

A Critical Review of Japanese Scholarship on Overseas Chinese in Modern Japan

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The study of overseas Chinese (*Kakyô/Kajin kenkyû* 華僑・華人研究) has experienced a boom in the 1980s and 1990s in Japan. The majority of studies focus on the business networks among overseas Chinese merchants (*Kashô* 華商) in Asia. The study of overseas Chinese in Japan is only a minor subfield. Nevertheless, this is an area of great importance and potential in Sino-Japanese studies and thus deserves our close attention. It has become a fast-growing field in Japanese scholarship in Sino-Japanese studies. During the past few decades, many Japanese books and articles on overseas Chinese in modern Japan have been published. Unfortunately, they are mostly unknown outside Japan, as this field has drawn little scholarly attention in the West, even among scholars of Sino-Japanese studies. This review article aims to introduce this important but neglected research area to Western readers by providing a historical overview, outlining important study groups, scholars, and their works, and offering some thoughts on the characteristics and prospects for the field. The scope of this article is limited to works published in the postwar period.

Historical Overview

The origins of the study of overseas Chinese in Asia can be traced to the 1930s and 1940s, when the Japanese government promoted such study for political, economic, and military reasons. Government agencies, such as the South Manchurian Railway Company (Mantetsu 滿鉄, for short), the Foreign Ministry, the Government-General of Taiwan (Taiwan sôtokufu 台灣總督府), and the Planning Institute (Kikakuin 企画院), published a large number of books and reports on the economic and social life of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. Representative works were the *Nanyô Kakyô sôsho* 南洋華僑叢書 (Series on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, six volumes) published by the South Manchurian Railway Company between 1939 and 1941. In contrast, due to its lack of practical value, both the prewar government and academia ignored the study of overseas Chinese in Japan.

The study of overseas Chinese in Asia witnessed a dramatic change in early postwar Japan. Due to the decline of Japanese influence in Southeast Asia and the temporary rise of the economic power of overseas Chinese in Japan, from the late 1940s to the 1960s, the number of works on overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia declined, while those on overseas Chinese in Japan jumped. The latter reached the same level as the former in research output.

The study of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia during this period was no longer an exciting research field, since many continued the prewar research traditions which were full of biases, misconceptions, and stereotypes. For instance, these studies tended to overemphasize the political and economic strength of overseas Chinese businessmen and the conflict between overseas Chinese and the local populations, giving readers the wrong impression that all overseas Chinese were rich businessmen who exploited the natural and human resources of their nations of residence.

This period did, though, mark the real beginning of the study of overseas Chinese in Japan. The scholarship was rudimentary and can be divided into two major types. The first type of research provided a general review of the history and society of overseas Chinese in modern Japan, and it was largely carried out by individual scholars. The most valuable work in this category was undoubtedly Uchida Naosaku's 内田直作 *Nihon Kakyô shakai no kenkyû* 日本華僑社会の研究 (A Study of Overseas Chinese Society in Japan) (Tokyo: Dôbunkan, 1949). The second type of research looked at the economic activities of overseas Chinese in early postwar Japan, investigating the population, occupations, geographical location, and businesses of the overseas Chinese in Japan of the postwar period. In particular, successful stories of "new overseas Chinese" (*shin Kakyô* 新華僑)--Taiwanese who regained their Chinese nationality and made a living in Japan after the war--were examined closely. This research was supported by the government. During the Occupation period, the government published three reports on this new economic force. Some individual scholars also did research on it. For instance, Uchida Naosaku edited the *Ryû-Nichi Kakyô keizai bunseki* 留日華僑經濟分析 (An Analysis of the Economy of Chinese Residents in Japan) (Tokyo: Kawade shobô, 1950).

Following the economic growth of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and certain Southeast Asian nations from the 1970s, the study of overseas Chinese in Asia has reached new heights from the decade of the 1970s to that of the 1990s. However, the field remains lacking in balance. The study of overseas Chinese business networks in Asia is still overemphasized. Not unlike the prewar period, this research area is supported strongly by the Japanese government and major business companies. The former is represented by the Institute of Developing Economies (Ajia keizai kenkyûjo アジア經濟研究所) and the Japan Foreign Trade Council (Nihon bôeki shinkôkai 日本貿易振興会), whereas the latter is represented by the Mitsubishi, Nomura, and Nikkei Corporations. Under their auspices, many conferences have been organized and many books and papers have been published. Unfortunately, this research area has promoted numerous problematic ideas and perspectives, many of which are rooted in prewar scholarship. For example, like prewar writings, Chinese merchants in Southeast Asia are still viewed as a threat to Japan's national interests and thus are portrayed in a somewhat negative light. Overseas Chinese merchants are portrayed as the "hidden bosses" in Southeast Asia, united in building a "Pan-Chinese economic sphere" (*Kajin keizaiken* 華人經濟圈) to control Asia. The majority of these studies exaggerate the economic strength, ambition, and networking ability of Chinese merchants in Asia. Although Japanese scholars have now shown some progress in calling overseas Chinese in the postwar period "*Kajin*" 華人 (ethnic Chinese) rather than "*Kakyô*" 華僑 (temporary residents from China), they refuse to accept the degree of localization of ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia and emphasize the conflict between the Chinese and the locals.

The study of overseas Chinese in Japan has also made some progress during this period. Although its popularity cannot be compared with that of the study of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, the number of researchers and works has increased tremendously in the 1980s and 1990s.

In general, researchers are relatively young and vigorous. There are four types of researchers. The first are professional scholars who hold academic positions at universities in the Kôbe-Ôsaka, Tokyo-Yokohama, and Nagasaki areas. Because these areas have a tradition of interaction with the Chinese and large Chinese populations, researchers have an advantage in gathering sources and doing fieldwork. They are better connected and many are members of study groups concerned with overseas Chinese in Japan. They study the history and current conditions of Chinese residents in the areas in which they reside. The second are professional researchers who hold academic positions at the universities outside the above-mentioned three areas. They tend to do research on their own. They do not seem to have specific areas of research. The third are amateurs, such as newspaper reporters and writers. Usually their works are less scholarly and have a larger appeal for the general reader. Many write about Chinese restaurants in Chinatown or business networks and practices among Chinese merchants in Japan. The fourth are Chinese residents in Japan, including those both on a permanent and a non-permanent basis. They document the history of their predecessors and sometime even recount their own stories. The following sections examine the development of the study of overseas Chinese in modern Japan in recent years by identifying important research groups, scholars, and works.

Research Groups and Their Works

There are only a few study groups related to overseas Chinese in Japan. Most of them were founded in the last two decades in Kôbe, Nagasaki, and Yokohama. They are small, informal, regional, and financially weak. Their activities mainly depend on two factors: whether there is a senior scholar to take the lead and whether they can acquire some funding for research projects and conferences. Members are usually the former students or friends of the group leader. They are relatively young and many have just started their teaching careers or are finishing their graduate studies. A considerable number of them are Chinese who came to study in Japan and then took up teaching posts at Japanese universities.

In the Kansai area, the Kôbe Kakyô Kajin kenkyûkai 神戸華僑華人研究会 (The Study Group on Chinese Residents and Ethnic Chinese in Kôbe), founded by researchers at Kôbe University in 1987, has been active in research in recent years. It usually consists of about 8-10 researchers from Kôbe. In addition, a number of Japanese and Chinese scholars are affiliated with it as research collaborators. The leader is Yasui Sankichi 安井三吉 of Kôbe University who supervises a group of young and productive scholars from his university, including Guo Fang 過放 and Chen Laixing 陳來幸. Their research papers have been published in books, reports, and periodicals. The majority of their works deal with Chinese residents in Kôbe and Ôsaka in the modern and contemporary periods. For example, they have published some interesting and original research on the rescue efforts by Chinese residents in Kôbe and Ôsaka during the great Hanshin earthquake of 1995 in two internal reports: *Hanshin daishinsai to Kakyô* 阪神大

震災と華僑 (The Hanshin Earthquake and Overseas Chinese, 1996, edited by Yasui, Guo, and Chen); and *Hanshin daishinsai kenkyû 2 阪神大震災研究 2* (The Hanshin Earthquake: Report 2, 1997, by Guo). Nakamura Tetsuo 中村哲夫 has published a valuable piece of research on the ties between Chinese merchants in the Kansai area and the Chinese Revolution of 1911 in his *Ijôkaku ibun: Son Bun to Go Kindo 移情閣遺聞 : 孫文と吳錦堂* (The Tale of the Yiqing Villa: Sun Zhongshan and Wu Jintang) Tokyo: Aunsha, 1990).

In the Kyûshû area, there is a research group specializing in the history of Chinese residents in Nagasaki: the Nagasaki Kakyô kenkyûkai 長崎華僑研究会 (The Study Group on Overseas Chinese in Nagasaki). It was founded in 1984 by a group of Nagasaki scholars to study the Taieigô Documents (*Taieigô kankei monjo 泰益号関係文書*), which record the rise and fall of a major Chinese firm in Nagasaki from the Meiji to the early Shôwa era. The study of the Taieigô Documents is still the major concern of this research group. It has about 30-40 members. Most of them are from Nagasaki and Miyazaki, while a few are from Ôsaka, Kôbe, and Tokyo. The leaders of the group are Ichikawa Nobuchika 市川信愛 of Miyazaki University and Miyata Yasushi 宮田安 of Nagasaki University. From 1985 to 1990, they edited and published six source books on the Taieigô Documents. This is perhaps the most significant contribution of the group. Ichikawa also published a fine study of the social, economic, and cultural life of overseas Chinese in Japan in his *Kakyô shakai keizairon josetsu 華僑社会経済論序説* (An Introduction to the Society and Economy of Overseas Chinese) (Fukuoka: Kyûshû University Press, 1987), but he was less successful in his analysis of education for overseas Chinese in Japan from a comparative perspective in his *Kakyô gakkô kyôiku no kokusaiteki hikaku kenkyû 華僑学校教育の国際的比較研究* (Comparative International Study of Overseas Chinese Schools and Education) (Report for the Toyota Foundation, 1988, 2 volumes).

Important members of the group include Shiba Yoshinobu 司波義信 of International Christian University (formerly of Tokyo University) and his student Yamaoka Yûka 山岡由佳 (formerly Hsu Tzu-fen 許紫芬) of Kôshien University. Shiba provides an excellent historical account of overseas Chinese in Japan and Asia in his *Kakyô 華僑* (Overseas Chinese) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995). He also made an important contribution by editing primary sources on Chinese residents in Hakodate in his "Hakodate Kakyô kankei shiryôshû" 函館華僑関係資料集 (A Collection of Sources on Chinese Residents in Hakodate), *Ôsaka daigaku bungakubu kiyô 大阪大学文学部紀要* (Research Reports in the Faculty of Arts at Ôsaka University) 22 (1982). Yamaoka is one of the most successful scholars in utilizing the Taieigô Documents in research. Her dissertation was written under the tutelage of Shiba, which was later published as the *Nagasaki Kashô keiei no shiteki kenkyû 長崎華商経営の史的研究* (A Historical Study of Management by Chinese Merchants in Nagasaki) (Kyoto: Mineruva shobô, 1995).

In the Kantô area, there are a number of scholars researching overseas Chinese in Yokohama and Tokyo, but there are few research groups to unite them. The Yokohama Kajin kenkyûkai 横浜華人研究会 (Study Group of Overseas Chinese in Yokohama) is a small group founded by scholars at Yokohama University. The leader is Iijima Wataru 飯島渉 of Yokohama University and it now has ten members. Most of them are young

scholars (including many Chinese residents and researchers) from Yokohama and Tokyo. The group is relatively new and informal, and has not yet been very active in research. In December 1997, it stole some limelight by organizing a large-scale international symposium on overseas Chinese in Japan and the networks of the Chinese community. The proceedings of the conference will be published in March 1999. The group is currently working on two projects: the Chinese cemetery in Yokohama and an oral history of overseas Chinese in Yokohama. It appears that the group will play a more active role in unifying scholars in the Kantô area to do research in future.

Individuals and Their Works

While study groups are weak in unifying scholars and promoting collaborative research, many scholars and writers on the subject of overseas Chinese in Japan work on their own. Individual scholars who hold academic positions are quite different from those who belong to study groups. First, many are not historians but social scientists who conduct fieldwork and carry out quantitative studies rather than engage in textual analyses. Second, their concerns are contemporary issues and they seldom write about history. Third, many do not work at universities near Chinatowns and therefore they do not focus their works on Kôbe, Nagasaki, and Yokohama. This may help explain why the works by individual scholars are so different from those by scholars who belong to the study groups.

Some individual scholars pay attention to the contemporary issues about Chinese residents--students, refugees, returning Japanese orphans, temporary workers, gangsters, prostitutes, and illegal immigrants--in Japan. Oka Masumi 岡益巳 of Okayama University and Fukuda Hiromi 福田博巳 of Hiroshima University provide useful empirical data for Chinese students in the 1980s and 1990s in their *Chûgokujin ryûgakusei to Nihon* 中国人留学生と日本 (Chinese Students and Japan) (Tokyo: Hakuteisha, 1995). Mizuno Takeshi 水野武 of Matsuyama University studies the history and current situation of Chinese residents in Japan, focusing on the issue of identity in his *Zai-Nichi Chûgokujin* 在日中国人 (The Chinese in Japan) (Tokyo: Arashi shoten, 1994). There are several books on the life and voices of the Chinese and other Asians in Japan. Interesting case studies can be found in the *Ikebukuro no Ajiakei gaikokujin* 池袋のアジア系外国人 (Asian Foreigners in Ikebukuro) (Tokyo: Mekon, 1991) and the *Shinjuku no Ajiakei gaikokujin* 新宿のアジア系外国人 (Asian Foreigners in Shinjuku) (Tokyo: Mekon, 1993), written by Okuda Michihiro 奥田道大 and Tajima Junko 田嶋淳子, both of Rikkyô University.

Interestingly enough, a significant number of individual writers are not professional researchers. They have produced a considerable number of non-academic but popular works for general readers. In particular, books on the gourmet culture and business practices of Chinese merchants (*Kakyô shôhō* 華僑商法) are popular. The former is represented by Sugawara Kôsuke's 菅原幸助 *Aji no Yokohama Chûkagai* 味の横浜中華街 (Gourmet in Yokohama's Chinatown) (Tokyo: Yûhikaku, 1987), and the latter is represented by Shirakami Yoshio's 白神義夫 *Kakyô shôhō 100 kajô* 華僑商法 100カ条 (100 Methods of Chinese Merchants) (Tokyo: Miki shobô, 1984). Both Sugawara and Shirakami are newspaper reporters.

Of course, some people outside academia have also produced highly scholarly and original works. The late Kôyama Toshio 鴻山俊雄, who wrote the best historical account of Chinese residents in Kôbe and Ôsaka, serves as the best example. Kôyama was an official Chinese interpreter during the war and gathered a sizable quantity data on Chinese residents in Japan. He worked for Hyôgo prefecture after the war and thus gained access to many government documents. He founded his one-man Kakyô mondai kenkyûjo 華僑問題研究所 (The Research Institute on Issues Concerning Overseas Chinese) in 1965 and published several books on the history of Chinese residents in Kôbe. His representative work is *Kôbe Ôsaka no Kakyô* 神戸大阪の華僑 (Overseas Chinese in Kôbe and Ôsaka) (Kôbe: Kakyô mondai kenkyûjo, 1979), which is based on massive primary sources and government documents. Its most original part is the chapter on the history of crime in Kôbe's Chinatown.

Sugawara Kôsuke worked for *Asahi shinbun* 朝日新聞 as a reporter in Yokohama and Tokyo. He wrote an extremely interesting book, *Nihon no Kakyô* 日本の華僑 (Chinese Residents in Japan) (Tokyo: Asahi shinbun, 1979), to introduce different aspects of the social and cultural life of Chinese residents in Japan. The chapter on education is particularly valuable. He also wrote two books dealing with Chinatown in Yokohama and Chinese merchants in Japan, respectively. After his retirement in 1987, he devoted his time to helping the returning Japanese orphans settle down in Japan. He records their ordeals in the *Nihonjin ni narenai Chûgoku koji* 日本人になれない中国孤児 (Japanese Orphans [from China] Who Can Never Become Japanese) (Tokyo: Yôsensha).

Lin Tongchun 林同春, a prominent leader of the Chinese community in Kôbe, wrote his own history in *Hashi wataru hito: Kakyô haran banjô shishi* 橋渡る人：華僑波瀾万丈私史 (Bridge-Crossing Man: My Own Turbulent History as a Chinese Resident in Japan) (Kôbe: Epikku, 1997). As a Chinese resident who came to Japan in 1935 at the age of ten, Lin suffered during the war and still felt discriminated against after the war. Thus, he refused to naturalize and decided to spend his time promoting the welfare of the Chinese in Kôbe. He has been the chairman of the Kôbe Kakyô sôkai 神戸華僑総会 (The Association for Chinese Residents in Kôbe) since 1986 and the chairman of the Kôbe Chûka sôshôkai 神戸中華総商会 (The Association for Chinese Business in Kôbe) since 1991. His book records the impact of social changes in postwar Japan and of Sino-Japanese relations on the Chinese community in Kôbe through his personal experiences.

Characteristics and Prospects

The study of overseas Chinese in modern Japan has had a slow start but it has gone through the "take-off" stage in recent years. Undoubtedly, the field is not problem-free and still has a long way to go. Although publications and research activities have been on the rise in the 1980s and 1990s, the field is still marginal in Japanese academia. Prominent scholars seldom take this field seriously. As a result, it has been left in the hands of "Chinatown scholars," graduate students, reporters, and popular writers. Despite the existence of some good work, in general the level of scholarship and the research output are not yet high. Most studies are in need of more depth of analysis. Some scholars just repeat the same topics and materials over the years. Most works are published by minor publishers with limited circulations or by the study group as internal

reports. Research groups are small in membership, weak in organizational ability, and unstable in finances. They become active only when they have recruited productive members or acquired research grants.

Regardless of these problems, I think the field is on the right track and will achieve greater growth in the near future. It has shown some very encouraging signs in recent years.

The field is young but fast-growing. The number of publications and academic activities has increased significantly. In terms of the publication of books, according to my rough count, there were at least 4 in the 1950s, 5 in the 1960s, 13 in the 1970s, 30 in the 1980s, 23 in the 1990s (as of 1998). Several international symposia have been held in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, in 1989 the Nagasaki Kakyô kenkyûkai, under the auspices of the Taiwanese government, held a workshop on the history of Nagasaki through the Taiekgigô Documents, in which about 30 Japanese and Taiwanese scholars participated. Also, in 1997 the Yokohama Kajin kenkyûkai held a large-scale conference, funded by the Suntory Foundation and the Toyota Foundation, on the issues of overseas Chinese in Japan and the networks of the Chinese community. About one hundred scholars from Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other nations participated. It seems that the trend of increasing research activities will persist.

Research works in the field are well-balanced. Unlike the study of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, which focuses too much on business networks and organizations, studies on Chinese residents in modern Japan cover various aspects of their life, including profession, identity, education, marriage, entertainment, religion, psychology, and family history. In studies concerned with the prewar period, there are two major foci: business history in Nagasaki through the Taiekgigô Documents; and Chinese students and activists in Japan and their interactions with overseas Chinese residents and Japanese supporters. In studies concerned with the postwar period, the foci are the history of Chinese residents in Kôbe and Yokohama, the life and identity of Chinese residents, education for Chinese residents, and Chinese students and workers in the 1980s and 1990s.

Foundational works have already been written, and the time is ripe for more mature and ground-breaking scholarship in Japan. We should also promote this neglected area of Sino-Japanese studies in Western scholarship.