

## The First Encyclopedia of Sino-Japanese Cultural Interchange:

**A Review of Terao Yoshio's 寺尾善雄 *Chûgoku bunka denrai jiten* 中国文化伝来事典 (Encyclopedia of the Importation of Chinese Culture to Japan) (Tokyo: Kawade shobô, 1993). ISBN 4-309-22251-5. Price: ¥3800. 557 pages**

This book is an expanded and improved edition of Terao Yoshio's (b. 1937) early work, *Chûgoku denrai monogatari* 中国伝来物語 (Tales of Things Imported from China) (Tokyo: Kawade shobô, 1982). It is perhaps the first and only encyclopedia of Sino-Japanese cultural interchange.<sup>1</sup> Well-researched, comprehensive, useful and interesting, the book is an indispensable reference work for scholars of Sino-Japanese studies.

Terao is a journalist who has written extensively on classical Chinese literature and folklore. This book represents a good combination of his scholarly interests and journalistic skills. Though he has received no formal academic training, he is familiar with Japanese sources in Sino-Japanese relations and knows how to utilize them. He has listed more than a hundred Japanese books in his bibliography (pp. 550-57). Most of these are high quality scholarly works by prominent scholars in various fields. Terao is a skillful reader and in general he has summarized a large quantity of sources faithfully and skillfully. His narrative is articulate and reliable, and his arguments are grounded on rich primary and secondary sources.

This comprehensive, thoughtful and beautifully illustrated book contains several hundred entries regarding Chinese influence on Japanese culture. Unlike many Japanese encyclopedias, which list their entries in alphabetical order, this book categorizes items according to theme or discipline. It consists of seven chapters, covering seven major areas in Sino-Japanese cultural interchange as follows:

Chapter One. Daily Life: Foods, Drinks, Plants, Animals, Games, Imported Items, Clothes, Dwelling, Commodities, and Languages.

Chapter Two. Folklore: Buddhism, Folk Beliefs, Customs, and Chinese Immigrants.

Chapter Three. Politics: Emperor System, History, Calendar, and Government.

Chapter Four. The Military: Tactics and Martial Arts.

Chapter Five. Arts: Writing Systems, Translation, Confucianism, and Chinese Art.

Chapter Six. Medicine: Chinese Medicine and Medical Thought.

Chapter Seven. Popular Literature: Chinese Language, Chinese Literature and Modern Literature.

---

<sup>1</sup> There is at least one dictionary of Sino-Japanese relations, namely, Xia Lin'gen 夏林根, ed., *Zhong-Ri guanxi cidian* 中日关系辞典 (A Dictionary of Sino-Japanese Relations) (Dalian: Dalian chubanshe, 1991).

This theme-oriented approach makes the work more than a dictionary or encyclopedia for reference, but also an interesting book to read. The length of each entry varies from a few sentences to more than twenty pages. However, most entries occupy about half a page, which is quite standard in Japanese dictionaries or encyclopedias.

The book is extremely interesting and informative. Not only does it cover familiar topics like Buddhism, imported items, Chinese immigrants, and Chinese medicine, but it also introduces little-studied areas like sports, foods, clothes, and languages, including much fascinating and useful information. The first two chapters are particularly valuable and provide many clues for further investigation.

The most important message of this book is to demonstrate how many aspects of Japanese culture have Chinese origins and how greatly traditional Japan was indebted to Chinese culture. This message can counterbalance the increasingly powerful nationalistic view found in the last few centuries from the *kokugaku* 国学 (national learning) and Japanized Confucian currents in the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) to the rightwing ideologues before and after the Second World War, a view which belittles Chinese influence and underscores the uniqueness of Japanese culture.<sup>2</sup> This book shows that many things (such as sumo, *shakuhachi* 尺八 [a musical instrument], soba, and *gagaku* 雅楽 [an ancient form of court music]) that Japanese believe to be their own creations were indeed imported from China or derived from Chinese culture.

The book, however, does contain a number of shortcomings. Regarding the content, something important is missing. First, the role of Korea in transmitting Chinese culture to Japan has not been discussed at all. The author himself has recognized this problem in the preface (p.2). Second, the book only focuses on the pre-modern era and has few references to the modern and contemporary periods. Third, the author makes no use of English and Chinese references.<sup>3</sup> Fourth, some entries are extremely sketchy and problematic. For instance, there is only one sentence on sashimi. It reads: "Eating raw fish is believed to be unique to our diet, but it actually came from *yusheng* 魚生 in Cantonese cuisine" (p. 31). This is obviously simplistic and misleading. The author should have dropped those entries regarding which he had not gathered sufficient information. Mistakes are few but do exist. For instance, in the entry on *ekisha* 易者 (diviners) (p. 198), the representative diviner in the Tokugawa period should be Arai Hakuga 新井白蛾 (1725-1790) and not Arai Hakuseki 新井白石 (1657-1715). Fifth, there is little discussion of science and technology (although there are references regarding the calendar, mathematics, and medicine). This is an important area and deserves special treatment.

---

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of *kokugaku*, see Peter Nosco, *Remembering Paradise: Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) and Harry Harootian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). Regarding the naturalization of Tokugawa Confucianism, see Kate Nakai, "The Naturalization of Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan: The Problem of Sinocentrism," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40:1 (June 1980: 157-199) and Harry Harootian, "The Functions of China in Tokugawa Thought," in Akira Iriye, ed., *The Chinese and the Japanese* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). The rise of the *Nihonjinron* 日本人論 (theories of Japanese uniqueness) discourse in modern Japan is discussed in Kosaku Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> For representative English works on Sino-Japanese relations, see "Bibliographical Note," in Marius Jansen, *China in the Tokugawa World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 128-29.

The structure and format of the book should also have been strengthened. Some chapters are too long (e.g., chapter one has 138 pages and chapter two has 158 pages), while others are very short (e.g., chapter four has only 22 pages and chapter six has 26 pages). This is too unbalanced. Some short chapters (for instance, chapter five on art and chapter seven on popular literature) should have been combined, and others should have been expanded (for example, chapter six on medicine should be expanded into a chapter on science and technology). Also, in order to make the book more useful, handy, and scholarly, a list of major references should have been provided at the end of each entry and an index should have been added at the end of the book.

Writing a book of this nature is an ambitious and painstaking task, and Terao took it on all by himself. Surely this book will continue to provide data and inspiration for research for years to come. In the future, I hope Terao or others will compile a reference work on Japanese influence in China as well to balance the picture of Sino-Japanese cultural interchange.

Benjamin Wai-ming Ng  
National University of Singapore