô bunka kenkyûjo 東洋文化研究所 --at Tokyo University.¹⁷

Hattori thought he had the prescription for a "disordered" China: Japanese assistance to educational development and to projects in science and the humanities that, in his words, "should transcend politics." He had only mixed success here, but in the process he helped fix in the Japanese public mind the logic of Japanese guidance--a foundation, perhaps, for what Professor Marius Jansen in his discussion of the 21 Demands has termed "guidance by force." In the end Hattori chose to emphasize the positive in his encounter with China. In an autobiographical account written in 1936, he gave little space to his Boxer ordeal and highlighted his 1924 trip to China as a series of happy reunions with Chinese friends. Sadly, by the time he died three years later, in 1939, power politics had taken precedence over culture, and Japan and China were at war.

¹⁷ *Jiaoyu zongkan*, p. 2; Yamane Yukio 山根幸夫, *Kindai Chûgoku no naka no Nihonjin* 近代中国と日本人 (Tokyo: Kenbun shuppansha), pp. 26-32; *Shina kenkyû*, pp. 308-09; Sophia Lee, "The Foreign Ministry's Cultural Agenda for China: The Boxer Indemnity," in *The Japanese Informal Empire in China*, ed. Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 277-83.