



East Meets East: Chinese Discover the Modern World in Japan, 1854-1898

著者	Reynolds Douglas R.
journal or publication title	Journal of Cultural Interaction in East Asia
volume	6
page range	73-78
year	2015-03
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10112/10522

East Meets East: Chinese Discover the Modern World in Japan, 1854–1898*

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This study originated as a doctoral dissertation of Carol Tyson Reynolds, “East Meets East: Chinese Views of Early Meiji Japan” (Columbia University, 1986). The goal of that study was to investigate, for the first time in any language, the full range of Chinese views of early Meiji Japan, 1877–94. Carol’s excellent command of classical Chinese, along with her firm grasp of Japanese, enabled her to accomplish this challenging task.

The late C. Martin Wilbur of Columbia University, Carol’s adviser in the field of modern Chinese history, strongly encouraged her to explore late Qing relations with Japan. Dr. Andrew Nathan was similarly supportive and helpful with practical advice. In the 1960s and 1970s, Columbia University required doctoral candidates in the field of modern Chinese history to have as a secondary examination field modern Japanese history, and to study the Japanese language. Columbia’s complementary strengths in Chinese and Japanese studies—and the mutual respect that existed across fields and disciplines—encouraged graduate students to develop expertise beyond any single country. Out of Columbia’s excellent program came scholars like Paula Harrell, Ronald Toby (primary interest in modern Japan), Douglas Reynolds, Joshua Fogel, Carol Reynolds, and Joan Judge.

At the master’s level, Carol studied Chinese at the Inter-University Program for Chinese Language Studies (the IUP or Stanford Center) in Taipei in 1968–69. Then, in 1976 for her doctoral research, she received a Fulbright fellowship to pursue research and training in Tokyo. Japan, sophisticated in

* A shorter version of the preface of *East Meets East: Chinese Discover the Modern World in Japan, 1854–1898*, by Douglas R. Reynolds and Carol T. Reynolds. Published by the Association for Asian Studies, Inc., USA. *Asia Past & Present: New Research* from AAS, Number 12, 2014.

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scholarship and welcoming of outside researchers, was the only place in which to pursue Carol's dissertation topic because Americans could not go to China prior to normalization in 1979 and China's archival and library collections were not organized or open for use. In Tokyo Carol was privileged to be a graduate research student (*kenkyūsei*) at the Institute of International Relations (Kokusai Kankeiron) of the University of Tokyo, working under the noted China specialist Etō Shinkichi (1923–2007). Separately, on her own, she spent long days at the Sanetō Collection (Sanetō Bunko) of the Tokyo Metropolitan Library (Tōkyō Toritsu Toshokan). To this day the Sanetō Collection preserves the most complete body of firsthand diaries, reports, and research publications of Chinese in Japan for the years 1870 to 1930, in their various roles of diplomat, student, or study-mission traveler and reporter. (Doug, who had completed his Columbia PhD in 1976, was also guided by Professor Etō to source materials and research topics that changed the direction of his research to Sino-Japanese cultural interactions. His and Carol's research on Sino-Japanese relations had little overlap at the time, since Doug's focus was post-1898 and Carol's was pre-1895.)

In 1980 an appointment to teach Chinese and Japanese history at Georgia State University brought Doug and the family (including Sara, age five, and Tokyo-born Emily, nine months old) to Atlanta. The family returned to Tokyo in 1986 under a Social Science Research Council (SSRC) grant, where Doug continued his research on a book project (*China, 1898–1912: The Xinzheng Revolution and Japan*, Harvard, 1993). From Tokyo, in early 1987, Carol accepted a position in the US Department of State as a political officer in the Foreign Service. Her assignments took her to embassies in Tokyo, Kathmandu, and Beijing, and to Washington, DC. Her great satisfaction and busy schedule as a diplomat prevented her from giving any thought to converting her dissertation into a book.

Doug, meanwhile, on frequent visits to China became aware of the growing quality of scholarship and publishing that followed China's 1979 *gaige kaifang* (reform and opening). This was clearly evident by 1990. The new Chinese scholarship included much material relevant to Carol's doctoral dissertation, including fresh discoveries and nuanced understandings of Meiji Japan. Searching for a new research project, Doug asked Carol in 1997 for permission to convert her dissertation into a book, incorporating the new Chinese scholarship. She graciously consented.

When Carol began her doctoral research in 1976, she was ahead of her time. Noriko Kamachi was working on her masterful study of Huang Zunxian (published in 1981), and senior Japanese scholars like Sanetō Keishū (1896–1985) and Satō Saburō (1912–2006) had published important pioneering studies directly relevant to Carol's topic. Chinese scholars—whether in

Taiwan, Hong Kong, or China—had scarcely touched the topic other than through the person of Huang Zunxian.

As Carol wrote in the introduction to her dissertation:

For the first time in any language, this study examines systematically the most useful of the Chinese accounts written between the late 1870s and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95—the event which signalled a new stage in Sino-Japanese relations—to learn how Chinese perceived the changes taking place in Japan in the decades leading up to the war. It investigates the response to Japan of nine individuals in the unique position of being among the first Chinese to visit Japan in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a time of revolutionary change for Japan’s society, economy and political institutions.

Exactly what did China know about Japan in the decades prior to the war? How accurate was that information? What things did the Chinese particularly notice? What significant areas did they ignore?

How the Chinese responded to Japanese reform efforts offers clues to a better understanding of Chinese reform efforts at home. For one observes in late nineteenth-century Japan many of the same tensions between traditions heavily influenced by Chinese civilization and the demands of modern change and survival. Which Japanese changes were viewed as necessary by the Chinese, and why? Which were viewed as unnecessary or even detrimental? Did the Chinese consider Japanese reforms as suitable models for China? Knowledge of what models were available and how the Chinese perceived them can aid in subsequent scholarly analyses of China’s own response to the outside world of the late 19th century.

These accounts produce new perspectives on Japan, informed by preconceptions completely different from those of westerners writing on the subject. Western observers were viewing a new pupil attempting to emulate the “western teacher.” Chinese, from the opposite perspective, were watching a former pupil turning away from the teachings of the “old master.”

Chinese scholarship since 1990 (including scholarship by Chinese trained and employed in Japan, and writing in Japanese) has taken the topic of “East Meets East” well beyond the point of “for the first time in any language.” Thanks to this scholarship, the present book also takes Carol’s dissertation beyond just a narrative overview of Chinese views. As Doug’s research proceeded, a second question arose. “What did observations of Japan say about the Chinese observers themselves and about their findings?” The unex-

pected answer was that in Meiji Japan Chinese discovered “the modern world.” In the lives of these writers and in their observations, tensions “between tradition and modernity” were most often absent. An initial sense of cultural betrayal in 1877 receded so that by the early 1880s new reports displayed startling objectivity—anything but “Sinocentrism.” The absence of Sinocentrism became a liability back home, however, as *qingyi* (moralistic criticism of public policy) and culture wars gripped the imperial capital. Leaders like Li Hongzhang, under pressure to avoid taking risks, blocked publication of these objective Japan reports after 1884. In the crucial decade between 1884 and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, not one major report on Japan was published in China. This deprived Chinese authorities of essential knowledge about Japan, even as China’s future enemy was surveilling China and its military preparedness.

In time a third, final set of questions arose, including “What is happening behind the scenes in China to explain the lives and careers of Chinese reporters in Japan and elsewhere?” Government at the top seemed plagued by institutional paralysis and political gridlock, even as lower levels witnessed dynamism and change and a growing importance of new types of persons engaged in new governmental and nongovernmental activities. What was going on?

Without Carol’s doctoral dissertation, the present book is unlikely to have been written. Yet the final product is not hers. Indeed, Carol has neither read nor critiqued any of Doug’s chapters. Her first reading of those will be after publication of the book.

Besides my deep debt to Carol for her foundational study, my greatest intellectual debt is to two Wangs—Wang Xiaoqiu and Wang Baoping. Wang Xiaoqiu, Beijing University, plowed the field of modern Sino-Japanese studies in post-1979 China, going to original source materials and archives and writing up his findings with patience and dedication, determined to open up the research field of cultural interactions between China and Japan. Wang Baoping (no relation; PhD, Kansai Daigaku) devoured original sources but also referenced secondary works. Meanwhile, his meticulous archival and library searches in both China and Japan uncovered “lost” primary works, and he continues to arrive at brilliant new insights.

Since 1979—the year of the historic first International Symposium on Sino-Japanese Cultural Interchange organized by Tam Yue-him at the Chinese University of Hong Kong—similar symposia have been an ongoing source of inspiration, whether in China, Japan, Hong Kong, or Taiwan. The community of scholars in the field of China-Japan studies has greatly expanded, and my debt to those scholars is evident in almost every endnote citation.

Beyond international debts are my ongoing debts to Georgia State

University, my academic home for more than thirty years, since 1980, for institutional support and flexible scheduling without which scholarship cannot be sustained. The university provides modest annual funding for research and travel. Since 2002 the History Department has applied my research funds to research in China. Every year since 2005 I have also served as professor and on-site assistant director of the Summer Study in China program of the University System of Georgia, directed and led by the able Dr. Baogang Guo of Dalton State College. This has taken me annually to my favorite bookstores in Beijing and Shanghai, and allowed regular updates of the prolific scholarship being published in China. The outcome of this rare privilege manifests itself in the narrative and notes of every page.

In 2002, funding from Georgia State University took me to Tsinghua University and its History Department. Department head Professor Cai Lesu and also Professor Wang Xianming were particularly helpful in assisting with my research and my life on campus. At Tsinghua that same summer I met Sun Aizhen, whom I married in 2006. This marriage required a divorce from Carol, married in 1968 and separated since 1998. Despite the divorce, Carol never once raised the issue of withholding her doctoral dissertation from me, and it is appropriate that *East Meets East* be published now as the work of Douglas R. Reynolds with Carol T. Reynolds. As for Sun Aizhen, bless her heart, she calls me *shudaizi* (addicted to books). I plead guilty as charged, and want to offer her an overdue public apology.

Finding a publisher has not been easy. Free from the pressures of tenure and promotion, I decided early on to hold out for an appropriate not-for-profit publisher whose prices are affordable to scholars and students. In 2009, during my search, I contacted Jonathan Wilson of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) to seek information about a publication series that involved him. "Would you like to submit your manuscript to the new Asia Past and Present series of the AAS?" he asked. After looking at the titles in that series and liking both them and their affordable prices, I sent Jon the manuscript. The publications committee then sent it out to readers. Outside evaluations were positive, even laudatory, which was most gratifying.

As for the AAS, I purchased a lifetime membership in 1973 using income from my first academic teaching position at Skidmore College. Here I was following in the footsteps of my late missionary-educator father, Dr. I. Hubert Reynolds, and my sister, Professor Virginia Reynolds, both longtime members. It is a distinctive honor and delight therefore that the AAS is publishing *East Meets East* in its excellent series. Thank you, Jon. Additionally, thank you Jan Opdyke for your meticulous copyediting that made this the book it is now.

