

THE PAST CENTURY OF SINO-JAPANESE LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

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- The many vicissitudes of political relationships between China and Japan during the past century should not be permitted to obscure, and may in fact be partially illuminated by, the vast range of uniquely interesting comparative problems that they offer. Some samples of those problems might include:
 - The millennium and a half of almost obsessive preoccupation with things Chinese on the part of Japan that was, until quite recently, balanced by an almost total indifference to things Japanese on the part of China.
 - What questions does this history raise about the nature of literary interaction between the two cultures and the nature of those cultures?
 - Were there any notable exceptions in the one-way nature of this relationship? If so, are they relevant to modern experience?
 - What was the nature of the tensions between Chinese and Japanese cultural values? Between Chinese and Japanese norms of expression?
 - To what degree were Japanese responses to Chinese civilization founded on misapprehensions? To what degree were they sound? In what ways were they creative? In what ways were they similar to or different from Japanese responses to European civilization?
- The years between 1896 and World War I marked not only the appearance of a large Chinese student population in Japan, but the large-scale presence of educated Japanese in China. Although Japanese intellectuals of that time were for the most part fully involved in the headlong assimilation of European learning, they also belonged to the last generation that still had a firm grounding in Chinese learning. Now, for the first time in history many of them were engaged in significant numbers in two-way interactions with Chinese intellectuals.
- What role did Japan play in the introduction to China of European learning in general and European literature and literary stances in particular?
- In what way might a first meeting with a European writer, a movement, a literary program in Japan or through Japanese sources have colored Chinese reactions?
- In what ways did this Sino-Japanese intellectual exchange influence Japanese responses to European influences?
- Following the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, Chinese-Japanese cultural relations began the long decline into hostility and confusion that reached its nadir with World War II. Since that war both Taiwan and the People's Republic each seem to have developed their own intensely ambivalent, yet strongly different, stances toward Japan, while the Japanese posture toward China has been marked by guilt, denial, and idealization.
- What has been the scale and significance of Sino-Japanese literary interactions during the postwar period? To what degree is it possible to quantify the answer?
- In what ways are the two presently closer to each other than to Europe? In what ways might they each be closer to Europe than to each other? What are the literary implications of the answers to these questions
- What would be an ideal course for future Sino-Japanese literary relations? What is the most likely real future course? Why? What are the implications for present and future literary practice in the two countries?

Although these and related questions are all important, I have no more than very tentative answers to any of them and none at all to some. Any progress that can be made toward such answers would not only be of great interest in itself but of immense importance to those of us in the seminar who will be approaching modern Japanese fiction from other directions.

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