

# Foundations of Cooperation: Imagining the Future of Sino-Japanese Relations

Matthew Penney

## Foundations of Cooperation: Imagining the Future of Sino-Japanese Relations

Matthew Penney

### Introduction

In the last week of 2007, Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo made an official visit to China. The tone of the trip was set by positive rhetoric on both sides and at one point, Fukuda expressed his conviction that now “Bilateral ties have become increasingly complementary, and one cannot do without the other.”[1] Fukuda is working under the assumption that closer Sino-Japanese relations are a key to the future of Japan and East Asia. This article shares that view. As Slavoj Zizek and other contemporary philosophers have noted, imagination has an important impact on political realities.[2] To build a progressive international relationship, the future of that relationship must first be imagined, diverse visions contested, and concrete strategies for a way forward defined. Given the extraordinary degree of economic connectiveness between Japan and China and the seeming ability of both markets to complement the strengths of the other within an expansive regional economy, there are compelling incentives

to overcome the political schism that plagued Koizumi Junichiro’s five years as Prime Minister.



Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao shakes hands with the visiting Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo in Beijing, December 28, 2007.

When Koizumi stepped down in September 2006, his successor, Abe Shinzo, quickly chose to visit China in early October. That trip was reciprocated in the following April when Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao went to Japan. Fukuda’s trip to China in late 2007 extends the constructive diplomatic chapter inaugurated by Abe.

Analysts of East Asian politics, however, still warn of continuing tensions. Popular works – from Japanese manga diatribes to

hate speech on Chinese internet messages boards – have been singled out by many commentators as indicative of hostility in the public space of both countries.[3] In the Japanese case, works that pump up Japan by disparaging others are cited as indicative of the rise of a virulent new brand of nationalism. This type of nationalist expression certainly exists, but the Japanese public sphere is a diverse one and the extent to which jingoistic views have penetrated mainstream discourse is debatable.

In a previous article, I noted that in 2005 and early 2006, arguably the low point in China-Japan relations since the restoration of diplomatic ties in 1972, a variety of works of Japanese popular non-fiction represented China in a reasonable way and served as an important counterpoint to crude “China-bashing” titles that monopolized international attention.[4] Japan Focus has paid close attention to neo-nationalist perspectives, offering important analysis of their rhetorical strategies and frequent excesses.[5] More attention needs to be given, however, to the even more prolific and influential body of writing with a conciliatory focus. Many works released since the 2005 protest movement, including titles published in Japan’s most prominent non-fiction lines, have been as critical of Japan as of China. Playing up common elements, including comparisons between China’s present situation and the stresses of Japan’s own high-growth period, was an important step toward mutual understanding. The fact that Japanese publishers issued these titles,

not only as statements in the public sphere but as viable commercial products, bespoke the potential for a popular thaw that, in tandem with deepening economic bonds, could help pave the way for a durable political accommodation.

This article extends the examination of the representation of China in Japanese popular non-fiction and manga by focusing on the period of political rapprochement marked by Abe Shinzo’s October 2006 visit to China and Wen Jiabao’s April 2007 visit to Japan. Works released in Japan in 2005 and early 2006 focused overwhelmingly on so-called *hannichi* (anti-Japanese) sentiments in China. Recent Japanese publications, by contrast, have moved beyond the *hannichi* paradigm. The major focus has turned toward imagining the future of Sino-Japanese relations in terms of closer bonds and even as moving toward the formation of an “East Asian Economic Community”. In his article “Reconciling Japan and China”, Mel Gurtov outlined a number of ways that conflict resolution theory could be used to improve relations between the two countries. Two of the most important approaches that he highlighted were “accenting the positive” and building a discourse of “mutual appreciation”.[6] Japanese authors have already begun to act in these areas in important ways and these developments also come at a time when Chinese public discourse has shown signs of moving away from the type of widespread condemnation of Japan common earlier in the decade.[7].

The works discussed in this paper are not from small left-wing publishers like Akashi Shoten – producer of an array of progressive titles. They emanate rather from the non-fiction paperback series of Japan’s major publishing houses. To this point, academic and journalistic analysis of Japanese popular representation of China has been limited. *Manga Chugoku nyumon* (Manga Introduction to China) – the notorious comic book attack on Chinese culture – is literally the *only* recent work of China representation to be widely cited and discussed outside of Japan. There is a need for a broader framework, particularly one that includes recognition of the positive ways that Japan and China’s shared future is being imagined.

Recent representations of China often focus first on the economy and on potential benefits for Japan of a flourishing China-Japan relationship. Within this overarching trope, however, most mainstream authors look for ways to place negative elements associated with the Chinese high-growth experience – pollution, human rights abuses, corruption, inequality – into a more layered context than the “good Japan” versus “bad China” stereotyping favored by neo-nationalists. China, in short, is not invariably presented as a sinister “other”. Indeed this paper will reveal a variety of alternative approaches that have been used to represent the country to popular audiences. Japanese authors have been exploring ways to criticize China in areas such as human rights while still helping to build foundations for closer

cooperation between the two countries on the economic, political, and cultural levels. In many respects, representation of China in Japan is also a creative and vital way of imagining Japan’s future and continuing important debates about Japan’s place in the world, a place that is now difficult to imagine without attention to its continental neighbor.

### Positive Images

Neo-nationalist publications like *Manga Chugoku nyumon* and some more recent works present China’s problems and faults while either eliding or denying Japan’s. They blame all conflicts in the Sino-Japanese relationship on China and those who have been corrupted by it. They assume a position of absolute “truth” and “justice” for Japan while often making essentialist attacks on Chinese culture. Some of these works express sympathy for the Chinese people, but still imagine no future course other than to cut economic and political ties, maintain criticism, and await China’s collapse. Amidst all of their critiques, including some that are valid, these books fail to outline any strategy for constructive engagement. This presents an important question – are there venues in which China is being presented more accurately and more positively in Japanese popular non-fiction? **[See appendix for information about negative images of China in recent Japanese non-fiction]**

An important counter-measure to neo-nationalist diatribes is to “normalize” China by drawing comparisons with

Japan and other countries that share common problems but may also be able to contribute to positive outcomes. This can be accomplished by stressing common goals or common social trends. It can also be accomplished by using parallel critiques of problems that confront both states and social systems. China faces serious issues including worsening inequality and environmental destruction. In many areas such as state-sponsored violence, military build-up, control over freedom of speech and ideas, inequality, and environmental pollution, however, Japan's history, and often its present, are hardly spotless. Some of China's problems may well be described as quantitatively or qualitatively worse. However, maintaining a critical view of China without playing toward jingoism and self-promoting essentialism is vitally important for resolving bilateral and regional conflict.

Authors of important works of Japanese popular non-fiction have responded successfully to these challenges in two important ways. First, some of the best of these criticize both Japan and China and relate China's problems to the historic Japan-China relationship - often to the "Fifteen Year War" (1931-45). Second, they give voice to a wide spectrum of Chinese who are critical of their own state and society. These approaches fill the dual role of promoting a hopeful future vision by imagining the possibility of a Chinese civil society open to a wider range of perspectives, and overcoming the image of a monolithic essentialized "China". In short, important works of

popular Japanese non-fiction acknowledge and analyze problems in the Sino-Japanese relationship, while also outlining potential paths toward future cooperation. Being able to imagine improvement is the first step toward its realization. Works with this type of orientation have dominated Japan's major non-fiction series since late 2006.

*Nitchu kankei no kako to shorai* (The Past and Future of Sino-Japanese Relations) by Okabe Tatsumi, an academic and China specialist, appeared in the popular *bunko* format in December of 2006.[8] Iwanami Shoten, the book's publisher, is a progressive press that seeks to present academic perspectives in popular form. The book's subtitle "transcending misunderstanding" points toward a hopeful common future.

*Nitchu kankei* stresses the mutual influence and interrelationships that characterize Sino-Japanese relations. Peace and friendship are advanced as natural and appropriate goals for both powers to be achieved through mutual understanding. Okabe presses for a problem-solving approach to Sino-Japanese relations. "Can we really say that 'China is bad' or 'Japan is bad'? China has its point of view and Japan has Japan's." [9] From this starting point, the work discusses previous failings of Sino-Japanese relations, outlines potential pitfalls, and imagines a better future. It exemplifies how positive imaginative projects conducive to a breakthrough in China-Japan relations are being presented in Japanese academic and popular writing.



The orientation of the majority of Japanese academics in the humanities and social sciences, and of presses that publish a range of relevant titles like Iwanami and Akashi Shoten, is positive about the future of China-Japan relations. What is particularly striking is that the hopeful vision presented in *Nitchu kankei* is shared by popular works in all of the major paperback non-fiction series. The majority clearly anticipate closer relations between Japan and China and see this as serving Japanese as well as Chinese interests.

Shimizu Yoshikazu's *Jinmin Chugoku no shuen* (The End of the People's Republic of China) was released in *bunko* format by Kodansha, one of Japan's largest publishers, in November 2006.[10] At first glance, the title of the work suggests a neo-nationalist account. During the low point of Sino-Japanese relations in the first part of 2006, however, the author, a noted China reporter, published the mass-market title *Chugoku ga hannichi o suteru hi* (The Day China Casts "Anti-Japanese" Aside) which refused to one-sidedly condemn Chinese positions.[11] Instead, the work drew critical comparisons, rather than absolute contrasts, between Japan and China. It described, for example, internet nationalism manifested in racist online comments by Japanese and Chinese youth as springing from virtually identical feelings of unease and lack of social place. It castigated *both* sides for a tendency toward "black and white" rhetoric during the Chinese anti-Japanese protests, with commentators on both

sides repeatedly failing to acknowledge the diversity of opinion that existed on the other. *Jinmin Chugoku* brought a similarly balanced view to the period of detente in late 2006.

In contrast with neo-nationalist writings that mock China's economic miracle as illusory, *Jinmin Chugoku* does not play down China's extraordinary growth. Despite his familiarity with the country and frequent visits, author Shimizu relates his constant surprise at the explosion of wealth. The book does not describe China as lurching toward collapse. Rather it finds a nation in flux as a result of economic acceleration. The author does not believe that the government can continue without effectively addressing issues of wealth disparity, environmental pollution, and basic rights. He believes, however, that such changes are increasingly likely and that Japan can play a positive role in facilitating the process.

*Jinmin Chugoku* offers a dual approach to China - highlighting the voices of both the new rich and the poor. The narrative focuses on the impetus for change, presenting a range of critiques of the state originating within Chinese society. The work provides a remarkable engagement with diverse voices. It profiles how settled urbanites who had been in their Shanghai homes for decades, have been displaced by development. Quoting them directly, Shimizu discusses their problems and their perspectives. Another chapter concerns the plight of poor farmers who explain in their own words how they have

been left behind by growth.

*Jinmin Chugoku* presents some of China's own critical voices while remaining optimistic that change for the better can occur and rejecting essentialist cultural explanations. Japan is mentioned only in passing and China is not offered up as a negative source of contrasts. In fact, Japan is typically mentioned in the context of how and why Japanese commentators have so often "gotten it wrong" on China. The author suggests that much Japanese commentary needs to acknowledge that China is a dynamic and increasingly diverse society. This is a formula for effective, critical China writing that can lay the basis for meaningful China-Japan dialog and mutual understanding.

Tanaka Naoki's *Hannichi o koeru Ajia* (Asia Transcends "Anti-Japaneseness") was published by Toyo Keizai Shinposha in November of 2006.[12] The book's title uses the term "hannichi" (anti-Japanese) – a media buzz-word in Japan in the aftermath of the 2005 Chinese protest movement – as a starting point for imagining improved relations in East Asia. Much of the book is devoted to examining Japan's own role in sparking anti-Japanese movements in other countries. It assumes that Chinese and Korean viewpoints are valid, cannot be dismissed, and that Japan must act to improve relations with its neighbors. For example, Tanaka acknowledges that from the Chinese perspective, modern history appears "to be a history of insults".[13] The book carefully examines the question "Why did Japan walk the path of

aggression against other countries?"[14] Looking honestly at Japan's aggressive war is common in mainstream writing about Japanese history. Drawing on the extensive record compiled by Japanese historians in documenting the country's wartime and colonial aggression and atrocities, Shimizu demands of more Japanese "the courage to investigate one's own past." [15]

The imagined end result of this reflection is an "East Asian Economic Community" envisioned as a common goal: "As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the idea of an 'East Asian Economic Community' has been raised repeatedly both within Japan and all over Asia.... It is time that we Japanese, as well as our neighbors, consider anew what is unique about this region." [16] Tanaka considers China's role in East Asia as potentially positive beyond the economic realm. For example, the book discusses how China can help to solve the "North Korea problem". From this angle, China is imagined as contributing to peace and stability in the region as well as to economic prosperity.

The *Nikkei* newspaper – Japan's most influential source of economic commentary – has published a number of popular non-fiction titles that express great optimism about the future of Sino-Japanese relations. *Chugoku daikoku no kyojitsu* (Fact and Fiction on China the Superpower) edited by the *Nikkei* and released in November of 2006, and *Chugoku o shiru – Bijinesu no tame no atarashii joshiki* (Knowing China – The New Common Sense for Business) written by Yukawa Kazuo and published

by the *Nikkei* in March 2007, share a positive vision of “the Chinese century”.[17]

*Chugoku daikoku* starts with a common comment from businessmen returning from China – “It is *not* sticking with China that is the biggest risk at present.”[18] Marginalizing China or moving away from it are not considered; engagement with China is at all points painted not only as desirable, but virtually inevitable. The work suggests that Japan’s lack of understanding of China is not due to that nation’s “bizarre” character, but rather to the fact that China has changed everything, creating a new “common sense” for international relations and international business. In this vision, it is Japan that is lagging behind.

*Chugoku daikoku* highlights the centrality of China to the plans of Japan’s major electronics manufacturers. The major focus of the book is on the potential benefits of combining Japanese technological innovation with Chinese manufacturing potential for *mutual* benefit. *Chugoku o shiru* takes a no less positive approach. It stresses the dynamism of China’s major cities. “The era of ‘everyone is poor’ in China’s public life has ended and in the cities . . . we see a consumer lifestyle that differs little from that of developed countries.”[19] This is an image of China as a major market for Japanese products, not simply as a factory for them.

While accenting the positive, these works do not spare criticism of China.

Criticisms, however, are not presented from a position of presumed Japanese superiority, but rather by introducing critical voices and trends within Chinese society. *Chugoku daikoku* details how Chinese people are resisting arbitrary government actions and effecting positive changes that Japan can also help to encourage. It presents the voices of Chinese farmers and migrant workers and shows the current situation through their eyes. A section on popular reactions to environmental problems, for example, is called “The People Stand Up”. The authors of *Chugoku daikoku* also avoid representing China’s problems as unique. Direct comparisons are drawn between China’s environmental crisis at present and what Japan faced in the 1950s and 1960s as well as pointing toward shared contemporary problems of global emissions.

When presenting criticism, *Chugoku o shiru* takes a similar approach to the earlier *Nikkei* title. It first draws attention to rural poverty by using Chinese critiques and assessments of the problem. It then goes on to make more subtle comparisons – the author uses the terms *kachigumi* (the winning team) and *makegumi* (the losing team) – central to contemporary Japanese social and economic discourse – to describe the Chinese who have surged forward and those who have been left behind in their consumer / capitalist revolution.[20] Adopting the same terms used in Japanese discussions of inequality stresses familiarity and shared dilemmas. Frequent comparisons between Japan of

the 1960s and 1970s and China at present in areas of consumerist expansion, car ownership, and the like also result in a “familiar” picture of China, and bring its rapidly changing society within the realm of Japanese experience. There is a fascinating extended discussion of how increased car ownership is changing the face of Chinese cities – dealerships, gas stations, car washes, as well as increased infrastructure. Car travel in the countryside and a boom in domestic tourism have also resulted. This is a sensitive description of fundamental changes in Chinese society that are familiar in their resemblance to Japan’s postwar social evolution. In pursuing this “positive” discussion, potential criticisms are pushed to the side. The automobilization of China has brought with it an emissions crisis, dramatically accelerated gasoline consumption, pollution, and traffic gridlock in China’s major cities. It is notable, however, that these negatives go unmentioned. Instead, readers are presented a reassuring image of China becoming more like Japan.

*Chugoku wo shiru* does offer criticisms, but typically by the direct comparison of shared negatives in Japan’s high growth period – “... it was not long ago that Japan was known as ‘copy heaven’ [because of the prevalence of fake and pirated goods].”[21] This keeps the problems of copyright violation, for which China is frequently criticized, from being made into an *essentially* Chinese problem and critical comparisons with Japan’s recent history can help promote

understanding. Avoiding the types of bitter attacks found in some Japanese popular works, concerned authors have been making simple comparisons between China at present and Japan during its period of high economic growth.

In *Nikkei* writing, China is a power that not only *can* but *must* be dealt with to ensure Japan’s future prosperity. China has much to offer Japan, for example, helping to negotiate with North Korea, and Japan has much to offer China, such as plans and expertise in the area of environmental clean-up and high technology generally. When China is criticized, it is with copious evidence and framed as part of a discussion of what Chinese are doing to effect change and what Japan can do to help. The *Nikkei* approach parallels the balanced academic one evident in Iwanami’s *Nitchu kankei no kako to shorai*, and when other works are surveyed, it becomes evident that this is the mainstream of current Japanese China writing.

*Nikkei* titles deal with all aspects of contemporary Sino-Japanese circumstances and relations. Works in other series often focus on a single issue, but are similarly optimistic. Taoka Shunji’s *Kita Chosen, Chugoku wa dore dake kowai ka* (Just How Scary Are North Korea and China?) was released as a part of Asahi’s *shinsho* series in March 2007.[22] Taoka, a leading writer on military affairs, warns: “Don’t make China out to be an enemy,”[23] arguing that China will become a threat only if



Japan imagines that it is so and refuses to constructively engage its continental neighbor.

Taoka plays on the fact that the Japanese word for “hawk” (*taka*) rhymes with the word for “idiot” (*baka*) and describes what he sees as “the idiots who can’t break away from Cold War thought.”[24] To encourage readers to abandon Cold War tropes, he offers a complex series of comparisons designed to deconstruct the “China threat”. Taoka describes increases in Chinese military spending as “a phenomenon very much like that seen during Japan’s high growth period.”[25] Comparisons are used to cut through the doom-saying that has dominated some corners of Japanese government and popular rhetoric.

Taoka is selectively critical of the Chinese side, raising issues such as the reclassification of soldiers as “public security officers” to obscure Chinese military spending levels. He calls for more transparency while noting that that many nations, including Japan and the United States, mask military spending. Taoka actively combats the sense of Chinese abnormality through effective comparisons.

Amako Satoshi, an academic who has written widely about Chinese history, wrote *Chugoku, Ajia, Nihon* (China, Asia, Japan) published as a part of the Chikuma *Shinsho* series in October of 2006. The subtitle “The ‘Dragon’ is becoming a superpower, but is it becoming a threat?” flirts with the “China threat” idea but the book goes on to

imagine the future in a very different manner.[26] The author holds that the Sino-Japanese relationship can become a potent force in regional and world affairs.

Amako believes that China’s leaders are becoming aware of their potential to play a positive role in the world community – “In China, the self-awareness of the nation as a ‘responsible superpower’ is rapidly strengthening.”[27] Amako cites Chinese participation in relief efforts after the 2005 tsunami as well as its central role in the six country talks with North Korea as evidence of this.

To promote deeper Sino-Japanese cooperation, this literature highlights China’s international connections: “China’s level of reliance on international trade, the pillar of its economic expansion, is unbelievable. In 2005, its trade reliance had reached 80% of GNP as compared with 14-20% for America, Germany, and Japan.”[28] This emphasizes the idea that China has little choice but to favor mutual cooperation and mutual benefit. Projections of closer Sino-Japanese relations need not rest on an idealized concept of human nature – mutual profit is seen as central.

Amako also sees major changes in Chinese society as likely. He views international exchange as having the potential to change China. “Just as more Chinese students are coming to Japan to study, the number of Chinese students is rising all over the world. These young people have a chance to experience a more open world – societies where ‘freedom’, ‘equality’, and ‘the rule of law’

are not mere slogans....”[29]

Amako is not only calling for change in China, but stresses that Japan too needs to change. He describes how “From the late 1990s, the idea of some Japanese conservative politicians that the Nanjing Massacre is an ‘illusion’ inflamed public opinion in China... and heightened the feeling that Japan cannot be forgiven.”[30] While criticizing the Chinese government for exaggerating the number of victims of the Nanjing Massacre, Amako states that “the barbaric mass killing is an undeniable fact.”[31] Placing the issues in broader perspective, he writes “... Japan’s ‘Asianism’ involved the idea of a ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’ with Japan at its head... national movements in various Asian countries that tried to resist this were suppressed and the whole thing turned into hegemonic domination. Japanese must be aware of this historic mistake and reflect apologetically.”[32]

In the end, Amako presents the creation of an “East Asian Economic Community” devoted to partnership and free of hegemonic drives as the best way forward, concluding that “improvement of relations with China and the formation of an ‘East Asian Economic Community’ are absolutely indispensable for Japan’s future.”[33] *Chugoku, Ajia, Nihon* presents a layered look at East Asia’s past and present and an optimistic imagining of its future.

Journalist Kondo Daisuke’s *Nihon yo, Chugoku to domei seyo!* (Japan! Ally with

China!) was published by Kobunsha in November 2006.[34] Saying that he is neither “anti-China” or “pro-China”, Kondo defines himself as a member of the “use China” group.[35] Sino-Japanese cooperation is not sought for the sake of idealized friendship, but rather because China can benefit Japan. This statement, direct to the point of being obtuse, is actually an effective summary of a major trend in Japanese China representation.

Kondo wants partnership between Japan and China. “The ‘bottom line’ of this book is that joining hands with China as quickly as possible and moving together toward a period of long-term growth is in Japan’s national interest.”[36] To encourage closer relations, Kondo debunks what he sees as “myths” about China. He states firmly that low wages are not the only attractive thing about shifting manufacturing to China - he also finds the skill and discipline of workers to be remarkable. Kondo believes strongly that China is not a threat but rather can contribute to Japan’s security. He argues for the necessity of cooperating with China to solve the “North Korea problem”. Kondo also sees the potential for Japan to aid in China’s transition to democracy and imagines cooperation between Japan and China to be a central part of 21<sup>st</sup> century international relations.

Works that focus on China’s economy are among the most positive recent China representations as they are in the United States and Europe. *Gendai Chugoku no sangyo* (China’s Modern Industry) by Marukawa Tomoo was published in

Chuokoron Shinsha's *shinsho* series in May 2007.[37] The book positions China as a source of vitality for Japanese business. China is described in the work as the world's manufacturing "power". Marukawa goes so far as to suggest that the paradigm of rich coastal cities and backward interior is outdated - the countryside is rapidly developing. Marukawa seeks to present a more varied view.

China is shown as vitally important for Japanese companies and the future of the Japanese economy. In this case, the "China threat" is Japan being left behind out of ignorance of China's potential. The epilogue is "The Future of Chinese Business, the Potential of Japanese Business". The author challenges the very use of terms like "Japanese companies" and "Chinese companies" - stressing instead the new norm of globalized companies, employing people from a variety of societies and developing and marketing goods across borders.[38] In this context, Japan can bring experience and technology to China while the continental power can share its labor power, manufacturing potential, as well as its increasing pull in global markets.

*Atarashii Chugoku, Furui daikoku* (New China, Old Superpower) by Sato Ichiro, a leading academic commentator on Chinese culture, was published by Bungei Shunju in March 2007.[39] In some circles, Bungei Shunju has a rightwing reputation, so it is important to note that this title explores Chinese literature and traditional culture as the foundation for a positive contemporary order linking

Japan and China.[40]

*Atarashii Chugoku* is filled with comments like "The influence of Chinese literature on Japan from the Nara and Heian Periods through to Edo is absolutely immeasurable." [41] The work stresses a shared heritage and historical closeness. Sato thinks that Chinese and Japanese do not know enough about one another and sees *Atarashii Chugoku* as part of a larger project devoted to improve relations. Sato argues that Japanese Prime Ministers should not visit Yasukuni Shrine, stressing that needless conflict with neighboring countries should be avoided.

While welcoming China's growth and arrival as a major global player, Sato also writes critically about pollution. He laments the degradation of China's human and natural legacies due to environmental damage, but does not consider this to be a uniquely Chinese problem. Noting earlier environmental problems, he stresses that "Japan has overcome many difficult problems. This practical experience, along with technical aid, can now help China..." [42] In short, this Bungei Shunju title, too, imagines the future in terms of cooperation, not conflict.

Few titles among the new *shinsho* and *bunko* treatments of China that have appeared in Japan during the period of "thaw" in Sino-Japanese relations are negative or alarmist. One that can be viewed in this way, however, is *Okinawa o nerau Chugoku no yashin* (Aiming for Okinawa, the Ambition of China) by

Higurashi Takanori. This book, part of minor publisher Shodensha's relatively new *shinsho* series, was released in January 2007.[43] Despite its alarmist title, however, it is by no means as negative as the "China bashing" works discussed earlier in this essay.

Higurashi sees his work as a "warning" to Japanese people about the territorial ambitions of their neighbors. He does not favor an aggressive military stance, however, advising instead that Japan should prioritize protecting its territory through legal means with resort to international bodies. Much of the book focuses on the claims that Japan's neighbors have made in international debates, especially concerning maps and maritime borders. The "aim" and "ambition" mentioned in the title are not necessarily military ones. While the title is alarmist, Higurashi, mirroring the stance of more positive titles, plays up optimism that an increasingly integrated Asian community will do away with the potential for a blowup.

In the latter part of 2006 and early 2007, the tone of Japanese popular non-fiction works in major series mirrored the "thaw" in Sino-Japanese relations. Authors achieved this by turning to a number of notable non-fiction techniques: using the authorial voice to explain why generalizations and stereotyping are harmful, presenting Japanese and Chinese negatives in parallel, evoking memory of Japan's high growth period through comparisons with China now, stressing the familiar rather than the different, engaging with Chinese voices

in a pattern of representation that includes extensive quotation, and predicting the future – an imaginative exercise – in a way that makes closer relations and cooperation seem desirable, essential, and increasingly likely. Popular non-fiction titles like the ones discussed in this essay are both inexpensive (the average cost of the titles discussed would be around \$6.00 US) and ubiquitous. Conciliatory approaches, however, are not limited to nonfiction books. Similar China images are also common in the very genre that has been most associated with resurgent Japanese jingoism – manga.

## Manga

Manga has been widely discussed in English-language commentary because of its prominence in the Japanese consumer environment and position as one of Japan's "globalized" cultural products. Indeed, manga has frequently been viewed as a barometer of Japan's ideological direction.

*Manga Chugoku nyumon* has been widely noted for its extremist denigration of Chinese culture. While critics have frequently analyzed *Manga Chugoku* as the manga representation of China, a broader look at China images in manga reveals other important trends including the appearance of works promoting Sino-Japanese friendship. The appearance of a new, major China history manga series for children also illustrates the potential of the medium to present a more positive view of China among young Japanese readers.



*Chugoku no hone wa ippon sukunai* (China Has One Less Bone) was written and illustrated by Oda Sora, an Okinawan artist who now divides her time between China and Japan.[44] The title is a follow-up to the author's pair of popular *Chugoku ikaga desu ka* (How About Some China?) books published in 2000 and 2003.[45] Oda's China representation is as different from the essentializing *Manga Chugoku nyumon* as is imaginable. Stylistically, her work is very similar to Oguri Saori's *Darling wa gaikokujin* (Darling Is a Foreigner) books that drew attention in Japan and internationally with their heartwarming portrait of the creator's international marriage.[46] In the case of *Chugoku no hone*, however, Oda is sketching her connections with China and its culture. Here, too, the relationship is drawn with humor, optimism, and an acceptance of difference.



*Chugoku no hone* author Oda discovers some of her childhood favorites - "Little Red Riding Hood", "The Ugly Duckling", and "Cinderella" - in a Chinese bookshop.

The title *Chugoku no hone* refers not to the individual or national body, but to the Chinese written character for "bone" which can be drawn with one less stroke of the pen than the Japanese version. She writes - "Bone and bone. However, it's not as if we can say that either Japan's 'bone' or China's 'bone' is mistaken. Both are correct, they're just different." [47] In this simple case, Oda presents Chinese points of view as legitimate, something that *Manga Chugoku nyumon* and similar culturalist polemics have worked to deny.

Oda uses acknowledgement of the validity of Chinese perspectives to criticize Japan and to demonstrate why, for her, China has many attractions. "In China people do things at their pace without worrying what others think.... When you get used to this Chinese "my pace" lifestyle, regimented Japan starts to feel very stuffy...." [48] In suggesting that Chinese society may give people a better outlet for individual expression than Japan's, not only is she promoting the idea that China's beliefs, stories, and patterns of behavior are equally valid to those of Japan. She is asserting that in many cases, they can be better.

*Chugoku no hone* humanizes ordinary Chinese and gives Japanese readers a view of a country that in important ways resembles their own. The manga's detailed description of the largest bookstore in Beijing highlights similarities to Japan's. Indeed, many Japanese works appear in translation, and many of the same "Western" titles (like *Harry Potter* and "classic" fairy tales) are popular in China as well. This

conveys a sense of familiarity and common experience – placing Chinese and Japanese in the same human category.

*Chugoku no hone* is an overwhelmingly positive work. This does not mean, however, that no criticisms of China are voiced. When they are, however, they are frequently applied also to Japan through strategic comparisons. For example, after discussing Chinese government controls on freedom of speech Oda writes “There may not be any manipulation by the Japanese government but the business strategies of companies – whether something can be turned into cash or not – are highly manipulative. Both Japanese and Chinese people need to watch out!!”[49] This is a criticism that has the potential to force readers to reconsider fundamental assumptions about “freedom” in Japan and China. This type of contextualization of China’s problems by looking at them on a level plane with Japan’s has been a notable trend in Japanese popular representations of the “other” in the past two years. Their appearance in manga with a popularizing focus is a notable development.

*Chugoku to no tsuki ai kata ga manga de sanjikan de wakaru hon* (A Guide to Understanding Relations with China through Manga in Three Hours) was written by Uemura Yumi and Kakehi Takeo.[50] The focus of the book is diversity. The authors describe China’s tremendous regional, cultural, and of course, personal diversity – an acknowledgement of difference that departs markedly from the essentialism

of some other titles. Parts of the work directly promote understanding of China’s increasing pluralism. For example, an extended discussion, coupled with manga depictions of different Chinese generations, shows how values are becoming more diverse. The authors have the manga’s characters directly lecture readers, saying “You know that there are lots of differences among Japanese people, right? You can’t look at one and just make judgments about the whole group.”[51] This indicates the potential for the manga medium to reflect critically on essentializing tendencies and their potential pitfalls. Readers are encouraged to come in contact with the other’s culture in a warm and friendly way. They could, for example, learn Chinese, using the common features of Japanese and Chinese – the writing system and a great deal of vocabulary – as a stepping stone toward improved understanding.

Like other progressive titles, *Chugoku to no tsuki ai kata* struggles to critically discuss China’s major problems without representing them as unique, unprecedented, or resulting from an essential side of the Chinese character. When Songoku (Sun Wukong or “Monkey”), a famous character from Chinese folklore takes a Japanese character on a tour of China’s wealth-poverty gap, the Japanese observes, “The gap between rich and poor is also a problem in Japan, right?”[52] Segments such as this bring Japan’s social problems into perspective and also play up points in common with China. This stresses

familiarity and suggests potential cooperation.



**The folktale character "Monkey" guides Japanese readers toward closer Sino-Japanese relations.**

Narrative manga are the most important part of the manga market and several popular titles put forward positive images of China that parallel the progressive non-fiction works. One of these, *Dawn*, was written by Kurashina Ryo – one of Japan's most popular and prolific manga creators, drawn by Nakatani D., and serialized in the digest *Big Comic Spirits* which sells around 400,000 copies weekly.[53] The series was also released in eight compiled volumes between 2004 and late 2006.

*Dawn* begins with a scathing attack of Japanese society as seen from the point of view of Tokyo's homeless.[54] The main character of the series, Yahagi Tatsuhiko, is a former Wall Street fund manager who has dropped out and joined the ranks of the homeless in order to see society from a new perspective. He emerges with the recognition that many of the homeless that he meets were committed salarymen cut loose during Japan's "lost decade". The way that

brutal restructuring and ineffective social safety nets combined to drive thousands to suicide is discussed frankly and in detail as part of a mosaic of criticisms of contemporary Japan.

There are elements of farce in the first parts of *Dawn* as Yahagi takes the homeless to an expensive eatery. When they are denied service, he buys the restaurant. The discussion quickly turns serious, however. Yahagi decides to make use of the talents of his homeless friends and form a new company, the "Asian Farm Corporation", to organize transnational cooperation in agriculture. He wants to counter what the manga represents as American bullying over trade in agricultural products. Yahagi seeks to team up with Chinese companies and businessmen to invest in South America and other regions.

Yahagi sees American prosperity as derived from trampling on Asian economies. If he grossly oversimplifies complex international developments to put forward an anti-American message, *Dawn* does evoke, in a very popular forum, a sincere desire to build solidarity in Asia, moving away from the US and toward a more developed partnership with China. For the project of imagining closer relations, a mutual foil can be an important rhetorical device and here the United States plays that role.





From *Dawn*. "America won't be able to set one foot in here."

In *Dawn*, the central characters strive to create an "Asian Economic Community" that can reorient the conditions of globalization to benefit developing countries. Japan and China will push for fair trade in Asia and, in partnership with the Middle East, offer development aid to Africa and Latin America. Asia lies at the centre of the strategy. The manga's title, *Dawn*, is actually a reference to Japan's "sun" rising once again. This time, however, it will rise together with China and others. The theme of Volume 5 is that Japan cannot challenge America's "unfair" conceptualization of

globalization alone. Japan-China cooperation is presented as the foundation for an alternative future.

In imagining the future of Sino-Japanese relations, *Dawn* does not ignore the past. The blame for the poor state of political relations that prevailed in the 2000s is placed squarely on Japan. In Volume 6 Koizumi Junichiro, who appears in the series as Ooshiro, but is quite recognizable by his trademark hair, is castigated for his visits to Yasukuni Shrine which made it impossible for Japan to form closer ties with China. Kurashina's one-sidedly blaming the Japanese government for souring Sino-Japanese relations offers a powerful counterpoint to the neo-nationalist defense of the shrine visits and criticism of China.





**Ex-Prime Minister Koizumi relegated to the role of "bad guy" in *Dawn*.**

Elsewhere, the behavior of the Japanese government is contrasted with that of Germany by a Yahagi ally who has become one of Japan's new political leaders:

"Germany has acknowledged the mistakes of the Nazi period and paid compensation.... Not only have they paid a huge amount to victims, but they have also ensured that the atrocious behavior of the Third Reich in the period between 1933 and 1945 is recorded in history textbooks. Also, Chancellor Brandt, on a visit to Warsaw, fell to his knees before a memorial in the Jewish area and showed the sincerity of apologies. In this way, Germany went from being a pariah in Europe to being forgiven! ... I want to stress the importance of this way of doing things to the Japanese people." [55]

Far from being ignored in Japanese popular culture, this type of perspective is actually being played up in mainstream manga.

*Dawn* also grapples with one of the central problems in Japan's recent China representation – how to present critical views of the continental power without resorting to the type of bashing that has characterized Japanese popular culture at its most excessive. When China is criticized in the series, the critical points are put into the mouths of Chinese characters – in this case, a Chinese politician striving to help poorer Chinese

to achieve better lives. Partnership with Japan is portrayed as one way to do this. Imagining China as being on the verge of a democratic revolution, *Dawn* implies that Japan could help achieve a transition into a new era.

*Dawn* holds "America" and "Europe" responsible for exploiting developing nations. Japan's responsibility in this area is not discussed. Instead, it is projected as helping developing nations and fighting for global equality alongside China. In other words, Japan is represented positively compared to "the West". For our purposes, however, what is important is the place that China is given in the narrative – not that of a rival, but of a partner.

The *Chugoku no rekishi* (History of China) manga series published by Shueisha was edited by Taisho University professor Kawakatsu Mamoru and released in October of 2006. [56] The series, aimed at primary school students, charts Chinese history from earliest times to the present. The volume on the postwar period stresses solidarity between Japanese and Chinese children while offering historical parallels between the two countries.

*Chugoku no rekishi* deals very critically with Japan's place in China's modern history. It recounts how China's "new history" began when it was "freed from the domination and aggression of Japan." [57] This view is standard in contemporary Japanese writing, and works aimed at grade schoolers are no different.

The book tries to capture the enthusiasm for change evident after the founding of the People's Republic. Mao is presented as a benevolent figure who agonizes over the suffering of the people and, as a character in the work, speaks mostly in quotations from his most idealistic writings. The darker side of Mao never comes out. For example, starvation during the "Great Leap Forward" is attributed to "natural disasters and other factors", obscuring Mao's and the Chinese government's responsibility for the famine.[58] It is notable that this approach characterizes the major work on Chinese history for Japanese children. The attempt to forge a largely positive story out of China's postwar history continues throughout the work. The narrative of Chinese growth is a positive one and ordinary Chinese are presented in very sympathetic and familiar terms.



**An idealistic depiction of Mao declaring the founding of the People's Republic of China in *Chugoku no rekishi*.**

The Tiananmen Square Massacre is the only instance of human rights violation given prominence in *Chugoku no rekishi*. The coverage of the massacre is extensive and the authors report that "many were killed".[59] Still, this section is a blip in the narrative, not connected with any extended discussion of human rights. The story returns directly to Deng's economic plans bringing prosperity to China. In effect, the Tiananmen Massacre is presented as an aberration and the account quickly

returns to more personal perspectives.

A child, Yanyan, becomes the focus. His family are bicycle manufacturers and live in a new middle class apartment building with an air conditioner. The boy studies traditional Chinese culture and calligraphy. Chinese people are thus shown as being in touch with their traditions and past while become prosperous. The boy's grandfather reflects that "Over our long history, the Chinese people have passed on their lives from parent to child and worked hard to achieve happier lives. Today's China is in the midst of an unprecedented period of economic growth and is joining the club of the world's great economic powers." [60] The speech acknowledges that there have been problems including environmental devastation and unequal distribution of wealth while overlooking systematic government violence. In short, the narrative welcomes China's growth and uses the story of one prospering family to provide a humanized portrait of modern China to young Japanese readers. It is also an account that plays up the fact that "Now China is a very important country for everyone living in Japan. In order to understand China's present, it must be looked at from historical, East Asian, and global perspectives." [61]



Yanyan and his family have prospered and look forward to a happy future.

## Problems and Prospects

This essay has examined a range of Japanese images of China. The most xenophobic "negative" representations typically employ contextless criticism and attack Chinese culture and the Chinese people by means of essentialist statements. "Positive" images reveal a strong interest in constructive engagement by journalists, scholars and manga authors to improve Sino-Japanese relations in the service of a shared future. These "positive" images of China are also at times accompanied by criticisms often presented from the Chinese point of view, deploring, for example, pollution or inequality, that is, troubles that are hardly unique to China.

We have noted that most neo-nationalist works are niche publications. It is "positive" images that have proliferated in the major non-fiction series published in Japan since 2006. Even a publisher like Bungei Shunju, which publishes conservative works, produced the *shinsho Atarashii Chugoku, Furui daikoku* which represents China

positively. Bungei Shunju may have found it necessary to offer this positive perspective to compete with other major publishers for a share of the mainstream reading market on China. At the same time, however, mainstream outlets in search of profits in a shrinking Japanese publishing industry are looking toward the neo-nationalist market developed by smaller publishers like Asuka Shinsha and Shinyusha. For example, mainstream publisher Tokuma Shoten released one of *Manga Chugoku nyumon* author Ko Bunyu's recent anti-China titles, *Joku de waku Chugoku no waraenai genjitsu* (Using Jokes to Understand China's 'Unfunny' Reality) in December of 2007.[62] The title is a reference to, and attempt to cash in on the success of, recent "joke" books like Hayasaka Takashi's *Sekai no Nihonjin joku-shu* (Anthology of the World's 'Japanese' Jokes) a self-deprecating book that became a bestseller when released in 2006.[63] In Ko's work, however, China is treated as in his other neo-nationalist polemics. But this time, through clever packaging, his anti-Chinese messages have slipped into a thoroughly mainstream book from a mainstream publisher. In such ways, the line between mainstream and neo-nationalist publications become obscure.

The categories "progressive" and "neo-nationalist" have become even more blurred. In the past, far right manga like Kobayashi Yoshinori's polemics relied on a unique, editorializing style that set them apart from other manga titles.[64] With its extensive text, this form of

manga clearly aimed at adult audiences. The recently published work of Nanking denial, *Manga de yomu Showa-shi, Nankin daigyakusatsu no shinjitsu* (Reading Showa History Through Manga - The Truth of the Nanking Massacre), however, is stylistically identical to progressive history manga like *Chugoku no rekishi*. [65] While it is not being placed in the children's section of major booksellers, Japanese consumers will have an increasingly difficult time identifying just which works are mainstream and which extremist. If these boundaries blur in high profile cases, an angry popular backlash in China is almost a given.

On January 30, 2008, several Japanese were sickened after eating dumplings manufactured in China. The dumplings were found to have been tainted with pesticide. The source of the chemicals remains unknown, but the incident set off a wave of criticism of Chinese imports in the Japanese media. Neo-nationalist publishers were ready to cash in. Before the incident, the niche publishers responsible for China-bashing works had already begun taking aim at China's food exports. Books like Takarajima's *Shirazu ni taberuna! Chugoku-san* (Don't Eat Without Knowing! Made in China) and Asuka Shinsha's *Chugoku shokuzai chosa* (A Survey of Chinese Foods), both published in late 2007 before the dumpling incident exploded, were moved to the front of bookstores.[66] The intersection between media hysteria and neo-nationalist publishing is important as works that are normally part of a niche



can rocket into the mainstream.

The existence of a rightwing niche that can be successfully tapped for profit could block the path toward better Sino-Japanese relations, especially as it is sometimes hard to distinguish between progressive, mainstream, and neo-nationalist works. Problems are not exclusively on the neo-nationalist side, however. “Positive” representations of China in Japanese popular works are also potentially problematic.

“Positive” representations of China make frequent allusion to the heterogeneity of the “other”. Shifting away from essentialism is one way to move closer to understanding. Nevertheless, most authors continue to view China and Japan, Chinese and Japanese, as exclusive categories. The importance of the idea of Japanese as a group uniquely separate from others has been highlighted frequently in scholarly writing. In focusing on Japan and China as exclusive groups, some commentators have overlooked potentially important ways to bridge gaps between the two nations. Chinese living in Japan, some as students, some as residents, others as citizens, can promote understanding and closer relations on a number of levels, as can Japanese in China. Japan and China are separate political entities but Japanese and Chinese *people* interact with each other in both societies in myriad ways. However, the period of political thaw, however, also saw the publication in Japan’s major non-fiction series of a variety of works by Chinese authors writing in Japanese.[67] The

willingness of Japan’s major publishers to present Chinese voices shows the potential for cross-border perspectives to circulate, even if Japanese authors themselves have been slow to explore this potential. More exchange between Japan and China on the personal and popular cultural levels and the acknowledgement of both societies as fluid, can help to pave the way toward the formation of the type of “East Asian Economic Community” that most of the authors discussed in this article see as necessary to improving Sino-Japanese relations.

There are other weaknesses in the attempts to grasp the nature of Chinese growth. Many images of China position it as a “factory” whose main contribution is the provision of cheap labor, or a simple market with Japan existing as an ideal post-industrial economy whose strength pivots on advanced technology and networks. There is little critical analysis of the role that cheap labor in other countries plays either in buttressing Japanese consumerism by making available inexpensive products, or in causing an outflow of Japanese jobs. In general, the works considered have paid insufficient attention to difficult questions about the future of China-Japan cooperation: the mechanisms for sharing technology, the financial tradeoffs, potential competition for markets, territorial conflicts, and environmental conflicts such as dust storms from China’s northeast reaching Japan. While future cooperation is vividly imagined, the mechanics of this cooperation are

scarcely illuminated.

The most serious potential problem, however, is that the presentation of Japan in many of these works, including titles that present China in a positive way, as a model member of the international community and future co-leader of an “East Asian Community”, is closely linked with Japanese nationalism.[68] Imagining Japan as guiding China or as being an ideal that China should strive toward remains attractive to many Japanese. Japan’s seeming ability to “help” China – in the form of aid, technology transfer, and environmental expertise for example – and to cooperate in forming an “East Asian Community” in which it would jointly exercise leadership, appears in recent non-fiction titles and some manga as a mark of pride and sign of Japan’s high status. These “positive” imaginings and the strategies they imply offer an alternative both to acquiescence to Chinese regional hegemony and confrontational politics associated with Japanese neo-nationalism. If the new stance has nationalist elements, this is a very different type of nationalism than that evident in works that flagrantly denigrate China. It is one that envisages a future that rests on mutual understanding and regional and international cooperation. There is also a sincere desire to see the Chinese people achieve a better quality of life. Hierarchies are clearly assigned, with Japan awarded an elevated position, but there is certainly something very positive in a nationalism rooted in Japan’s ability to cooperate with and contribute to its

neighbors. Nationalism does rest on self-interest, but as long as many self-interested Japanese opinion-makers recognize the economic and geopolitical value of cooperation, nationalism *can* play a positive role.

The imaginative projects discussed in this article are self-serving of Japanese interests but not xenophobic, and while some of the images are distinctive, they are hardly limited to Japan. Australia’s and New Zealand’s relations with the Pacific Islands can be described in terms of paternalism as well as philanthropy.[69] Canada presents its generous foreign aid to domestic audiences as evidence of the country’s high international standing.[70] Indeed, development aid at its most selfless is based on defining hierarchies and serving the national interests of the donor as well as the recipient nation. These forces may in fact be conducive to allowing Japanese and Chinese nationalisms to coexist with limited friction. China continues to define itself as a developing country, has sought assistance on a range of developmental and environmental projects, and has actively and successfully sought foreign investment and access to advanced technology and expertise even as it provides aid in the Pacific Islands, Africa and elsewhere. There is little in contemporary Chinese official rhetoric to suggest that going it alone is desirable.

Nationalism frequently makes its way into academic discussions as a negative. This is understandable, given the role that nationalism has played in sparking international conflict, inequality, and

discrimination. A January 2007 survey carried out by Japan's *Asahi Shimbun* revealed that 78% of Japanese claim to have nationalist feelings.[71] This would seem to foreshadow a difficult path for Sino-Japanese relations. The survey also showed, however, that 85% of Japanese believe in the importance of continued "apologetic reflection" toward China and other Asian countries for wartime misdeeds. Surprisingly, however, the survey showed that individuals who professed strong nationalist feelings were actually *more* likely to favor apology and reflection. This suggests that mainstream Japanese nationalism may be entirely compatible with a closer relationship with China (and South Korea), or at least need not be a serious impediment. This suggests the possibility that they may be able to cooperate even if nationalist feelings remain high.

There are certain remarkable similarities in Japanese and Chinese representations of the relationship between the two countries. During the period of "thaw", the Chinese leadership has frequently referred to Japan and China as "economically complementary". Chinese leaders, as well as many Chinese people, seem receptive to the type of partnership that is being imagined in Japan. For example, Wen Jiabao has said "China and Japan should identify targets, approaches and key orientations for bilateral economic and trade cooperation through dialogue... In particular, the two countries should increase collaboration in the fields of energy conservation, environmental protection, hi-tech, small

and medium-sized enterprises, finance and information."[72] Japanese writers are not taking their cues from Wen, but there are striking and encouraging parallels. Mel Gurtov has written of how lasting improvement to Sino-Japanese relations demands "... not continuing debate over grievances but practical steps that serve common interests."[73] While problems remain, steps in this direction are being made.

Some Chinese official statements are even more optimistic than Wen's. The importance of cooperation with Japan is also making its way into Chinese official rhetoric. Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said on the eve of Wen's 2007 Japan visit, "Lasting friendship between the peoples of China and Japan is the path we should stay firmly on and no one can stop us from doing this."[74]

Nationalist yet "positive" imaginings of Japan and its global role in the country's political sphere and in popular discourse could co-exist with Chinese nationalist images in which growth, increasingly seen as being integrated with that of Japan and other countries, serves to instill pride. It is impossible to predict what directions nationalism will take in the future, and a dramatic fall into another "freeze" in Sino-Japanese relations is always a real possibility. The positive "points of view" that have replaced more pessimistic ones in Japan's major non-fiction series, however, are an important discursive foundation that imagines Japan and China as cooperating East Asian neighbors in an epoch in which strong economic foundations for accommodation

exist.

*Matthew Penney is Assistant Professor at Concordia University. He is currently conducting research on popular representations of war in Japan. He can be contacted at [penneym@hotmail.com](mailto:penneym@hotmail.com).*

*He wrote this article for Japan Focus. Posted on April 5, 2008.*

## NOTES

[1] Xinhua News Agency, “[Fukuda: China’s economic growth an opportunity to Japan, world](#)”, December 26, 2007.

[2] Robert Porter, *Ideology: Contemporary Social, Political and Cultural Theory*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006.

[3] See, for example Norimitsu Onishi, “Ugly Images of Asian Rivals Become Bestsellers in Japan”, *New York Times*, November 14, 2005, Late Edition – Final, Section A, Page 1, Column 1.

[4] Matthew Penney, “China Comparisons: Images of China in Japanese Popular Non-Fiction”, *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 4:2(2006), pp. 15-28.

[5] See, for example, Rumi Sakamoto and Matt Allen, “[“Hating ‘The Korea Wave’” Comic Books: A sign of New Nationalism in Japan?](#)”, *Japan Focus*.

[6] Mel Gurtov, “[Reconciling Japan and China](#)”, *Japan Focus*.

[7] B-Net Business Network, “[Chinese feelings toward Japan show signs of evolving](#)” *B-Net Asia Political News*. In addition, many have noted that Chinese official references to Japanese war crimes have been toned down in recent months. See, Associated Press, “[China remembers ‘Nanking Massacre’](#)”, *USA Today*, December 12, 2007.

[8] Okabe Tatsumi, *Nitchu kankei no kako to shorai*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2006.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[10] Shimizu Yoshikazu, *Jinmin Chugoku no shuen*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 2006.

[11] Shimizu Yoshikazu, *Chugoku ga hannichi o suteru hi*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 2006.

[12] Tanaka Naoki, *Hannichi o koeru Ajia*, Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinposha, 2006.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[17] Nikkei Keizai Shimbunsha, *Chugoku daikoku no kyojitsu*, Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 2006. Yukawa Kazuo, *Chugoku o shiru – Bijinesu no tame no atarashii joshiki*, Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 2007.

[18] Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, *Chugoku daikoku no kyojitsu*, p. 3.



- [19] Yukawa, *Chugoku o shiru*, pp. 15-18.
- [20] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- [21] *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.
- [22] Taoka Shunji, *Kita Chosen, Chugoku wa dore dake kowai ka*, Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 2007.
- [23] *Ibid.*, p. 268.
- [24] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- [25] *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.
- [26] Amako Satoshi, *Chugoku, Ajia, Nihon*, Tokyo: Chikuma Shoten, 2006.
- [27] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- [28] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- [29] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- [30] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- [31] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
- [32] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
- [33] *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- [34] Kondo Daisuke, *Nihon yo, Chugoku to domei seyo*, Tokyo: Kobunsha, 2006.
- [35] *Ibid.*, p. 11
- [36] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- [37] Marukawa Tomoo, *Gendai Chugoku no sangyo*, Tokyo: Chuokoron Shinsha, 2007.
- [38] *Ibid.*, p. 237.
- [39] Sato Ichiro, *Atarashii Chugoku, Furui daikoku*, Tokyo: Chuokoron Shinsha, 2007.
- [40] Iris Chang frequently described Bungei Shunju as “ultra right-wing”, see [[http://www.irischang.net/press\\_article.ctm?n=9](http://www.irischang.net/press_article.ctm?n=9)]
- [41] Sato, *Atarashii Chugoku*, p. 75.
- [42] *Ibid.*, p. 195.
- [43] Higurashi Takanori, *Okinawa o nerau Chugoku no yashin*, Tokyo: Shodensha, 2007.
- [44] Oda Sora, *Chugoku no hone wa ippon sukunai*, Tokyo: Sobisha / Shueisha, 2006.
- [45] Oda Sora, *Chugoku ikaga desu ka*, Tokyo: Sobisha / Shueisha, 2000. Oda Sora, *Chugoku ikaga desu ka zoku*, Tokyo: Sobisha / Shueisha, 2003.
- [46] Oguri Saori, *Darling wa gaikokujin*, Tokyo: Media Factory, 2002.
- [47] Oda, *Chugoku no hone*, p. 144.
- [48] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- [49] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- [50] Uemura Yumi and Takehi Takeo, *Chugoku to no tsuki ai kata ga manga de sanjikan de wakaru hon*, Tokyo: Asuka Publishing, 2006.
- [51] *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- [52] *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- [ 5 3 ]

- [http://www10.ocn.ne.jp/~comic/hikaku.htm]
- [54] Kurashina Ryo, *Dawn*, Vol. 1, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2004.
- [55] Kurashina Ryo, *Dawn*, Vol. 7, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2005, p. 117-118.
- [56] Kawakatsu Mamoru (eds.), *Chugoku no rekishi*, Vol. 10, Tokyo: Shueisha, 2006.
- [57] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- [58] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- [59] *Ibid.*, pp. 122-128.
- [60] *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.
- [61] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
- [62] Ko Bunyu, *Joku de wakaruru, Chugoku no wareenai genjitsu*, Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 2007.
- [63] Hayasaka Takashi, *Sekai no Nihonjin joku-shu*, Tokyo: Chuokoron Shinsha, 2006.
- [64] Rumi Sakamoto, "'Will you go to war? Or will you stop being Japanese?' Nationalism and History in Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Sensoron*", *Japan Focus* [http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2632].
- [65] Hatake Natsuko, *Manga de yomu Showa-shi, Nankin daigyakusatsu no shinjitsu*, Tokyo: Waku, 2007.
- [66] Takarajima, *Shirazu ni taberuna! Chugoku-san*, Tokyo: Takarajima-sha, 2007.
- Chin Keiun, *Chugoku shokuzai chosa*, Tokyo: Asuka Shinsha, 2007.
- [67] See, for example, Shin Saihin, *Ima no Chugoku ga wakaruru hon* (Understanding Today's China), Tokyo: Mikasa Shobo, 2007. Much like the authors discussed above, Shin sees close Sino-Japanese ties to be an ideal goal for both countries. He criticizes the Chinese government, writing that "the Chinese Communist Party must change." (p. 35) He is also critical of Japan, recommending that Japanese leaders follow Germany's lead in expressing remorse for wartime atrocities. (p. 62) Shin imagines that small steps on both sides can lead to rich future cooperation.
- [68] For a discussion of the intersection between ideas of Japanese nationalism and Japan's global roll, see Takekawa Shunichi, "Forging Nationalism from Pacifism and Internationalism: A Study of *Asahi* and *Yomiuri*'s New Year's Day Editorials, 1953-2005", *Social Science Japan Journal*, 10(1), 2007.
- [69] Stephen Hoadley, "[Pacific Island Security Management by Australia and New Zealand: Towards a New Paradigm](#)", *Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand, Working Paper*, No. 20/05.
- [70] David R. Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA and Canadian Development Assistance*, Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1998.
- [71] "[Aikokushin 'aru' ga 78% honsha yoron Chosa](#)", *Asahi Shimbun*, 25 January 2007 [].

[ 7 2 ]

<http://english.people.com.cn/200704/06/eng20070406.html>

[73] Gurtov, "Reconciling Japan and China".

[ 7 4 ]

[http://english.people.com.cn/200703/06/eng20070306\\_354780.html](http://english.people.com.cn/200703/06/eng20070306_354780.html)

## Appendix - Negative Images of China in Japanese Manga and Non-Fiction

This article shows that positive depictions of China now dominate in Japan's mainstream non-fiction. There are, however, negative images of China present in a variety of contexts. None that has appeared in the period of political detente, however, has been as unwaveringly negative as the now infamous *Manga Chugoku nyumon* which ran the gamut of stereotypes and insults from unambiguous Nanking Massacre denial to various descriptions of the Chinese people as "chaotic", "unreasonable", "immoral", or just plain "bad". *Manga Chugoku nyumon* offered nothing in the way of reasoned evidence or case studies, making its points instead with hyperbole and pure prejudice. More recent "negative" manga still focus on China's faults. In many newer titles, however, even negative depictions suggest redeeming and humanizing features for China and the Chinese. This is a major departure from the *Manga Chugoku nyumon* pattern which has now

been increasingly relegated to niche non-fiction writings. This section will assess some major manga and hardcover non-fiction works released around the same time as the more positive offerings discussed in main body of the paper. It will explore how some non-fiction China manga, while still negative, depart from the *Manga Chugoku nyumon* approach in important ways. It will then look at a number of recent niche non-fiction titles in standard text format that, exemplify the continuing thrust of Japanese neo-nationalist discourse.

*Soshite Chugoku no hokai ga hajimaru* (The Collapse of China Begins) was written by Izawa Motohiko, illustrated by Hatano Hideyuki, and published by Asuka Shinsha in August 2006.[1] Asuka Shinsha was the publisher of *Manga Chugoku nyumon*, and barely a month before Prime Minister Abe's ice-breaking trip to China, another similar mix of racism and revisionism would have struck a sour chord in the milieu of Sino-Japanese detente. *Soshite Chugoku*, however, while still a negative depiction of China, differs from *Manga Chugoku nyumon* in important respects. Early in the work, Izawa writes - "I feel that I have to say up front that I have Chinese friends. It is because of them that I hope that the Chinese state will be reborn as one devoted to its people." [2] Of course, such assertions are meaningless without content to back them up. In the body of the work Izawa consistently takes the side of ordinary Chinese against a government that he sees as irredeemably corrupt. The manga begins with images

of anger boiling over in the Chinese countryside and erupting into mass protest. The Chinese government then uses atomic weapons against its own people. Taking this nightmarish scenario as a starting point, the work presents a litany of the worst excesses of the Chinese government - unchecked pollution, families driven from their homes to make way for development and beaten if they resist, and other misdeeds. Nevertheless, unlike *Manga Chugoku nyumon*'s often ludicrous overstatements - that cannibalism is at the core of Chinese culture and ten percent of the Chinese GDP is tied to prostitution - Izawa deals sharply with real issues.[3]



**Chinese protesters celebrate the beginning of a new era before vanishing in atomic fire.**

Overall, the vision of China on a path toward social collapse presented in *Soshite Chugoku* focuses on that country's faults while avoiding the racist essentialism of *Manga Chugoku nyumon*. However, without providing context or making any attempt to look at the Sino-Japanese relationship beyond cataloging China's "ills", such narratives become either a chauvinistic boost to the ego of nationalist Japanese while eliding Japan's own problems, or a simple form of edutainment for uncritical readers.

A variety of other titles critical of China have appeared in Japanese bookstores during the period of political thaw. *Abunai! Chugoku* (Danger! China) was written by the group Akebono Kikan - a team of current-affairs manga artists - and published by pop press Takarajima in December of 2006.[4] In some respects, this manga emulates the successful anti-Korea comic *Kenkanryu* (Hate the "Korea Wave"). Unconcerned with telling a story, it instead presents characters who discuss issues concerning contemporary China against various backdrops. Within this framework *Abunai! Chugoku* follows an elderly Japanese professor who has longed to visit China but finds that his dreams are smashed by what he finally sees in the country.

Despite its title stressing "danger", *Abunai! Chugoku* is not without sympathetic Chinese characters. As the professor travels with a young Japanese exchange student, they encounter



Chinese who wish to practice their Japanese conversation skills. Parts of the work present a friendly, thoroughly humanized portrait of the “other”. The conversation quickly lapses into criticism, however. Readers are presented with an exposition of the high rate of abortion of female fetuses in China, a product of the “one child policy”. This and other criticisms are directed at the Chinese government and its apologists. Particularly harsh words are reserved for Japanese who have advocated closer relations with China without pressing for improvements on human rights. A Chinese character condemns Japan – “While going on about Sino-Japanese friendship... they don’t see the suffering and pain of ordinary Chinese.”[5] This is coupled with a powerful condemnation of Japanese who seek to profit from China without considering moral consequences – “I thought Japanese are nothing but a bunch who would sell out their own parents if money or profit were on the line.”[6] These criticisms are given authority in the narrative. The Chinese man praises the main characters, now critical of the Chinese state, and condemns other Japanese for cooperating with the Chinese authorities. The manga is as critical of Japanese support of the Chinese Communist government as it is of the Chinese side, at least sharing criticism instead of one-sidedly berating the “other”. The focused criticism of the Chinese state, instead of the wholesale condemnation of the other culture that characterized *Manga Chugoku nyumon*, is another notable departure.

Other recent manga criticize China. *Manga de wakaru Chugoku 100 no akugyo* (A Manga Guide to 100 Chinese Misdeeds) was compiled by the Ajia Mondai Kenkyukai (Asian Problems Research Group) and distributed by *Kenkanryu* publisher Shinyusha.[7] The manga uses extreme rhetoric. It contains a description of China’s “murderous” acid rain “attacking” Japan.[8] Extreme language is coupled with extreme images. At one point, there is a crude illustration of a laughing Chinese soldier about to execute a kneeling Tibetan monk.[9] There is a fine line between criticism and demonization, one that *Manga de wakaru* repeatedly crosses.



A demonizing image from *Manga de wakaru*.

Yet despite its excesses, many of the points it makes about pollution, human rights abuses, and other failings of the contemporary Chinese state are valid. The authors show concern for the oppressed, especially Tibetans and China's rural poor. In this, it differs from *Manga Chugoku nyumon*, which offered cultural attack in place of detailed discussion of issues.

In 2006 and 2007, major manga critical of China moved away from attacks on Chinese culture toward a more focused

criticism of the Chinese state. Some non-fiction works in text format, however, have not. *Nihonjin yo, Yahari Chugoku wa abunai* (Japanese! China Really Is Dangerous) is a product of Tsuge Hisayoshi, a specialist on military affairs who now characterizes himself as a "China watcher".[10] According to the author, the purpose of this work is to "bring to light the latest information about out-of-control China." [11] Tsuge cannot conceal his prejudices. He resorts to essentialism and describes China's recent record of corruption as being due to the "true nature" of the Chinese.[12] He also launches an attack on Chinese worldwide - "Excepting some sincere exchange students and diplomats, we have to ask - what are ordinary Chinese doing in foreign countries? The truth is close to criminality without limit.... prostitution under the name of "massage", men committing acts of theft and robbery.... In some countries Chinese residents are becoming the source of various evils and are even staining their hands with murder." [13] This is simply a form of hyper-nationalist denigration of others.

Watanabe Shoichi, a leading neo-nationalist commentator, since the mid-1990s has tried to ensure that Japan's "national narrative", as expressed in school textbooks, popular history and other genres of non-fiction, is defended against the assertions of others.[14] In March of 2007, Watanabe released *Chugoku o eikyū ni damaraseru 100 mon 100 to* (100 Questions and Answers to Shut China Up Forever).[15] This title is

significant. Watanabe is looking to “shut up” a monolithic China that he sees as an irrational and untruthful “other” to the honest and just Japanese “self”. Watanabe believes that the Sino-Japanese relationship has been soured by China’s “wrong” version of the past. Here there are no shades of grey, only a snappy correct answer to every Chinese “untruth”.

Thus Watanabe not only argues that the Nanjing massacre did not happen, but that it *could not* have happened – “Originally, the idea of ‘massacre’ did not even exist in Japan... The Chinese, however, they loot, they kill, they’ll do anything.”[16] This is self-other contrast and fantastic assignment of national characteristics at its ugliest. Its historical essentialism whitewashes everything behind assumptions of Japanese moral superiority. It is also a rhetorical choice that ensures that Watanabe never has to deal with inconveniences like primary sources or human testimony.

Watanabe is not alone in exploiting this type of approach. Ko Bunyu, the prolific anti-Chinese author of Taiwanese extraction and editor of *Manga Chugoku nyumon*, released *Bunmei no jisatsu* (The Suicide of Civilization) in May of 2007.[17] The suicide referred to in the title is pitched as “China’s inescapable destiny”. Seeing inevitable collapse as the core of the Chinese cultural condition is a form of extreme essentialism. The work is, however, more balanced than some of Ko’s earlier efforts. Ko reports that when he thinks of China “... what

comes to mind are the Chinese classics, literature, novels and poems, and also the idea of Chinese centrality, the imperial system ... and the oft seen characteristics of its historical society – uprisings, banditry, refugees, frauds, and so on....”[18] Here, Ko seems to be drawing an artificial distinction between “Chinese civilization”, which he views as fundamentally bad, and “Chinese culture”, for which he expresses admiration.

Some of the reasons why Ko sees Chinese civilization as heading toward suicidal collapse are actually quite relevant criticisms. For example, he outlines how attempts to make Tibetans and Uighur into “Chinese” through means that individuals like the Dalai Lama have described as “cultural genocide” are bound to spark resistance that shatters national borders and national myths at the same time[19]. Support for these groups, their human rights and self-determination, however, would be better placed in a book that avoids polemical China bashing.

In their negative rhetoric, the writings of Tsuge Hisayoshi, Watanabe Shoichi, and Ko Bunyu are representative of recent neo-nationalist works in Japan published in text form. What is notable, however, is that such work is being relegated to the fringes of Japanese popular non-fiction. These titles are hardbacks, a trait shared by the bulk of Japan’s anti-Chinese writing.[20] In the case of manga, recent examples of which have maintained criticism of China while turning away

from earlier patterns of essentialism in important ways, the publishers Asuka Shinsha and Shinyusha come up time and again. They are small presses that exploit a rightwing niche audience. These manga are also released in a costly “wide” format, more typical of niche non-fiction than the smaller, priced-to-sell format of more mainstream manga and are placed in the “current affairs” section of bookstores, not with the manga bestsellers. In contrast, the most widely available, least costly, and frequently bestselling Japanese non-fiction titles, however, are released in the soft cover *bunko* and *shinsho* formats favored by Japan’s major publishers. Bookstores devote large permanent space to series in these formats, and they typically have a far longer presence on store shelves than hard covers. What is important about anti-China hard covers and manga is not that they are representative of the mainstream of Japanese popular discourse, but rather that they contrast greatly with the perspectives on China being put forward in Japan’s major non-fiction series. They are at best only one part of a much larger discussion.

[1] Izawa Motohiko, *Soshite Chugoku no hokai ga hajimaru*, Tokyo: Asuka Shinsha, 2006.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[3] Penney, “China Comparisons”, p. 16.

[4] Akebono Kikan, *Abunai! Chugoku*, Tokyo: Takarajima, 2006.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[7] Ajia Mondai Kenkyukai, *Manga de wakaru Chugoku 100 no akugyo*, Tokyo: Shinyusha, 2007.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

[10] Tsuge Hisayoshi, *Nihonjin yo, Yahari Chugoku wa abunai*, Tokyo: PHP, 2007.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

[14] Watanabe Shoichi, *Nihonjin no tame no Showashi* (A History of Showa for Japanese), Tokyo: Waku, 2007. This book, the very title of which shows a concern with “Japanese narratives for Japanese”, is representative of Watanabe’s approach to history.

[15] Watanabe Shoichi, *Chugoku o eikyu ni damaraseru 100 mon 100 to*, Tokyo: Waku, 2007.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[17] Ko Bunyu, *Bunmei no jisatsu*, Tokyo: Shueisha, 2007.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[19] Neo-nationalist authors, while castigating China for enforcing cultural uniformity through violence, have been silent on Japan’s prewar record of forcibly assimilating the culturally and linguistically distinct Ainu and Okinawan



peoples as well as efforts to downplay local traditions and enforce emperor worship and Japanese language learning in colonial Korea and Taiwan. When neo-nationalists do discuss these efforts, they are typically painted as a “civilizing project” in a pattern of representation that differs little from the most excessive Chinese government rhetoric.

[20] A few of the works critical of China that were released in hardcover format in 2005 have been incorporated into various *bunko* series. See, for example, Komori Yoshihisa, *Chugoku ‘hannichi’ no kyomo*, Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 2007. The book describes “Chinese anti-Japanese education” as “more dangerous than a nuclear weapon.” (p. 38).