

Some Sidelights on Japanese Sinologists of the Early Twentieth Century

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This article will treat of some of the giants of early twentieth-century Japanese sinology: Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉, Naitô Konan 内藤湖南, Hattori Unokichi 服部宇之吉, Kano Naoki 狩野直喜, Kuwabara Jitsuzô 桑原隲藏, and Ikeuchi Hiroshi 池内宏. The focus will be on sidelights on their lives, including their attitudes towards Western sinologists like Paul Pelliot and Henri Maspero.

A series of roundtable discussions was held in the late 1960s and early 1970s on the life and works of prominent former Japanese scholars of East Asia, the transcribed proceedings for which were published in the journal *Tôhōgaku* 東方学. Later, six of these discussions were selected and published in a 320-page volume entitled *Tôyōgaku no sōshishatachi* 東洋学の創始者たち (Founders of Asian Studies), edited by Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎 and published in Tokyo by Kōdansha 講談社 in 1976.¹ As the title implies, the six, who are the focus of this article, were considered “Founders” or “Creators” of “*Tôyōgaku*” 東洋学 in Japan--“*Tôyōgaku*,” of course, meaning the study of Asia exclusive of Japan. Five were famous historians of East Asia; the sixth, Kano Naoki, was a professor of Chinese literature.

All six scholars were active at the beginning of this century. Along with figures like Naka Michiyo 那珂道世, they founded the modern study of East Asia in Japan. In turn, they were the teachers of the great twentieth-century Japanese scholars of China, Korea, and Central Asia. For example, along with the rest of the Department of Oriental History faculty at Tokyo Imperial University, Shiratori Kurakichi by 1916 had trained a large cohort of future scholars of East Asia, which included Hamada Kōsaku 濱田耕作, Haneda Tôru 羽田亨, Ikeuchi Hiroshi, Ishida Mikinosuke 石田幹之助, Kuwabara Jitsuzô, Wada Sei 和田清, and Yanai Watari 箭内互.² Two of these are included among the six in the book under consideration. Most of that generation of scholars had already died by the 1970s; a few, however, like Ishida Mikinosuke and Uno Tetsuto 宇野哲人 (both already old or very old in 1970, being 79 and 95, respectively), were still alive and able to participate in the discussions. Indeed, the generation after that one, represented by Yoshikawa Kōjirō and Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定, which had recently retired at the time of the roundtable discussions, has since disappeared: Yoshikawa, for example, passed away in 1980 at the age of 76; and Miyazaki Ichisada died in 1995 at the age of 93.

¹ Subsequent page numbers in the body of the text refer to this volume.

² See note 10 below.

The nature of the roundtable discussions implicitly militated against pointed commentary on the scholarship or personalities of these scholars. Those taking part were their former students, and already senior (and mostly retired) scholars themselves. And a family member, usually a son or grandson of the scholar under discussion, would also take part. The mores of that generation, to say nothing of the conventions of social interaction in Japan (especially of that class), precluded there being much critical comment. The idea was more to evoke the scholar's personality by sharing personal recollections of him.

Some of the discussion is interesting at a mundane level, being the loving gossip of former students telling tales out of school. Ishida Mikinosuke informs us that Shiratori Kurakichi, like Akutagawa Ryōnosuke 芥川龍之介, suffered from constipation (59); and like the famous author, he hated ballpoint pens (and would dip his into inkwells). (50) In an 1887 dormitory fire, Shiratori, along with other students who were to prove famous --for example, the future compilers of the 260-plus volumes of the *Kokusho kankōkai sōsho* 国書刊行会叢書--had to jump from a second-floor window to avoid the flames. According to some, Shiratori injured his hip; others said his spine. Ishida Mikinosuke helpfully solves the question. When sifting through *sensei's* bones as part of the Buddhist memorial service for him, he looked into the matter. Sure enough, his spine was a bit out of kilter. (63-64) The fire episode tells us something of Meiji social history. Not only did the famous Dr. Erwin Bälz attend the students who had been in the fire and mention it in his diary, but also the Meiji Emperor himself paid a sick call and left money. The Meiji Emperor's visit, as noted by these roundtable discussants, underscores how exceptional and prestigious it was to be a university student at the time.

There are anecdotes about other figures. Naitō Konan, along with Kano Naoki, is mentioned especially for his calligraphy. In what his son refers to as his less-good earlier years, Naitō used uninspired copybooks of Zhao Mengfu's 趙孟頫 calligraphy as a model. (106) Uno Tetsuto argues that Naitō and Kano later transformed the Japanese calligraphic tradition, shifting it away from the Tokugawa models of Dong Qichang 董其昌 and Wen Zhengming 文徵明 and returning to Northern Wei masters. (210)

Concerning Hattori Unokichi, we are told that he was strict and serious as a father and teacher, but when he was young he played around in the Shinbashi 新橋 area (namely, with geisha). Tanaka Keitarō 田中慶太郎, as cited by Uno Tetsuto, once explained the significance of riding about in a carriage, when explicating a passage in a Chinese *xiaoshuo* 小說, by saying: "There used to be that sort of thing in Japan--in rickshas--riding around with geisha. You young people probably wouldn't understand, but Hattori *sensei* would catch my drift immediately." (129) Hattori was said to drink a lot; at one party in 1914, he stood drunkenly, waved his hands, and walked around speaking a jumble of Chinese and Japanese. (141) Later, he suffered an extended bout of Parkinson's disease. (161)

About Kano Naoki we are told by his disciple, Yoshikawa Kōjirō, that he was physically dirty. (182) According to Uno Tetsuto, Kano himself said he disliked getting into the bath (*ofuro*). (188) Yet we are told more than once that he was quite "stylish and up-to-date" (< "high collar" = *haikara*). (187) Kano was a classmate of Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石; and like Sōseki, he liked cats--games of chance, too. (197, 204) Yoshikawa tells of a visit he paid to Kano in retirement. The former teacher said, "I read from

morning to night, read about ten hours. Something you people can't do, can you [given your university obligations]?" Yoshikawa chuckled about it. (205)

Kuwabara Jitsuzô was a classmate of the future foreign minister, Shidehara Kijûrô 幣原喜重郎, whose policies he is mentioned as having greatly criticized; at the same time, however, we are told that Kuwabara would praise Shidehara's intelligence. After all, back in the super high-powered collegiate they both attended, Shidehara was the only person whose academic record surpassed Kuwabara's stunning one. (228)

As for Ikeuchi Hiroshi, who wrote on the history of the Jin 金 dynasty (1115-1234), it is arresting to hear Hatada Takashi 旗田巍, and especially Mikami Tsugio 三上次男, say that they found his work extremely difficult to read. Mikami notes that it took him three readings to understand Ikeuchi's treatise on Jin dynasty capitals. They doubted younger scholars had the perseverance. (282) In editing his students' writing, however, Ikeuchi insisted on clear, straightforward prose: "Write the kind of prose that can be translated directly, be it into English or German. As for Japanese, it's just too inexact."³ (274)

What is striking about these scholars' attitude toward Western scholarship on China is just how positive it was. In fact, more than simply being viewed positively, such scholarship was a spur to Japanese not only to write on East Asia, but also to--as they put it--"catch up with" Western studies of the Asia. Enoki Kazuo 榎一雄 speaks of the period 1895-96 in these terms. (23)

This may strike us as odd, knowing what most of us do of the quality of Japanese scholarship on Asia, not to mention that of most early Western-language work on the area. But in the context, it is not so strange. Well into the Meiji period, Japanese study of China continued the traditions of Japanese *Kangaku* 漢学. The first general Japanese-language history of China was that started by Naka Michiyo in 1888. Young Japanese students of Asia read outlines of world history by William Swinton (225) and (an as-yet-unidentified) Parry or Perry (87). And they were greatly influenced by their professor at Tokyo Imperial University, Ludwig Reiss, himself a student of Leopold von Ranke. In East Asia as well as the West, the academic study of history is a comparatively recent development.

Who are the Western scholars of China cited in these discussions of early twentieth-century Japanese sinologists? Works by the following are mentioned: Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (252), J. J. M. de Groot (146), Joseph Edkins (188), Berthold Laufer (227), Edouard Chavannes (227), J. Dyer Ball (257), E. V. Bretschneider (252), Friedrich Hirth (252), A. H. Smith (257), and Herbert Giles (202).

Kuwabara Jitsuzô was said by Kaizuka Shigeki 貝塚茂樹 to have been greatly influenced by Friedrich Hirth. (232) And Uno Tetsuto spoke of perceiving the influence of French scholarship in Kano's work. (195) Indeed, Kuwabara's disciples state that no one was as well read in Western-language scholarship on Asia as he was--which is not

³ Ikeuchi also had something of a reputation for orneriness. When the topic of their *sensei's* outside interests and hobbies was broached, his former disciples could not name any, other than his occasionally listening to records. Ikeuchi's son capped the discussion with the wry comment that, "His hobbies seemed to consist of correcting others' manuscripts, going after people in academic arguments, and putting them through the wringer in seminars"--at which, everyone laughed. (299)

surprising, given the extraordinary range of treatment in his work on China, Central Asia, and Western relations with both. Also we are told that Kano Naoki looked up Vasily Alekseev when he was in Russia, and that they communicated in Chinese. (208)

The two Western “greats” who are mentioned are Henri Maspero and Paul Pelliot, who, being born respectively in 1883 and 1876 and both dying in 1945, were contemporaries of the six. Miyazaki Ichisada tells us that Naitô Konan praised Maspero’s *La Chine antique*. “But he wasn’t saying that scholarship over there, in France, was better than here, in Japan,” he chucklingly adds. In fact, he tells us that Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 (Miyazaki’s junior contemporary and a fellow student of Naitô) said to their *sensei*, “Couldn’t we easily adopt such a French style of academics?” to which Naitô replied, “There’s no need to go ask the French. You come to me and I’ll do it better.” (80)

The case of Paul Pelliot presents a different picture altogether. Enoki Kazuo remembers Shiratori Kurakichi’s saying about Pelliot. “That fellow’s a regular pickpocket!” (*Aitsu wa kinchakukiri mitai na yatsu da!* あいつは巾着きりみたいな奴だ). (40) Ishida Mikinosuke fills in the story as follows. Shiratori Kurakichi and Kuwabara Jitsuzô published something in Japanese. Even though Pelliot acted as if he could not read Japanese, he could; and he published the same material as his own work. So it was taboo to give much praise to Pelliot in front of Shiratori. Ishida adds, “Of course, Pelliot being Pelliot was a great ‘*Tôyôgakusha*’ 東洋学者 --he can be granted that; but there was an element of crafty intelligence to him.” Ishida continues: “I’m not even one percent of what Pelliot was. But I did get burned by him two or three times. Still, being a real politician, he would call me ‘*mon collègue*’ or ‘*mon collaborateur*’; and he would, as it were, give me a flower, saying, ‘That’s something that “Monsieur Ishida” taught me.’ He was not one to be sent to the corner of the room [an expression that means ‘he was a knowing fellow’].” (40-41)

Kuwabara Takeo 桑原武夫, the son of Kuwabara Jitsuzô, relates that his father complained of people in places like France appropriating Japanese scholarship as their own. Pelliot is cited by way of example, for having used the writings of the geography professor, Ishibashi Gorô 石橋五郎, without so much as a “by your leave”; his father, he said, spoke of the matter with displeasure. (253) Tamura Jitsuzô 田村実造 and Uemura Seiji 植村清二 second these remembrances about Pelliot. (253, 41) And Enoki Kazuo notes wryly that things Japanese scholars write about have a way of showing up pretty much unchanged in Western scholarship a few years later. (41)

Upon first meeting him, Kano Naoki asked his young student, the future great lexicographer, Kuraishi Takeshirô 倉石武四郎, “What Western-language books have you read?” He replied, “Things like Giles’ *History of Chinese Literature*.” Kuraishi recalls Kano replying, “Things by Westerners aren’t very important, are they?” (*Seiyôjin no mono wa taishita koto wa nai na?* 西洋人のものはたいしたことはないな). (202) But Yoshikawa Kôjirô takes issue with that characterization, saying that Kano, whom elsewhere he speaks of as being much admired at Kyoto University by others outside his discipline for his knowledge of the West, was asking Kuraishi a more general question, not one limited to sinology, and that the teacher, as was his wont, responded in a diplomatic way to the student’s reply. (206, 202)

Not unlike current-day Japan, real or supposed skill in Western languages is brought up in these discussions partly as a prestige item. Some reference to it seems *de rigueur* when discussing these scholars. Clearly, Kuwabara Jitsuzô, judging from his writings, and Kano Naoki, judging from the genuine, non-formulaic testimonies in these discussions, were gifted, trained, and skilled in reading Western languages. There is an element of social cachet, however, when Kuwabara's son, a famous scholar himself of both French and East Asian literature, speaks of having in his possession letters to his father from Chavannes and Laufer, and then wonders aloud whether his father replied in French or English to Chavannes.

Japanese feelings of inferiority--or at least a craving for recognition--are also expressed in reference to acceptance of their work by ethnic Chinese scholars of China. We are told of differing approaches advocated by Shiratori Kurakichi and Kuwabara Jitsuzô for earning the respect of Chinese scholars in the field. According to Tamura Jitsuzô, Shiratori felt that to earn the respect of Chinese, it would be most effective for Japanese scholars to engage in the same arena and on the same footing with Western scholars; in contrast with this, Kuwabara argued that Japanese should first become fully conversant with Chinese primary materials and then read Western scholarship on top of that; their scholarly arsenal would thus be complete. (251-52; also 254) Eventually, praise did come from Chinese scholars. Miyazaki Ichisada, decades later, is able to name the Chinese scholars who wrote in the Nanjing-based journal *Shixue zazhi* 史學雜誌, praising either Kuwabara's work specifically or Japanese sinology in general, saying it was the best in the world.⁴ His recollection was: Japanese scholars were said to be able to read Western-language material better than Chinese could, and to be able to read Chinese-language material better than Westerners could. Both then and now, Miyazaki adds, this may be a fair characterization of what distinguishes Japanese scholarship about continental Asia. (254-55)

Not surprisingly, the strongly positivistic bias of the group emerges in numerous comments. This is to be expected in a group that literally, via Ludwig Reiss, was only a step or two removed from Ranke himself. Shiratori is clearly so disposed. And Kuwabara is described as being as much of a mathematician *manqué* as anything else. (228) But notwithstanding his long apprenticeship in positivism, Ikeuchi is remembered as being more flexible as a scholar, and one with flashes of intuition, than one might expect. (278-79)

There is little overall appraisal of the scholarly contributions of the six in these roundtable discussions, apart from the occasional comment in passing. For example, Yoshikawa Kôjirô notes that Kano Naoki was the first Japanese scholar to have an appreciation for Qing-dynasty literature, a view that was to exert considerable influence on Yoshikawa.⁵ (203)

⁴ He may have a 1936 *Jinling xuebao* 金陵學報 article in mind. See the "Shiratori Kurakichi" entry in John Timothy Wixted, *Japanese Scholars of China: A Bibliographical Handbook* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), p. 208.

⁵ See Yoshikawa Kôjirô, *Five Hundred Years of Chinese Poetry, 1150-1650: The Chin, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties*, trans. John Timothy Wixted (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 3-7 and 8, for evidence of Yoshikawa's respect for Qing-dynasty *shi* 詩 poetry.

What is unfortunately--but not surprisingly--lacking from the discussions is anything of the attitudes of most of these scholars to World War II and the lengthy build-up beforehand. This would have been particularly useful as regards both Shiratori and Naitô, given the damning treatment of both--and Hattori as well--in one recent study.⁶

The only real exception to this silence (except for passing mention of Kuwabara's view of Shidehara, earlier alluded to) comes in the discussion of Ikeuchi Hiroshi, the great scholar of Korean history. According to Hatada Takashi, Ikeuchi said: "I'll be damned if I'll write a textbook. You have to tell lies in them, so I won't write one." Mikami Tsugio points out that the imperialism of the time demanded treatment in textbook histories that did not fit with Ikeuchi's views. It was a matter of principle to Ikeuchi. "It was for that reason he felt contempt for those writing textbooks"--saying of such people that they were "nothings" (*kudaran* 下らん). (287)

According to Suzuki Shun 鈴木俊, "Ikeuchi was a Meiji patriot [and implicitly not a Shôwa one], and so was misunderstood. One time he was pulled in by the secret police (*kenpeitai* 憲兵隊) and had a very bad time of it. It was the same time I got tossed in the can (*butabako* 豚箱), just before the end of the war around '44 or '45." (288) Mikami Tsugio adds that he was pulled in at the same time and interrogated by some underling who addressed him with drippingly insincere courtesy: "You are a disciple (*deshi* 弟子) of Ikeuchi *sensei*, right? You are a follower of his thought, right?" It was only then that he knew what the interrogation was about. (289)

After retiring from Tokyo Imperial University in 1939, Ikeuchi would still eat at a university hall where Mikami remembers him as saying in a loud voice: "This war is just like Hideyoshi's 秀吉 expeditions; it makes no sense. It's bound to be lost. China is great (*rippa da* 立派だ)! There's no way Japan will win."⁷ By this time, Mikami says, it was clear that Japan would lose. But the previous year Ikeuchi had received imperial rank, and it was thanks to it that he was not punished later, for imperial authorization would have been necessary for any indictment. The *kenpeitai* wanted to indict him, but couldn't.⁸ He was in custody for about a week. Twenty-five years later, Ikeuchi's students attributed his eye hemorrhage to the incarceration. (289, 291)

A year earlier, upon receiving the imperial award, Ikeuchi made a formal presentation to the emperor. His topic was the Mongol invasion of Japan. Ikeuchi pointed out that the Mongol plan for the second invasion of Japan was for two forces, the Jiangnan army and the Koryo 高麗 army, to join together and attack the Japanese islands. Instead, the two fought between themselves and never joined forces, so they lost. The

⁶ See note 10 below.

⁷ Another example of Ikeuchi's outspokenness occurred when he was traveling by train in 1940 from Korea to Manchuria with Mikami Tsugio. Ikeuchi started saying in a loud voice how "senseless" (*fujôri* 不条理) the war was. Mikami tried to check him, which only served to make him talk louder. On the return trip, Mikami got pulled in by the secret police. (292)

⁸ There is an excursus in the discussion about how honorable a man Ikeuchi's chief interrogator was. (290-91)

whole talk, Mikami argues, was about contemporary Japan: the Japanese army and navy were fighting each other, and Japan would lose.⁹ (289)

These reprinted *Tôhōgaku* roundtable discussions lend a human dimension to the six subjects: Shiratori Kurakichi, Naitō Konan, Hattori Unokichi, Kano Naoki, Kuwabara Jitsuzō, and Ikeuchi Hiroshi. Considering how unfairly some of them are treated in a recent volume, it is a dimension that, along with their actual contribution to historical scholarship, merits fuller consideration.¹⁰

⁹ Similarly (as I argue in an unpublished paper), the 1944 monograph of Erich Haenisch on the fall of Kaifeng in 1234--*Die Ehreninschrift für den Rebellengeneral Ts'ui Lih* (The Inscription in Praise of the Rebel General, Cui Li 崔立)--can also be understood to be a protest against the German government of the time.

¹⁰ I refer to Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). (The above-cited list of Shiratori Kurakichi's former students appears, in expanded form, on p. 235.)

There are serious flaws to the Stefan Tanaka book. They are best treated in the review by Joshua A. Fogel, *Monumenta Nipponica* 49:1 (Spring 1994), pp. 108-12.

In reading the book, I noted only one specific reference, in more than 280 pages, to there having been any significant "scholarly" contribution by any of the Japanese sinologists he treats--and that (p. 193) refers to the secondary writings in English of Joshua Fogel and Tam Yue-him 譚汝謙.

Tanaka also basically overlooks a crucial dimension to his argument: there is little that his late-Meiji and early-Shōwa "Orientalists" did that was not paralleled in the way Japanese appropriated and transformed Chinese neo-Confucianism during the Tokugawa period.

In regard to the scholars he treats, Tanaka privileges the ideological (or historical) macrostructure that he perceives to be operative, and ignores the more mundane levels of gathering, organizing, and interpreting data--at the primary, intermediate, and upper-intermediate levels of abstraction found in more traditional histories. Typically, Tanaka extracts something from the macro-level that he then takes to be an indictment of a scholar's entire enterprise, top to bottom. These supposedly broadly-damning indictments are drawn from among the general points a scholar makes in the introduction to one of his studies (a favorite source of citations for Tanaka), from the history of one of the scholar's sponsoring organizations, or from the use put to his work by his compeers. The result makes for a distorted picture of the persons he treats, of their work, and above all, of the kinds of contributions they have made.