

A Grateful China Should Also Pay Respect To Yasukuni Shrine

By Huang Wenxiong (Ko Bunyu), commentator

Stopping the civil war, famine relief and relief for farmers, preventing China's dismemberment by the great powers... No matter how you look at it, China should be thanking the Japanese rather than criticizing them. Accusing Japan of waging a war of aggression on China is nonsense. Instead China should show gratitude to Japan, a country which was burdened by its foolish neighbor.

Historical perception in Taiwan

Many Japanese people, regardless of their feelings toward China, do seem to think that the "aggression" perpetrated by Japan against China calls for a humble apology and soul-searching on the part of the Japanese.

Recently, Japanese people are increasingly recognizing that the war with the United States was a war of self-defense, but by contrast the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) is still unambiguously seen as a "war of aggression". Japan has been completely unable to erase its feelings of guilt towards China. But what is it exactly about the Second Sino-Japanese War that Japan and the Japanese people are supposed to repent?

China has alleged that the Japanese Army was responsible for aggression, massacres, rape, and pillage directed against the Chinese and other Asian peoples, and since the end of the war this is also what people in Japan have generally believed. However, this is not what people think in Taiwan where most intellectuals knowledgeable of Japan are, instead, of the belief that, "Japan did not do wrong. Japan's only sin was that it lost the war." I myself have heard people say that since childhood.

Back then, the world belonged to the great powers of the West. The great Confucian philosopher Mencius once commented on the nonexistence of "righteous wars", and indeed, at that time the only real international law was "might makes right". The ones who were called the "bad guys" were the weaker party, and the ethos of the time was one of national self-awakening and aggrandizement. Until the Second World War, "aggression" was considered something of a virtue.

And yet, in that brutal era the one country fighting in the name of a truly righteous goal and ideal was Japan, which sought the liberation of East Asia. At a time when white men controlled colonial empires of global scope, Japan's most important national priority in the 19th century was to find a way to avoid being subjugated as a colony of the Western powers. For the Japanese, the best way to ensure the protection of their own country was for all of Asia to be freed from the shackles of Western imperialism.

After the end of the Second World War, the Allied Powers proclaimed their victory by denying that the "liberation of East Asia" had been Japan's objective, but that should go without saying. The Western colonial powers were not going to admit anything that called their own motives into question. During the Tokyo War Crimes Trials (1946-1948), the language of "liberation" was denounced as propaganda to justify Japan's "aggressive wars" in East Asia. The Japanese people simply accepted what the Allied Powers told them, without attempting to question it, and that continues to be the situation to this day.

Thankfully, the people of Taiwan were never indoctrinated by the version of history promoted at the Tokyo War Crimes Trials. Because of this, the people of Taiwan lamented that Japan lost the war, and we had no problem in accepting the historical fact that Japan's true objective in fighting the war was to take back Asia and rid it of the invasive colonial powers.

History belongs to the victors

China's meddling with Japanese history is not just a matter of Japan's history textbooks, but has also extended to politics and diplomacy.

This is really Japan's own fault, the natural consequence of its inability to unambiguously say "no" to China, but still, China's imposition of its own version of history on other nations is originally the product of the self-righteous way of writing history prevalent in China itself. It is perhaps fair to say that official history is written in China under the assumption that it will be imposed on other people, and this is a clear reflection of the cultural traditions of the Chinese people.

In China, official histories were compiled by each successive dynasty that came to power, ranging from the ancient Shiji and Hanshu up to the Yuan Dynasty's Yuanshi and the Ming Dynasty's Mingshi. There is a time-honored Chinese tradition called Yixing Revolution, which means that when the Emperor no longer rules in a virtuous manner he would also lose the mandate of heaven and a more virtuous man would found a new dynasty. Accordingly, the new dynasty would, as a means to legitimize its own authority, record the reasons why it needed to seize the throne from the old dynasty. In other words, from the Chinese perspective the victors write the history and the losers are expected to accept and learn what the victors have written. This is the "iron law of Chinese history".

The truth about the Second Sino-Japanese War is that it was a civil war between the Nanking Government of the Nationalist Party's Wang Jingwei faction, the Chongqing Government of the Nationalist Party's Chiang Kai-shek faction, and the Yenan Government of the Communist Party, with each government supported respectively by Japan, the Anglo-American powers, and the Soviet Union. However, the Chinese Communists, who ultimately won the civil war, felt that they had to write the history of the Second Sino-Japanese War in their own way.

The major player on the Chinese side of the war, known in China as the Eight Years War of Resistance, was the Nationalist Army, whereas the Communist Army played a supporting role. But rather than actually supporting the Nationalists, it would be more accurate to say that the Communists let the Nationalists fight Japan for them while they themselves avoided frontal attacks as much as possible and focused on building up their bases in preparation for the coming confrontation with the Nationalists. In spite of this, after the war the ruling Communists would brandish their "heavenly mandate" in order to rewrite the reality of the conflict and portray themselves as the leaders of a popular liberation war. The Communists avoided mentioning the activities of the Nationalists whenever they could, and claimed that, "If the Chinese Communist Party had never existed, today there would be no China."

Because China was the victor of the Second Sino-Japanese War, that meant that the loser, Japan, would have to accept the "iron law of Chinese history". It was up to China to decide how to write the history of the war, and the Japanese people didn't think they had any choice but to obey.

In China, the one-sided imposition of one's own version of history is seen as a natural right of the victors, not as interference in the affairs of other countries. Quite the contrary, Japanese people who criticize this state of affairs are seen as sore losers who are violating China's rights, and China is not hesitant to show its displeasure at this.

China's leaders are saying that, "The Japanese should study only the history that we create, and must not write their own history textbooks contradicting us", but they aren't stopping there. What runs through the mind of the Chinese government is that the Japanese ought to feel indebted and grateful to China for its role in controlling the contents of Japanese history books, and that the Japanese ought to be happy that China even lets them use the Japanese language.

For you see, in the Chinese-controlled regions of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia, efforts are being made to go well beyond history textbooks and to wipe out the native languages themselves. Children in elementary schools are permitted to use their own languages to some degree, but higher education is entirely in Chinese. Consequently, only one in three people in Inner Mongolia are able to speak Mongolian, and only one in six are able to write in the Mongolian script. Thus, an entire people are truly on the verge of an existential crisis. Some in China believe that, compared to people like the Inner Mongolians, the Japanese of today should consider themselves lucky, but that is a warped and arrogant sentiment.

Prioritizing politics over historical facts

In China, all "scholars" are government mouthpieces, and what is called "historical research" subordinates the facts of history to the ideology of the regime. In China a "correct perception of history" is the one which fully conforms to the objectives of the government.

What China refers to as a "correct perception of history" is not so much based on China's self-righteous style of history, but rather is most often something which the government has fabricated out of whole cloth in response to a national or international political need. Accordingly, when it comes to the history of China since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, all the details of this history must glorify the Communists.

If you compare the textbooks put out by the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party, all this becomes very clear. Of course the Nationalist Party also advocates a distorted, Nationalist-centered view of history, but with regard to the Second Sino-Japanese War, it is far closer to the truth than that of the Communist Party.

No matter from which national perspective you look at it, the Second Sino-Japanese War was a fight between Japan and the Nanking Nationalists on the one side and the Chongqing Nationalists on the other, and here the Nationalists get it right by portraying themselves as the main force standing in Japan's way. According to the Communist view of history, it was they who played this role.

During the Second Sino-Japanese War the basic strategy of the Communist Party was to leave the fighting to the Nationalists in order to preserve their own fighting strength. This historical fact, which everyone knew at the time, was aggressively denied by the Communists after the end of the war. They did this because the Communist Party was building up the legitimacy of its new regime on the foundation of the myth of their own "glorious victory" over Japan. And so, the Communists imposed on their own people a "correct perception of history" in which the Second Sino-Japanese War became a showdown between the Communists' Red Army and the Japanese invaders.

The fact is that Japan was defeated by the United States. On the Chinese front the Japanese mostly scored victories and even by the time the war ended they maintained an overwhelming advantage in force of arms. The Communists denied these facts and, because they wanted to emphasize their heroic exploits against Japan, they wrote up many war stories which were framed like thrilling adventure novels. The "correct" version of history born in this manner was then imposed on Japan.

But the Chinese government has sought to foist its own warped historical views not only on Japan, but on the United States as well.

For example, when Jiang Zemin visited the United States he insisted that China's invasion of Tibet was a noble act intended to free the serfs of Tibet from bondage, and he even engaged in some fancy apologetics by equating it with Abraham Lincoln's emancipation of the slaves. China's assertion that Taiwan is a "sacred and inviolable" part of their territory is just one more example of China forcing its own homemade historical fabrications onto international society.

By doing this, the Chinese government wants to be able to tout to its own people that the "correct perception of history" concocted by the Communist Party is also the one accepted by international society.

Consequently, describing the facts of Chinese history is a very challenging task. Amidst all the misinformation circulating in China, one can know very little without a fair amount of historical knowledge and a critical but objective eye.

For instance, the Chinese people favor the fictional novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* over the history book *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, and so the personalities and the events described in the former have become widely embedded in their historical consciousness. What the people of China think they know about their history is actually a mix of established official history, non-mainstream unofficial history, and popular history gleaned from novels. In modern times one more important component of their perception of history has been the history resolutions passed by the Communist Party at their National Congresses, but since the Chinese government gives such low priority to historical facts, one has to wonder how it can possibly investigate its own history accurately.

In contrast with China, in Japan it is universally accepted that historical fact must never be confused with historical fiction. Especially since the end of the Second World War, the Japanese people have tended to be rather extreme in their insistence that any analysis of their own history be purely objective, without even a hint of the researcher's personal opinions. That is the reason why you can commonly hear Japanese people say things like, "Shiba Ryotaro's popular books are just historical novels, not something which can be cited as actual historical research." I suppose it's not surprising then, that whenever anyone in Japan proposes something like government-written textbooks, there is suddenly an uproar from people alleging that history will be rewritten to suit the whims of politicians or that the emperor worship of the prewar days will be revived.

China's betrayal of Asia

The Second World War in Asia, which was and should still be referred to as the "Greater East Asian War", was fought in defense of Asia and was a direct extension of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), and the Second Sino-Japanese War. The Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro once said that, "The many races of East Asia can cast off the shackles of Anglo-American imperialism and achieve prosperity only if they themselves unite together against our common enemy of Anglo-American imperialism and destroy it completely. In other words, the peoples of East Asia will partake in the fruits of co-prosperity only through the successful prosecution of the Greater East Asian War, the preservation of East Asia, and the establishment of the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." "This", Nishida declared, "is the foremost historical task facing the peoples of East Asia in modern times."

Such ideas appealed not only to the Japanese, but also to all the other Asian peoples who were groaning under the boot of Western colonial rule.

The only nation which refused to join in, and which instead allied itself with the great powers conquering Asia, was China. This is something that I cannot stress enough.

Naturally, the establishment of a modernized economic system cannot take place in an unstable society, and Japan's historical mission was to construct a new order in a continent that had been in chaos for over one hundred years. The notion of liberating Asia and founding the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was the logical extension of this.

Here, one needs to look at history in the grand scheme of things. Throughout Chinese history, peoples of foreign origin who have intruded on and ruled over China have been seen as saviors. However, the role played by and the contributions made by these non-Han Chinese peoples, including the Japanese, is impossible to understand through the prism of modern-day nationalism including Chinese nationalism and Han Chinese ethnocentrism.

"Revolutionary diplomacy" that ignored international law

China was saved through the strenuous efforts made by the Japanese people before World War II. One would think, therefore, that the people of China whose homeland and race were saved would not be able to thank the Japanese enough for this.

In 1995 former Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi apologized for Japan's "colonial rule and aggression" at "a certain period in the not too distant past", but he failed to mention that this was the same period when all central authority in China had broken down. It was a time of true chaos when multiple governments competed for power and constant civil wars were fought amongst the warlords, between the Communists and the Nationalists, and within the Nationalist Party itself. Each government asserted its own righteousness and legitimacy to represent all of China and to preach the values of the revolution, but none were able to assume their responsibilities abroad as the sole government of China. In other words, China was still a long way from being able to call itself a full-fledged nation-state.

At that time, the scholarly community in Japan did argue that China did not constitute a nation-state, and that idea was neither glib or fallacious. When one thinks about the essence of the Sino-Japanese conflict, one cannot say that any of the confrontations, crises, and wars that started with the First Sino-Japanese War were true national wars between modern-day nation-states. In the First Sino-Japanese War the side opposing Japan was actually the private army of Northern Commissioner Li Hongzhang, in the Manchurian Incident it was the soldiers of regional warlord Zhang Xueliang, and in the Second Sino-Japanese War it was the main force of the army of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party. None of these were national armies.

It was in this context that Japan began to acquire many rights and interests in China following the end of the First Sino-Japanese War. But though these rights and interests were recognized internationally, they were continuously disregarded, denied, and threatened by the Chinese, and indeed, China would begin to ignore international law entirely under the moniker of "revolutionary diplomacy". Diplomatically, Japan was again and again being trifled with by China. Japan was constantly at the mercy of what I would call the unchecked and self-righteous pursuit of pure self-interest by rival governments in China.

The anti-Japanese trap

Meanwhile, in China, the civil war continued with no sign that a unified government would be able to come into being. Because of this, Japan, as a modern nation-state, had no choice but to follow a policy of intervention in the civil war as a means to protect its legitimate national rights and interests in China. In order to bring the war to an early conclusion, Japan supported pro-Japanese elements fighting in the war, including the Beiyang Government of Duan Qirui, who was the successor to Yuan Shikai, and the government of Wang Jingwei. It is important to remember that, in a country like China wracked by civil war, it was inevitable that all the great powers, including Japan, would intervene and take sides.

That was how Japan first got involved in China's civil war. From there Japan was pulled into a quagmire on the Chinese continent, and, after having accepted tremendous human, material, and financial sacrifices, was finally made to taste the bitterness of defeat.

If, in the era of the Republic, only one government had existed in China, perhaps there would have been no war between China and Japan. However, because this was not the case, at each turn, every power and every government in China provoked Japan based on their own, individual self-interest and induced the other factions to go to war while preserving their own strength at the same time. That is what the war between Japan and China was really all about. If we condemn Japan's acts as being a "war of aggression", then what exactly should we call Communist China's interventions in other country's civil wars, or its attempts to export its own revolution, or its land and sea incursions into foreign territories?

What really started the Second Sino-Japanese War was not a "conspiracy" or an "act of aggression" on Japan's part, it was that Japan artlessly fell for one of the many "anti-Japanese traps" set up by the various warring factions of China. These "traps" came in countless forms, from anti-Japanese propaganda, education, demonstrations, and boycotts up to even massacres of Japanese residents. These constant provocations inflamed the emotions of the Japanese people, who demanded that China be "punished," and drove the country into full-scale war with China.

Various Chinese factions engineered these anti-Japanese provocations as a means of taking pressure off themselves. For instance, the non-mainstream factions of the Nationalist Party wanted to force the Nationalist Government, dominated by Chiang Kai-shek, into a war with Japan, thereby curbing the

concentration of power around Chiang and preventing Chiang from engaging in campaigns that would depleting their own forces.

However, the factions that continuously provoked Japan did not take responsibility when Japan protested or confronted them. Instead, the factions pinned the blame elsewhere. The Communists, who had been driven into Yenan likewise found this to be a good way to avert their own collapse. Even their calls for a United Front against Japan were calculated to extend their own lifespan.

Stopping the civil war in China

Civil wars in China last longer, are more destructive, and leave behind far more victims than any war China has ever fought against an external enemy.

Even after the Manchus completed their conquest of the East Asian world in the middle of the 18th century, insurrections and civil wars were commonplace events throughout China, and this situation continued to hold true for well over one hundred years, through the subsequent Republican era (1912-1949) and into the era of the communist People's Republic. Even if we examine these civil conflicts individually, there were a number that lasted over ten years including the White Lotus Rebellion, the Taiping Rebellion, the Dungan Revolt of Hui Muslims, and the Cultural Revolution, each of which exacted a huge death toll incomparable with any of China's foreign wars. For example, the number of victims of the Taiping Rebellion is believed to have been between fifty and eighty million people, the latter figure representing one fifth of China's total population at the time. During the Dungan Revolt forty million were killed.

By comparison, it seems that about three million Chinese were killed during the Second Sino-Japanese War, though the government has officially claimed a death toll of thirty-five million.

In China, wars against external enemies are undertaken, if not to paper over internal contradictions, to at least provide temporary respite from civil war, and the role they have played is to decrease the number of casualties due to civil war. The effect of the Second Sino-Japanese War in Chinese history was to halt China's domestic strife between the Communists and Nationalists and between miscellaneous armed factions.

We certainly cannot say that this effect was produced by accident. When Japan intervened in China it was always with the strong intention of stabilizing the country and reining in its civil war. It was contrary to expectation that Japan itself was dragged into the war as a result, thus launching the Second Sino-Japanese War, but the advance of the powerful Japanese Army did put an end to the fighting between the Communists and Nationalists. Then, in the territories that it occupied, Japan adopted the slogan of "Sino-Japanese peace" and made heroic efforts to maintain public security and promote peaceful reconstruction in Chinese communities.

The Nationalists and Communists used the slogan of "joint resistance against Japan" as an excuse to avoid any further direct confrontations with one another, and from then on the civil war was reduced to the level of skirmishes. It seemed that the Communist Party's strategy of drawing Japan into the war to keep the Nationalists off its back paid off. However, once the Japanese Army was defeated, the civil war in China immediately restarted.

The fact that it was Japan that ended China's civil war is something that deserves special mention in the context of modern history, but ending the civil war was not the Japanese Army's only contribution to the restoration of peace in China. Along with the advance of the Japanese Army, pro-peace groups came together and formed a number of autonomous governments in North China and Central China, the armed factions fighting the civil war there were dissolved, and once law and order was established, modern industry began to develop just like in Manchukuo.

The Japanese Army had brought an end to China's 150-year-long civil war in one stroke and finally brought peace to the people of China. The Chinese may hate Yasukuni Shrine, but actually it's the Chinese above all who must bow and pray before the precincts of the shrine in gratitude to the Japanese soldiers who died to bring them peace.

Helping the Chinese farmers

The fundamental problems of the farmers of China, who have suffered through famine, displacement, and crushing taxation since imperial times, have yet to be resolved even today. One might even call this China's "chronic illness".

For example, from the time Japan and China started down their collision course in the 1920's, the rural masses of China were hit by a rash of natural disasters including floods, drought, and plagues of locusts. These natural disasters were exacerbated by the destruction of irrigation networks during the long civil war. A water-management system is only possible under strong national management, and for this reason irrigation in ancient China was viewed as an imperial undertaking. However, in Republican China, no such national management system was ever introduced.

The destruction caused was beyond imagination. Between 1927 and 1935, right before the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War, major floods or droughts occurred almost every year, and each time between ten million and fifty million people fell victim. The disasters of those eight years wiped out agriculture across China and led not only to the tragic separation of families, but also the loss of countless lives through famine-induced starvation. The number of people affected was said to be about three-quarters of China's whole population.

Even in peacetime, China's agricultural productivity was low and producing enough food for its own people was a challenge. China was importing food even into the 20th century, but every year innumerable people died of starvation due to a surplus of laborers. Although the failure of Mao

Zedong's "Great Leap Forward" is well known for producing a famine that killed several tens of millions, this was not at all an unusual event for China.

It was very strange that such calamity would befall a nation like China with a 5,000-year history of agriculture and a ninety percent rural population, but ultimately the ones who leaped to the rescue of China's rural communities in place of China's own government were the soldiers and civilians of Japan stationed in China during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

In January of 1937, the same year the war started, future Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro declared before the House of Representatives that, "If we do not fully understand the soul of the Chinese people, then the establishment of peace in East Asia, and by extension Sino-Japanese cooperation, will be impossible. China is a nation of farmers, and therefore, it is absolutely imperative that we join hands with the farmers of China and aid in the development of Chinese agriculture."

It's quite natural that the Japanese people of the time believed that the only way to achieve cooperation with their neighbor China was through first relieving the farmers of China, the overwhelming majority of the population, of their misery.

The Chinese Army sacrificed its own people

By contrast, at the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War the Chinese Army worked to stymie the Japanese attack by destroying irrigation equipment in rural villages and by stealing crops and livestock to feed its own soldiers. The Chinese Army even press-ganged civilians into service as laborers, a practice called *lafu* in Chinese, and anti-Japanese guerrillas also wantonly disrupted the production and distribution of food. In short, while the Chongqing Government and the communist guerrillas were preaching national defense, they, as usual, showed no concern whatsoever for the lives and livelihoods of the farmers.

Chinese soldiers on the frontlines requesting food supplies were told by their government in Chongqing to commandeer them from the farmers and, in order to block the Japanese Army's advance without having to fight it, they showed little hesitation in blowing up the dams on the Yellow River, flooding eleven cities and four thousand villages.

On the other hand, the Japanese, far from plundering China, instead created agricultural production plans similar to those already implemented in Taiwan, Korea, and Manchukuo. In China, the Japanese guided and supported production, ended oppressive taxation by landlords, protected villages from local bandits, and enthusiastically helped farmers and made their food supplies secure.

Japan promoted the modernization of rural life in China. Not limiting itself to raising agricultural productivity, Japan also planted trees, supplied electricity to villages, carried out cultural instruction, built schools and hospitals, and devoted considerable energy towards training capable medical workers.

On top of this, Japan constructed new roads, railways, and ports, and made impressive headway on developing industry in North China and Central China.

However, while Japanese-occupied China was enjoying bountiful harvests, the zone controlled by the Chongqing Government was in crisis and food prices were spiraling out of control. The reason behind this sharp contrast was mostly because food was being hoarded in the territory of the Chongqing Government by landowners, wealthy merchants, bureaucrats, and soldiers seeking to line their own pockets through speculation. This sort of unbridled selfishness on the part of the rich and powerful and their brutal exploitation of the people are major defining characteristics of traditional Chinese society.

The Japanese Army would even overturn the whole traditional economy of the rural villages while coming to grips with saving their farmers. In order to modernize the rural economy, Japan promoted a movement of co-ops, or *hezuoshe*, as they are known in China. From the Japanese perspective, the *hezuoshe* were crosses between an agricultural co-op and an industrial association. They did everything from arbitrating disputes among villages to cultural activities, education, and technological training, and they brought economic order to the chaotic Chinese countryside.

Outside of Manchukuo, this was unprecedented in Chinese history. Whereas China's traditional rulers were completely lacking in any original or innovative ideas, the Japanese who had propped up and revitalized their own nation through ingenuity alone had now led China from stagnation to growth.

Thus, even amidst the chaos of war, the farmers of China had finally managed to find salvation and to free themselves from thousands of years of grinding poverty. This is something that the Chinese government will probably never be willing to admit, but at very least the people of Japan ought to cherish it as a historic accomplishment of their forbearers and to adamantly reject the claims of a "Japanese war of aggression" which China has been thrusting upon them.

Famine relief and education

At the turn of the twentieth century, more and more devastation was being brought upon China through war and famine. In the space of time between the Manchurian Incident of 1931 and the Second Sino-Japanese War, flooding and drought had attacked the land and claimed hundreds of millions of victims. For instance, the Great Northwestern Famine of 1930 to 1932 left ten million dead, according to the official statements of the Nationalist Government. Starving citizens resorted to cannibalism and scores of people were displaced. In response to the seriousness of the situation the Japanese government dispatched a humanitarian mission and an investigation team. Even during the Second Sino-Japanese War, Japanese humanitarian missions would rush onto battlefields and carry out relief work anywhere there was a serious famine.

After Japan's defeat, the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists exploded across China, sparking more violence than the Second Sino-Japanese War ever did. Famines too became even more severe. Then, after the People's Republic of China came into being in 1949, conventional warfare

transformed into vertical class warfare. Due to the failure of the Great Leap Forward, the Chinese government starved to death an estimated twenty million to fifty million of its own people.

However, the Chinese government still had to take responsibility for all those who had died and who had lost family members due to its failure to build a socialist society. The Chinese government was eager to find a suitable scapegoat, and so it told the people that it was Japan's "war of aggression" which was to blame for all their woes.

Confucius once said, "You just need to tell people what to do, but you don't have to tell them why", and since his time that has been the basic policy through which the Chinese government has controlled its "ignorant masses". Right from the beginning, learning in China had centered around how to control the people. Segments of China's ruling elite studied assiduously in order to pass the Imperial Examination which was prerequisite for appointment into the civil service, but naturally, what they were learning was how to preserve the existing system, and so any progressive or independent ideas were forbidden.

For the overwhelming majority of Chinese commoners, education had no impact on their lives and in fact was something they were actively discouraged from having. It was believed that the land would be at peace as long as the ignorant masses remained obedient to their more virtuous rulers, whereas an educated populace might question the government and was therefore viewed as a danger. Both Mao Zedong's Anti-Rightist Movement and his Cultural Revolution were anti-intellectual campaigns of this variety. Mao said that his revolutionary undertaking would harness the madness of the people, and so the intellectuals, the people who were most likely to criticize madness for what it was, were a threat to him.

It was at the turn of the twentieth century that the Manchu Qing Dynasty of China, then on the verge of collapse, began to admire the prosperity and the strong army of Japan, a country that it had before then belittled. The Qing finally embarked on a huge reform effort seeking to modernize China in the same way Japan had with the help of Japanese officials and ordinary people. The Qing government was able to introduce the institutions of the "eastern barbarians" of Japan to China because of the shock it had received from witnessing Japan's incredible victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War. The Qing managed, albeit momentarily, to abandon their revered Sino-centric worldview.

Abolishing the Imperial Examination and studying abroad in Japan

Two symbols of the new reform were the abolition of the Imperial Examination and the declaration that studying abroad in Japan would be a condition for bureaucratic appointment. This was the first time the Chinese had realized that they had to strive for wealth and power by increasing the knowledge of every person through national education. It was a major reversal in China's traditional concept of learning, a "Cultural Revolution" in the true sense of the term.

From the year 1896, when the first thirteen Chinese international students arrived in Japan, Japanese government officials, soldiers, and teachers worked wholeheartedly to give them a proper education.

They built schools and established curricula for their benefit. What these Japanese wanted was to modernize Qing China. A sense of crisis had been filling Japan, especially since the 1895 Triple Intervention of Russia, Germany, and France, and they were desperate to see China quickly correct its weakness and decay through a modern reform program so that China could serve as a strong ally to Japan. Thus, their sincere hope was that a strong foundation for future Sino-Japanese cooperation would be built as China's youthful elite absorbed modern culture in Japan and deepened their appreciation for Japan.

The number of Chinese who crossed over to Japan to study increased annually, surpassing 8,000 people in the year 1905. Some say that at its peak in the year 1906 the number hit about 10,000, but there are also sources which argue that it reached 20,000 to 30,000.

The number of Chinese international students in Japan surged from 1905 after Japan was held up as a model of modernization. That was the year that the Imperial Examination system was done away with, that overseas study in Japan became a condition for bureaucratic appointment, and that Japan achieved victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Learning in Japan had replaced the 1,300-year-old Imperial Examination system as the key to getting a government post, a fact noteworthy as a turning point in the cultural history of China. Of course, the Chinese who have been steeped in an anti-Japanese historical worldview are not likely to mention this.

For China's military overseas students, what interested them about Japan, and what they sincerely admired about Japan, was not only the level of Japan's military might, but also the people of Japan. The people had a strong awareness of national defense and were brimming with patriotism, and from this was born their common spirit of solidarity and self-sacrifice. One can get a good idea about how the Chinese international students really felt about this from reading their own personal accounts. These students studied hard while trusting and idolizing Japan and the Japanese people. Back then they called this "the age of the Japanese teachers", and it was also referred to as "the golden decade".

The modern military training that Japan provided to Chinese students had a big impact on China. When they returned to China they accelerated the modernization of the Chinese Army in cooperation with Japanese military advisers, and in the closing years of the Qing Dynasty the Chinese Army grew so rapidly that even the great powers felt threatened. This proves just how passionate Japan's soldiers really were to see the Chinese Army modernize.

Not long thereafter when the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out, most of these very same Japanese military advisers fought against China. If these men had really been plotting to launch a "war of aggression" against China, then it's rather inexplicable why they had exhausted so much effort to train and augment China's army.

Founding Peking University

Of course, Japan's zealous cultivation of talented Chinese students was not limited to the military side of things, but also extended to many other domains including politics, economics, and education. China's judiciary and police system received the same support. People across Japan worked to ensure that the Chinese had access to the latest scientific know-how, not only in social and natural sciences, but also in medicine, literature, architecture, and other fields. At one point there were 1,000 Japanese doing teaching work, and even in the founding of Peking University the help of Japanese scholars was indispensable.

Why were Japanese people from both inside and outside the government so eager to come to the aid of the Chinese? One reason was the notion that China was Japan's sister nation with "the same writing and the same race", which made the Japanese feel a strong emotional attachment to and sympathy for the Chinese. Another reason was the sense of mission, which was felt widely by Japanese people at the time, that it was their national duty to give Asia back its pride and prosperity. Even so, all the moral and material guidance, cooperation, support, and encouragement that Japan lent to China was ultimately shattered through civil strife within China and China's betrayal of Japan. From that point on, China never again reconsidered its fundamental policy of telling its "ignorant masses" what to do but not why.

As an aside, Japan has also taken more care than China in preserving China's own historical antiquities.

Chinese people love to bring into conversation the envoys Japan sent to China's Sui and Tang Dynasties, and to talk about how China bequeathed its culture upon Japan and how, without the adaptation of Chinese culture, the Japanese people would still have no civilization. However, it is not correct to talk as if the Chinese taught culture to the Japanese. Texts of the Chinese classics which were brought back to Japan by its envoys to the Tang Dynasty were actually purchased by the envoys at great cost. During the Song Dynasty the only Japanese visitors allowed into China were Buddhist priests, so Japan's feudal lords had to have the products of Chinese civilization smuggled into Japan by paying exorbitant rates for them.

China boasts about its everlasting, five-thousand-year history, but the Chinese are also the world's greatest destroyers of Chinese tradition, culture, and history. Everyone knows about the Cultural Revolution, the national communist movement to destroy "old customs, old habits, old culture, and old ideas", but actually, as epitomized by Emperor Qin Shihuang's burning of books and burying of scholars, every new Chinese dynasty sought to thoroughly demolish the cultural heritage of the previous dynasty as a means of erasing it from history.

Among the countless Chinese books imported into Japan since the time of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, there are a great many which have been completely lost in their native land, and by the time of the Song Dynasty, Japan was already well known as a treasure trove of lost, unusual, and rare books. When exchanges between Qing China and Japan began following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 this fact was rediscovered by the Chinese. These lost works were then re-imported back to China, filling a huge void that had existed in Chinese academic research up to then. Between 1880 and 1890 droves of

Chinese scholars descended upon Japan in search of books which no longer existed in their own country.

Therefore, Japan did not bring only modern culture to China. For traditional culture as well, it is not Japan that owes a debt to China, but, rather, China that owes a debt to Japan.

The truth about the Twenty-One Demands

One of the most commonly-cited major reasons for the dramatic downturn in Sino-Japanese relations after the foundation of the Republic in 1912 is Japan's so-called "Twenty-One Demands".

The Twenty-One Demands were presented by the cabinet of Japanese Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu to Chinese President Yuan Shikai in January of 1915. Today it is widely accepted in both China and Japan that the demands infringed flagrantly on China's sovereignty and were thrust upon China as an ultimatum that it had no choice but to accept.

The Twenty-One Demands were split into five groups in total, but actually the Japanese government of the time did not view these demands as being especially harsh in comparison to the ones which had already been made by the other great powers. Group 2 contained a demand for an extended ninety-nine year lease on Port Arthur and Dalian, but that was the same deal China had signed with Great Britain concerning its lease on Hong Kong. Group 3 contained a demand for joint Sino-Japanese ownership of the Hanyeping Company, China's largest iron-manufacturing firm, but that company was already cooperating closely with Japan.

Essentially, Japan was mere asking that its political and economic activities be given the same treatment as those of the Western powers, but Japan's penetration of China, in sharp contrast with that of the other great powers, was truly a matter of national survival. Since the time of the First Sino-Japanese War, Japan's established interests in China had been under threat from the instability prevailing in China and from all manner of interference from the great powers. The purpose of the Twenty-One Demands was to firmly consolidate these interests while the great powers were still preoccupied by the First World War.

The demands that the Chinese criticized most strongly as being an infringement on their sovereignty were Group 5, which included the following seven articles.

"The Chinese Central Government is to engage influential Japanese as political, financial, and military advisers; The Chinese Government is to grant the Japanese hospitals, temples, and schools in the interior of China the right to own land; The police in localities in China, where such arrangement are necessary, are to be placed under joint Japanese and Chinese administration; China is to obtain from Japan supply of a certain quantity of arms, or to establish an arsenal in China under joint Japanese and Chinese management; China is to agree to give to Japan the right of constructing a railway in South China; Japan is to be consulted first whenever foreign capital is needed in connection with the railways,

mines, and harbour works (including dockyards) in the Province of Fujian; China is to grant to Japanese subjects the right of preaching in China."

This last group was actually more like a list of "wishes" rather than "demands", and ultimately Japan took China's concerns into consideration and made a big concession by dropping all seven articles of Group 5 from the final treaty which was signed in May of 1915.

Although Japan decided to put out an ultimatum, this was only because Yuan Shikai had already been dragging negotiations as a means of evoking British and American intervention, and Japan was worried that anti-Japanese forces in China would grow in strength unless strong action was taken. There is also a popular theory that Yuan himself requested an "ultimatum", being concerned that acceding to anything else would spark Chinese opposition to his own government.

Deliberate distortions

Chinese people, starting with members of Yuan Shikai's own government, disseminated flagrant distortions both inside and outside of China about the details of the demands while they were still under negotiation. Some "demands" were pure inventions that never were in the original, such as "Chinese schools must teach the Japanese language", "when internal disturbances break out in China, China must request Japanese military support to maintain law and order", "China must open its borders to Japanese nationals and recognize their right to unrestricted trade", "the Chinese Army and Navy must invite in Japanese instructors", and "China must cede its administrative and police authority in northern Manchuria to Japan". Within China the result of this propaganda was the advent of an anti-Japanese movement, which declared May 9, the date the treaty was signed, as a "Day of National Humiliation". Outside China, the propaganda prompted the great powers to apply pressure on Japan. Later, when anti-Japanese operations following this pattern were repeated, they would spark the Manchurian Incident and the Second Sino-Japanese War.

I would not doubt that Yuan Shikai understood what the Twenty-One Demands were about, and even Sun Yat-sen deemed them "an appropriate measure" to build Sino-Japanese amity and confront the Europeans. Therefore, the Chinese government's opposition to the Twenty-One Demands was to some extent a part of Yuan's bigger scheme. His aims were, on the one hand, to use the anti-Japanese movement to unify the country, and also, on the other hand, to "use barbarians to control barbarians". The latter meant pitting foreign countries against one another and controlling them.

Saving China from the imperial powers

In the age of imperialism, India and Southeast Asia were made into colonies, leaving only Japan and China, plus Thailand, as Asia's last remaining independent nations. However, even China was fated to be partitioned between Great Britain, France, Germany, and Russia.

It was Japan that saved China from this fate. Amid the trend towards Western colonial domination of the world, Japan was for a brief time actually welcomed into the club of great powers. Japan's

responsiveness to the trends of the time had been truly remarkable. Japan had succeeded in embracing Western civilization, including modernization and industrialization, and then, in the First Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War, Japan fought for and won its own survival in a spectacular manner.

But concerning the Russo-Japanese War in particular, the Japanese were not only fighting to defend their own country, but also to defend all of Asia and the nonwhite peoples of the world. Just think of what the world might be like if Japan had lost the war.

And yet despite this, Chinese historians still see the Russo-Japanese War as just another "war of aggression" by Japan against China. They discuss it only in terms of Japan's "imperialistic ambitions", without even bothering to take into consideration the global trends of the time and the dynamic interactions between the great powers. In China, the study of history is nothing more than a political tool, and it is not sufficient to merely say that the "truth" is unimportant. Sometimes the "truth" can be China's greatest enemy.

If Japan had lost the war, Japan would probably have become a colony of Russia. Then, without Japan to stand in its way in continental Asia, Russia would have incorporated Manchuria and Korea into its empire just as it had initially planned to. The dismemberment of China by the Western powers would also have proceeded apace. I'm sure that the Russians would have marched south like a mighty avalanche and wreaked havoc across China, and the Chinese, having lost the one country that was supporting their modernization, would not possibly have gotten another chance to stand on their own two feet again. Without Japan, no other country with the strength to challenge the great imperial powers and liberate Asia could possibly have emerged.

Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War saved China from destruction, and no one can say that things only incidentally turned out that way because Japan just happened to be the winner and Russia the loser. It turned out that way because of the sense of mission which had been imbued in the Japanese people, that it was their duty to rescue China and free Asia.

After Commodore Perry's black ships arrived in Japan in 1853, the Japanese quickly became aware that the battle lines of the future would be drawn between the white race and the yellow race. The Japanese felt a shared identity with the other peoples of Asia under the doctrines of "same writing, same race" and "same culture, same land", and because of this both government officials and private civilians worked to construct a common defense concept for Asia which was sometimes called "greater pan-Asianism". Here the Japanese were not just pursuing national self-interest, but rather were doing everything they could, with the conviction that "Asia is one", to prevent the partition of their neighbor China. The earnest desire of the Japanese people of the time was for Japan to keep China intact, wait for it to modernize, and then fight alongside it in defense of Asia. No matter what some Chinese might say, this is an undeniable historical fact.

Even though Japan was trying to preserve China in contrast to the other great powers who were trying to carve it up, the anti-Japanese movement in China nevertheless despised the newly-Westernized Japan as being a "traitor to Chinese civilization". Japan became the victim of this anti-Japanese frenzy and never had an easy time trying to form a strong bond with China.

The nationalist leader Uchida Ryohei wrote an opinion paper for the Japanese government which stated, "The kind policy of 'preserving' China has actually earned us nothing but derision from the Chinese. We won't be able to have any relations with the Chinese unless we instead adopt the same firm and merciless attitude that Great Britain has." Uchida's assessment of the situation was spot-on. China interpreted Japan's kindness as weakness and became convinced that the Japanese can be easily taken advantage of.

Out of compassion and racial affinity, the Japanese wanted to pull China from the brink of disaster, and for that the Japanese were scorned, trifled with, and deceived by China, and then entrapped by China's diplomatic ploy of "using barbarians to control barbarians". Still, the good-hearted and naive people of Japan never stopped fervently believing that China would "awaken" before they themselves were defeated in war.

Japan had gone forward preaching the path of peace in Asia to Chiang Kai-shek, but under strain of its own civil wars, China, far from promoting peace in Asia, instead dragged Asia further and further into the abyss by drawing the Anglo-American imperial powers into Asia, having them confront Japan, and then embroiling Japan in China's own internal wars.

Why is it that China fought against Japan, which helped to avert China's partition, and instead curried the favor of the Western imperial powers which sought to partition it? It is because the Chinese people never completely understood the meaning of national defense. Japan was unfortunate in having had such a foolish neighbor. Thus, there is no need for Japan to apologize to China, and indeed, China is the one that should be apologizing to Japan.

*Note: This article was first published in Japanese in *Rekishitsu*, March 15 Special Issue.