Series Editors' Preface

Japanese scholarship has profoundly influenced how Sinologists across the globe engage with the Han and non-Han Chinese pasts of the region we today define as "China." Its insights permeate our discourse, periodization, and even vocabulary. However, despite this, there has been a growing disengagement and decided lack of dialogue between the Anglophone and Japanophone traditions in recent years that has made the voice of Japanese Sinology increasingly difficult to perceive. This is largely due to structural constraints in academia that hinder Japanese scholars from sharing their research internationally and the challenges younger Western Sinologists face in acquiring Japanese as an additional research language. That said, the benefits to be gained by engagement with Japanese scholarship are enormous. In the larger interest of making scholarship on China genuinely international and introducing major work to a largely Anglophone readership, we have launched an exciting new initiative with the extraordinary support of The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press to introduce the best Japanese work on China to the Anglophone world.

This recent lack of dialogue between the two traditions is unfortunate for a variety of reasons. The work of Japanese scholars has prefigured many influential arguments and discoveries in Anglophone scholarship. For instance, Naitō Konan 內藤湖南 (1866–1934) and his disciple Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定 (1901–1995) explored the Tang-Song transition and "East Asian early modernity" (*Tōyōteki kinsei* 東洋的近世), setting the stage for many of the arguments today associated with Kenneth Pomeranz's notion of a "Great

Divergence." Moreover, while the inadequacy of the "tribute system" framework has recently come under renewed scrutiny due to David Kang's influence, Japanese scholars such as Iwai Shigeki 岩井茂樹, Ueda Makoto 上田信, and Okamoto Takashi 岡本隆司 have not only criticized and expanded upon the framework of Hamashita Takeshi's 濱下武志 formerly influential "tribute trade system," but they have also provided empirically rich analyses of the reality of China's diversity in foreign relations. Our intent in presenting these examples is not to lionize Japanese scholarship and encourage all of us to begin genuflecting at its altar, but to emphasize the need for improved *engagement*, which would benefit all parties involved. One such example of this concerns the issue of how we deal with the "residual Eurocentrisms"—to use Deniz Kuru's term—that haunt our work. Traditionally, Japanese Sinology has been exceedingly self-aware of its own Eurocentric biases. Practicing the new "modern" Rankean form of historiography that took hold in Japan during the Meiji period necessitated the coining of a vast amount of new terminology derived from the Western European experience. The effects of Western modernity were, therefore, ever palpable in the words people spoke and employed in their writing. For famous Sinologist Tachibana Shiraki 橘樸 (1881–1945), to be "scientific" was to adopt Western concepts and epistemological frameworks. And, precisely for this reason, he followed H. B. Morse's (1855–1934) footsteps and denoted many groups and associations in Chinese society, such as the *huiguan* 會館 and *gongsuo* 公所 as "guilds." Others, however, such as Katō Shigeshi 加藤繁 (1880–1946), saw Tachibana and later Niida Noboru's 仁井田陞 (1904–1966) practice of employing the term "guild" as deeply problematic and rooted in a jaundiced Eurocentric understanding of the Chinese past.[1]

Furthermore, paradoxically, Japan's imperial expansion and the desire to establish itself as a superior alternative to the West, which was adequately poised to lead Asia, compelled its intellectuals to contemplate how the specter of Western modernity had hitherto inhabited and colonized Japanese thought. Despite the nefarious ways in which the ideas they produced were used to help

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1 Okamoto Takashi 岡本隆司, *Kindai Nihon no Chūgoku-kan: Ishibashi Tanzan, Naitō Konan kara Tanigawa Michio made* 近代日本の中国観——石橋湛山・内藤湖南から谷川道雄まで (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2018), pp. 112–147.

justify Japanese expansion in Asia, the "Overcoming Modernity" (*kindai no chōkoku* 近代の超克) symposiums of the 1940s could be read as a conscious means through which to isolate and do away with "residual Eurocentrisms." In other words, Japanese intellectuals at this time sought to *overcome* Western modernity, which compelled Japanese scholarship to become profoundly self-aware of its Eurocentric biases. Of course, this self-awareness was by no means infallible, and the very idea that Japan was best poised to lead the benighted Asia that Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1835–1901) spoke of in his "On Leaving Asia" (*Datsu-A Ron* 脱亞論, 1885) was an idea that was thoroughly grounded in Hegelian and Marxian portrayals of China as a place outside of history and which was mired by stagnation.

Issues of Eurocentrism also came to light in the postwar period, due to the debates that erupted in Japan over the proper way to periodize Chinese history. The postwar repentance for Imperial Japan's ills, coupled with a new-found admiration for China's "success" in achieving socialism through the Communist Revolution of 1949, encouraged a stream of new scholarship in which scholars of the Marxist "Rekiken" 歴研 School at the University of Tokyo sought to fit Chinese history into the mold of a Marxian developmental trajectory. As Kishimoto Mio 岸本美緒 has alluded to in a recent article, the intense debate over periodization that resulted from this paradox helped Japanese scholars to realize, by the 1980s, that periodization according to a Western historical trajectory made no sense and would lead to the cultural relativism that characterizes contemporary Japanese scholarship.[2]

The Japanese Sinology Series aims to bring some of the best Japanese scholarship on Chinese history and culture, broadly conceived, to an English-speaking audience. This series, the first of its kind, aspires to publish high-quality translations of academic scholarship about China produced by scholars working in the Japanese language, regardless of their Japanese or non-Japanese descent. We use the term "China" broadly and do not wish to solely privilege the Han Chinese past, welcoming research on non-Han regimes and peoples associated with what we today define as "China." We also welcome work on

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2 Kishimoto Mio岸本美緒, "Gurōbaru hisutorī ron to 'Kariforunia gakuha'" グローバル・ヒストリー論と「カリフォルニア学派」, *Shisō* 1127 (2018): 86–87.

communities, diaspora, and other connections to "China," wherever situated globally. More generally, we are open to manuscripts coming from any discipline.

We encourage submissions from prospective translators or original authors who can translate their work in line with the academic standards of Anglophone scholarship. Each submission will undergo a rigorous peer review process to ensure the highest standards of scholarship. For inquiries regarding the series, please contact Joshua Fogel (fogel@yorku.ca) or Thomas P. Barrett (thomas.barrett@keio.jp). It is our sincere wish that, together with your support, we can help push the boundaries of research with input from Japanese Sinology.

Joshua A. Fogel and Thomas P. Barrett
Series Editors, Japanese Sinology Series

Translator's Preface

In the fall of 1970, as a third-year student at the University of Chicago, I enrolled in the first term of elementary Chinese. I had decided that Chinese history was the way I wanted to go, and that, of course, necessitated study of the Chinese language. I also enrolled in the first Chinese history course I would ever take—it was on the Tang dynasty, and it was a graduate course. If that seems like a precipitous, danger-filled jump, it was. There were six of us in the class, and we were able to read virtually everything that had been written until then in English, including William Hung's biographical study of the great poet Du Fu 杜甫, Denis Twitchett's study of Tang finances, and Edwin O. Reischauer's magisterial translation and study of Ennin's diary, along with considerably more obscure articles. We even read page proofs of the forthcoming *Perspectives on the T'ang*.[1] It was great, and there was no turning back.

Little did I know how hard Tang-period Chinese was to read, though I soon came to realize that I would also have to learn to read Japanese. Although my research interests have tended toward later imperial and modern history, I have always wanted to engage with the Tang period. Having spent the last four or five decades working on Sino-Japanese relations, a study related to the Japanese secular and religious missions to Tang China (*ken-Tō shi* 遣唐使 in Japanese, *qian-Tang shi* in Chinese) seemed natural for me. While I might

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[1] Arthur Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

not be in a position to carry out an original work of scholarship, I thought I might be able to translate a work that would offer specialists in the field another perspective.

Several years ago, I translated a work by Saeki Arikiyo 佐伯有清 (1925–2005), a scholar of early Japanese history and especially its connections with mainland East Asia. It appeared under the English title of *Treatise on the People of Wa in the* Chronicle of the Kingdom of Wei: *The World's Earliest Written Text on Japan*.[2] It concerned an even earlier period in East Asian history and one of its most frequently commented upon texts. As it turned out, Saeki, whom I never had the good fortune to meet, had written a volume on the last of these Tang-era missions to make the voyage in the 830s. Planning for another mission was contemplated at the end of the ninth century, but it never went beyond that stage.

Saeki's subtle style of argumentation takes what appear to be foregone conclusions and holds them up for scrutiny. He launches right in by asking why Ono no Takamura 小野篁 (802–853), named the vice-ambassador on the mission initially scheduled to depart in 834, would decide at the last minute to refuse to board his vessel, knowing full well that he could suffer serious consequences for defying the throne. The obvious reason was abject fear that he would drown en route—and indeed, the mission ultimately experienced a series of disasters in both directions. Saeki, however, finds other possible causes, making the whole story that much more interesting.

Scholarship on this topic requires not only an extraordinary depth of learning in Japanese and Chinese history and language(s), but also an understanding of the histories of Silla and Bohai (Palhae). Also necessary is considerable learning about ninth-century Buddhism, shipbuilding, and modes of international communication within the Sinosphere. We get small tales of individual personalities—from Chief Ambassador Fujiwara no Tsunetsugu 藤原常嗣 (796–840) through the numerous Buddhist monks and even ordinary sailors and other lower-level functionaries who made the actual voyages physically possible. But *chutzpah* (חוצפה) in Hebrew runs deep in my family,

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2 Saeki Arikiyo, *Treatise on the People of Wa in the* Chronicle of the Kingdom of Wei: *The World's Earliest Written Text on Japan* (Portland, Maine: MerwinAsia, 2018).

and I was reminded of this promptly not only as I worked on the translation but especially when I read the meticulous comments that readers Matthew Fraleigh (Brandeis University) and Thomas Barrett (Keio University) provided. I owe them both a huge debt of thanks. In addition, for the translation of the titles of embassy personnel, I have generally followed Charlotte von Verschuer's *Les Relations Officielles du Japon avec la China aux VIIIe et IXe Siècles*.[3] I hope someday to meet and thank her in person.

One overwhelming point that comes through forcefully in this story is the astounding willingness of thousands of Japanese to literally risk their lives for the opportunity to visit the homeland of culture, be it secular or religious. Some would remain there for a relatively short period of time, while others, like Ennin, were there for a decade or more. There would never again be such a period of China-to-Japan cultural enrichment and interaction transported by Japanese visitors and pilgrims. At the tail end of the nineteenth century, a Japan-to-China route opened up for this volume of cultural exchange, and thousands of Chinese students flocked to Japan to study, though the vast majority were more interested in learning about the West via Japan and the writings available in Japanese than in Japan itself.

One of the things that makes this so readily available to readers at many levels, from students to academic specialists, was Saeki's writing style. He was able to narrate and mix difficult textual material with many ordinary stories, while at the same time reading between the lines of complex literary Sinitic prose. We learn in this book about men with such elite names as Fujiwara and commoners with single names. We also learn about how the Chinese of the Tang period and the Japanese of the Heian period interacted on those occasions when they did, the level of mutual respect, and each's recognition of the other's seriousness in this mutual venture. It provides an important corrective to Sino-Japanese relations in a much later period.

All dates given in the text by lunar month and day will be presented as month/day (and then converted in parentheses to the Western calendar). Thus, the twenty-second day of the sixth lunar month will be 6/22. Also, people's

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[3] Charlotte von Verschuer, *Les Relations Officielles du Japon avec la China aux VIIIe et IXe Siècles* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1985).

ages will be given as recorded in East Asian style, meaning that they are usually one year older than according to Western style. Finally, I was uncertain about the best way to refer to China at the time: simply "China," the "Tang," or "Tang China." There are good reasons for any (or even all) of these. The Tang imperium surely never came to power with an end date in mind, even if we now know there to be one. Indeed, "Tang" and "China" were effectively synonymous at that time, just as "Song," "Ming," and "Qing" were in their respective eras.

Joshua A. Fogel
Toronto, 2025

Preface

The Mysteries of the Jōwa Embassy to China

The dispatching of embassies to Tang China (*ken-Tō shi* 遣唐使) in Japan began in the year 630 (Jōmei 2) and concluded in 894 (Kanpyō 6). Counting from the first embassy led by Inukami no Mitasuki 犬上三田耜, there were a total of eighteen missions, three of which were cancelled. The time span covered was roughly 260 years, from the eve of an emerging Japanese state with codes of law (*ritsuryō* 律令) through the era of its decline.

Those men who traveled to the Sui (589–617) as scholars and monks-in-training, as part of the embassies to the Sui dynasty (*ken-Zui shi* 遣隋使), spent time in China during the tumultuous period of the demise of the Sui and the birth of the Tang dynasty. They observed the flourishing of the Tang in great detail before returning to Japan. As they counselled the court of Empress Suiko 推古 (554–628, r. 593–628): "The great state of Tang is a land of treasures equipped with fully established laws. We ought to have regular contact there."

This proposal was the origin of the sending of these embassies to China. Thereafter, the governmental institutions of the Tang dynasty were imported to Japan through these embassies, and the magnificent culture of the Tang was absorbed. Tang influence on Japanese politics and culture from the Nara through the Heian periods was genuinely immense. To that extent, the role played by the embassies to China in ancient Japanese history was critical. However, the coming and going of every embassy was obstructed by the natural barrier of the sea, and those travels were suffused by turbulence and life-

threatening dangers. Also, these embassies were especially brimful of all sorts of interesting men interwoven into the midst of the turbulence.

Among them, the seventeenth embassy, which transpired during the Jōwa 承和 period (834–848) and would be the final mission to the Tang, was an embassy replete with turmoil. After it was decided that this mission would sail in the first year of Jōwa (834), the embassy party failed twice to make the voyage. Just before setting off a third time, an unprecedented incident erupted when Vice-Ambassador Ono no Takamura refused to board ship. In addition, the first effort to make the voyage met with a disaster producing over 110 victims, and on its return from China, the number two vessel counted well over 100 deaths due to being cast adrift amid "pirate terrain in the South Seas"—one tragic catastrophe after another. The loss of life amounted to 40 percent of the well over 600 men on board the embassy's four ships—indeed, lives turned to tragedies, drowned at sea, and etched into the history of the embassies.

Many mysteries concerning the sending of this embassy in the Jōwa period remain hidden. Why did Ono no Takamura, who served under Chief Ambassador Fujiwara no Tsunetsugu, refuse to board ship? Despite failing to set sail twice, how was it that the government at the time stubbornly insisted that this embassy to China depart? What was the government's objective in dispatching this mission to China? And what was brought back to Japan?

There are even mysteries concerning the embassy vessels. Around the same time as the Jōwa embassy was to set sail, men from Tang China and from the kingdom of Silla were frequently traveling aboard Silla vessels between China and Japan. Silla vessels enjoyed an excellent reputation in Japan. The Japanese embassy ships, by contrast, were often a mess, frequently becoming shipwrecked. Unlike Silla ships, was the technology that went into constructing them inferior? Was the navigational engineering inept?

From the first sending of an embassy vessel to the dispatching of the Jōwa embassy, though, some 200 years had passed, and the Japanese had amassed considerable experience in sea travel with over twenty roundtrip crossings. Common sense tells us that low quality shipbuilding or navigation technology alone are inconceivable explanations.

To disentangle the many doubts of this sort, my plan in this volume is to trace in detail the movement of what became the final embassy to Tang China

from its sendoff to its return to Japan, while also focusing on the men of the embassy and the trends of the time. Materials for ancient Japanese history are not in a particularly happy state. Perhaps such an unfavorable condition is only natural for matters in the ancient period, but this is especially true of historical materials on the embassies to Tang China. Fortunately, for the final embassy, the standard history *Shoku Nihon kōki* 續日本後記 (Continued later chronicles of Japan), although fragmentary, provides a relatively rich account compared to the other embassies. This may be due, in part, to the Jōwa embassy's peculiar incidents of shirked responsibilities and massive losses of human life.

There is in addition the extraordinary chronicle known as *Nit-Tō guhō junrei kōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記 (The record of a pilgrimage to China in search of the law). Ennin 圓仁 (794–864), a priest of the Tendai sect who accompanied the Jōwa embassy, left us this thorough record of his travels in diary format. We thus know of the difficult state of affairs at sea for the embassy personnel on this final voyage and their movements in Tang China. It is permeated with the sorrows and joys of the travelers to this foreign land.

In this book, I will primarily be using these two kinds of historical materials to trace the story of the final embassy to Tang China. I shall be looking as well at the fates of the anonymous embassy personnel. In any event, however, these people remain anonymous, making the tracing of their travels exceedingly difficult. I have been successful at ascertaining the movement, after returning to Japan, of a person by the name of Etsu Teigen 越貞原 (Ochi no Sadahara 越智貞原), the embassy scribe, who appears in the *Nit-Tō guhō junrei kōki*. Tracking him may provide one aspect of the reason why the Jōwa embassy to China was the last one.

As I have repeatedly said, this embassy to Tang China of the Jōwa era was the last such embassy. I will begin our story with the incident surrounding Vice-Ambassador Ono no Takamura's refusal to board ship.