

# People's Diplomacy: The Japan-China Friendship Association and Critical War Memory in the 1950s

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## Summary

*This article examines the place of Sino-Japanese relations in Japan's domestic struggles over war memory in the early 1950s, when the door to an official reconciliation with China had just closed following the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. It focuses on the Japan-China Friendship Association as a lens through which to understand the role of civic organization in carving out a public space for memories of Japanese wartime aggression as part of special interest politics.*

## Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the Chinese-Japanese relationship has once again emerged as central to regional (and global) security and economic vitality. China's meteoric rise as an economic superpower, North Korea's threat to the stability of the region, and the changing

politics of Japan's U.S. alliance have sharpened national rivalries at the same time as regional integration has become a desired goal. This realignment of power relations elicited by now notorious "history wars" about Japan's alleged failure to appropriately address its aggressive wartime past, from vague governmental apologies and ambiguous history textbooks to outright denials of war crimes by some nationalist politicians. In the early 2000s, diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and Japan plummeted over prime minister Koizumi's annual visits to Yasukuni Shrine, where Japan's military dead are enshrined along with some Class A war criminals. Koizumi's handling of war memory issues also drew unprecedented criticism across the political spectrum in Japan—and especially from the business community—as detrimental to Japan's foreign political and economic interests. The place of "historical matters" in Sino-Japanese relations changed again in April 2007, when Chinese premier Wen Jiabao visited Tokyo to "melt the ice," focusing squarely on economic cooperation while only briefly mentioning the

“proper handling” of issues relating to the two countries’ shared history as the “basis of good bilateral relations.”[1] Prime minister Abe and his entire cabinet, for their part, decided not to visit Yasukuni Shrine the following August 15.

The current imbrications of war memory and Sino-Japanese economic ties seemingly contrast with the first three Cold War decades, when Japan and China had no official diplomatic relations and Japanese struggles with war memory rarely made international headlines. In fact, however, the desire for trade with mainland China played a significant role in the way that critical war memories of Japanese aggression assumed public attention in the opening stages of the Cold War. The peace treaty negotiations in the last years of the occupation and Japan’s independence in April 1952 galvanized the progressive and radical left in opposition to the conservative Yoshida government and its American supporters. They inspired mass protest movements of unprecedented scale and focused interest politics on issues of the war and its aftermath that had not been adequately addressed under the Allied occupation. One such issue was Japan’s relationship with China after the Communist Revolution and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) under Mao Zedong in October 1949. The United States’ deliberate exclusion of China and other communist countries from the peace treaty and the growing enmity between the two during

the Korean War (1950–53) alarmed many Japanese intellectuals, businessmen, and socialist and even conservative politicians, some of whom had been so-called China hands before and during the war.

Just as Japan’s political options for international rehabilitation became narrowly circumscribed by its alliance with the United States in the deepening Cold War, a whole new range of discursive possibilities concerning Japanese war memories opened up. The return of convicted war criminals to public life (and even national politics), the belated disclosure of the real horrors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, the stories of repatriates from Japan’s former empire, and bestselling collections of war testaments brought a flood of memories to public prominence and provided fertile ground for liberal democrats, pacifists, and nationalists of different vintages to formulate their respective political agendas with great urgency. It was in this context that an eclectic group of people with personal and professional ties to China formed a movement to “set the grand stage of Japanese-Chinese friendship” by promoting cultural and economic exchanges “between the two peace-loving peoples” based on remembering and atoning for Japanese war crimes against Chinese people, especially Chinese forced laborers in Japan.

One of the first collaborative projects of atonement was the retelling of an uprising at the


Hanaoka mine through a long series of woodcuts. These were originally presented as a slide show (*kamishibai*) at local storytelling events. Prepared under the guidance of a local artist, Nii Hiroharu, and published in 1951 in book form as *Hanaoka Story (Hanaoka monogatari)* these woodcuts adapted a Chinese tradition of political protest art that had become very popular in China before and during the war. The series depicted in graphic detail the conditions of Chinese (and Korean) forced laborers in the camp at Hanaoka, a copper mine run by the Kajima corporation (image 1), their brutal treatment at the hands of the mine supervisors, the laborers' uprising (image 2), and the Japanese supervisors' bloody crackdown in June 1945, which left 418 Chinese dead (image 3). One of the last panels showed Kajima's escape from responsibility for this crime as the big capitalists prevailed, undisturbed by the memory of the victims (image 4). The book remains in print today after more than 60 years and serves not only as a record of the Hanaoka massacre but also as a powerful reminder of Japanese brutality and aggression against Chinese, Korean, and other Asian laborers.[2] 



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4

This sentiment of remorse and atonement for specific Japanese war crimes was central to the establishment of the Japan-China Friendship Association (Nitchu yuko kyokai) on 1 October 1950, the first anniversary of the Communist Revolution. The Friendship Association held that without a peace treaty and the normalization of official relations with the PRC, the state of war between the two countries continued to victimize both peoples—if not with bullets, then by preventing the settlement of humanitarian issues and economic recovery through trade. In the group’s first statement, leaders blamed “American imperialism” for causing a revival of “Japanese militarism” by pressuring the government into a U.S.-Japan alliance that required remilitarization, thereby implicitly threatening Chinese national security. But it was the Japanese government, they held, that, against the will of its own people, refused to forge amicable relations with Communist China and furthermore failed to acknowledge its wartime

crimes. In sharp contrast, China, which had suffered under Japanese militarism, was successfully building a people’s state on the principles of peace and national independence and extending a “hand of friendship” to its neighbor.[3]

Although the Japan-China Friendship Association did not have a direct prewar or wartime organizational predecessor to salvage or reconnect with, the careers and personal lives of its leading members were deeply entwined with mainland China and the Japanese presence there in the first half of the twentieth century. The Friendship Association’s first president from 1950 to 1953 was Uchiyama Kanzo (1885–1959), who had spent half his life in Shanghai, where he ran a Japanese bookstore from 1917 right through the end of the war. Uchiyama had learned to walk a thin line there, taking advantage of the Japanese army’s protection of Japanese civilians in Shanghai during the 1930s, while offering his bookstore as a secret meeting place for Japanese and Chinese literary figures, some of whom were clearly resisters to Japanese imperialism in China. Known in the early 1930s as the Japanese-Chinese Culture Salon, Uchiyama’s bookstore was a refuge for the famous Chinese writer Lu Xun before his death in 1936 and one of several Shanghai liaison centers for Japanese communists like Ozaki Hotsumi, an *Asahi shinbun* reporter later involved in the Richard Sorge spy ring. Uchiyama returned to Japan in



1947 and reopened his bookstore in the Kanda district of Tokyo, this time specializing in Chinese books.[4]

Ito Takeo (1895–1984), another founding member of the Japan-China Friendship Association, had an illustrious prewar and wartime career in the research section of the South Manchurian Railway Company (SMR). As the director of the company's Shanghai office, he was friends with China specialists in the navy, while also maintaining close relationships with left-wing intellectuals critical of Japan's war in China, including Ozaki Hotsumi. The discovery of the Richard Sorge spy ring in Tokyo led to a series of arrests of scientists working for the SMR Research Department in Shanghai in 1942–43 and the execution of Ozaki. Ito was sent to prisons in remote areas of northern China in June 1943 but was released the following year. A number of Ito's Research Department colleagues remained in China after 1945 to oversee the dismantling of the SMR. Others returned to Japan and devoted themselves to building up the field of East Asian Studies at Japanese universities.[5]

The Japan-China friendship movement also relied heavily on politicians with prewar careers in social activism. Its second director was the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) politician Matsumoto Jiichiro (1887–1966), the founder in 1922 and chairman of the Leveling Society (*Suiheisha*), an organization for the restoration of the *burakumin* (outcast class) to full social privileges.

Matsumoto was arrested in 1942 but restarted his activism on behalf of *buraku* emancipation in 1946, developing it into a mass organization backed by many left-wing groups. Another prewar social activist and postwar Socialist politician was Oyama Ikuo (1880–1955), who had been a prominent Marxist economist and spent the war years in exile in the United States. Returning to Japan in 1947, he became a member of the Lower House of the Diet and a leading member of several peace organizations. Instrumental in the Friendship Association's quest for the revival of trade with mainland China was the active participation of Hoashi Kei (1905–89), a postwar Socialist politician and Diet member (of both Upper and Lower Houses), who was reelected seven times from 1947 on. Hoashi had been director of the Heavy Industry Council in the prewar period and a consultant to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry under Tojo in the early 1940s. He concluded agreements on Japanese-Chinese trade in the 1950s and 1960s and was also on the board of directors for the Japan–Soviet Union Friendship Association and the Association for the Return of Koreans Living in Japan.[6]

At the time of the Association's establishment, one-third of its 78 founding members were intellectuals and China specialists. Another third came from the business world, half of them representatives of Chinese overseas businesses, and the rest were JSP politicians, labor union

representatives, and social movement activists, including the mayors of Kyoto and Yokohama. The professional eclecticism of this organization helped in creating a mass movement in the 1950s around the notion that Chinese-Japanese relations, rather than the U.S.-Japanese alliance, should serve as the basis of postwar peace. It is safe to say, however, that the core of the friendship movement consisted of people like Ito Takeo and Uchiyama Kanzo, who brought to this movement a wealth of personal experience living and working in China before and during the war, and a deep commitment to righting the wrongs of the Japanese imperialist presence there.

### **Responsibility Evaded: Reparations and an “Incomplete” Peace**

Japan’s defeat in 1945 did not immediately erase its deep, multilevel entanglement with developments on the Chinese mainland. As the examples above show, many Japanese had made successful careers in China before as well as during the war, and the line between participating in the government’s militarist ventures and nurturing an anti-imperialist attitude deeply sympathetic to the Chinese people was sometimes blurred in real life. Some Japanese recognized, sympathized, and in a few cases actively supported Chinese resistance to Japanese imperialist ventures in China. But most simply played their own small parts in Japan’s vast and multifaceted presence there, which

extended far beyond military combat. The legacies of this complicated history, however, were largely buried in new Cold War enmities as perceived by Washington and implemented by the occupation forces in Japan. Under MacArthur, GHQ dealt directly with two main issues concerning Japanese-Chinese relations: the repatriation of Japanese from the Chinese mainland, and reparations. Repatriation was an ongoing humanitarian problem that spilled over into the 1950s and required the engagement of private organizations such as the Red Cross and the Japan-China Friendship Association. The return of Chinese and Koreans living in Japan at the end of the war, many of them forced laborers, was another matter. The loss of their status as Japanese nationals after the war, as well as the contemporary conditions of civil war in both China and Korea, made this reverse repatriation difficult and in some cases impossible, complicated by the fact that significant numbers chose to stay in Japan rather than return to their war torn countries.

The reparations issue, however, was even more directly bound up with Cold War politics and the interests of the United States in particular. Both the United States and the Chinese Nationalist government had drawn up separate plans demanding Japanese reparations payments well before the end of the war. In contrast to Chinese leaders, who demanded that Japan transfer its assets and industrial infrastructure to rebuild the

shattered Chinese economy and compensate for the huge public and private losses it had inflicted in the course of the war, the U.S. government approached Japan's reparations as an issue of economic policy rather than of punishment and restitution. The Communist Revolution and the establishment of the PRC in October 1949 sealed the fate of U.S.-Chinese negotiations over Japanese reparations.[7] The United States declared Communist China an enemy and brought Japan fully into its own orbit of strategic and economic interests in the region. The resulting mass protests in Japan against the exclusion of China and other Communist countries from the peace treaty and the demand of a "full peace agreement," however, virtually ignored the abandonment of the reparations program. Indeed, major leaders of the protests, such as the Teachers' Union, explicitly stated their desire to have reparations waived and instead to rebuild East Asian trade relations so that Japan would not remain dependent on the United States.

In contrast, organizations specifically focusing on Japanese-Chinese relations were formed at this time to demand the resurrection of trade between the two countries on the basis of atonement for Japan's wartime aggression. The Chinese Revolution demonstrated to them that China had in fact thrown off the shackles of the past and was building a peaceful society on new principles, while the Japanese government had

failed to make a clean break with its imperialist past by showing remorse for its war conduct. Whereas most on the liberal left saw that break with the past embodied in the commitment to "democracy," participants in the Japan-China friendship movement staked their hopes on a fundamentally altered relationship with China, which required a full acknowledgment of Japan's unilateral responsibility for its aggressive war in Asia.

Critical to the unity of this eclectic movement was the belief that the breakdown in relations with China was due to Japan alone. This reflected not only a moral and intellectual standpoint but also a political stance toward the contemporary situation, informed by a particular view of the prewar and wartime past. Essentially, the group held that Japan's century-long practice of imperialistic and militaristic policies toward China, paired with a popular attitude of contempt for its "backward" neighbor, was now being revived through Japan's support of American imperialism in Asia. As early as January 1950, a statement of goals for the proposed Friendship Association hinted at this belief:

The first step toward rebuilding a democratic Japan is to dispose of our self-satisfied island-nation mentality and to become an international people willing to preserve peace in all directions. It is therefore necessary that not only the

Pacific but also the Japan Sea and the East China Sea become “free waterways.” It is an old truth that “Japan will not prosper if China does not prosper.” We should recognize this, but in a way that corrects the old view of China.[8]

In the early 1950s, the Friendship Association accused the Japanese government of failing in at least three ways to “correct the old view of China.” First, the government both covered up and evaded practical responsibility for Japanese war crimes committed against Chinese people in both China and Japan. One specific example heavily publicized by the Friendship Association in its first years was the Hanaoka massacre of 30 June 1945. Second, it pointed out, neither the Japanese government nor the people correctly understood the significance of the Communist Revolution. It was in China, not in Japan, that people had succeeded in throwing off the shackles of the imperialist past and were building a free society of “new men” based on the principles of independence, equality, and peace. Third, by following the United States in recognizing the Taiwan Nationalist regime as the legitimate representative of China, Japan once again used China’s internal affairs for its own self-serving political purposes instead of accepting reality.

Specialists on contemporary China, including scholars and critics in the humanities and social sciences, served as the Association’s main

resource in its endeavor to articulate a responsible memory of Japan’s war in China. The Japan-China friendship movement attracted intellectuals who had professional or personal ties to mainland China, enthusiasm for the Communist Revolution from an ideological standpoint, and a progressive political understanding of culture. Takeuchi Yoshimi, perhaps the best-known postwar scholar of modern Chinese literature, held views that mirrored those of the Friendship Association but never actually joined the movement and refused several invitations to visit China as a member of a cultural delegation. Although Takeuchi became a political activist for a short time at the height of the 1960 movement against the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (Anpo), his understanding of revolution was theoretical rather than practical, and he steadfastly refused to get involved in politics.

Nevertheless, Takeuchi’s vision of Chinese resistance to foreign and domestic exploitation as a “model” for Japanese society had great intellectual influence on those active in the Japanese-Chinese friendship movement. It resonated powerfully among those who contrasted the success of China’s Communist Revolution with the dearth of revolutionary promise in Japan in the early 1950s. Takeuchi’s China, in Lawrence Olson’s words, “served a vitally affirming purpose as an object of aspiration and an abstract good.” Intellectuals



working in the friendship movement, however, devoted themselves to making China the subject of political discourse and popular knowledge in Japan. They accepted the PRC as a “qualitatively different kind of civilization peopled by ‘new men.’”[9] As a first step toward changing the Japanese people’s poor understanding of China, the Association printed an article denouncing the Japanese term *Shina* as imperialist and promoting the use of *Chugoku* as the correct name for the People’s Republic of China.

In fact, intellectuals writing in *Nihon to Chugoku* not only demanded atonement for Japanese wrong-doing in the past but clung to the political and moral notion of a new reality. If Japan had led Asia into war, China was now the leader in building peace and prosperity for all in Asia. Indeed, a 1953 article entitled “The New China and Japan” took issue with every criticism of the new regime in China in the contemporary media and turned it around to demonstrate the PRC’s competence and good intentions. Politically, China presented no threat to its neighbors because its strength rested neither on dictatorship nor on monopoly capitalism. With the people taking the lead, “why should a country that has reformed itself, that knows the way to develop on its own . . . be a threat to its neighbors?” Militarily, the Korea conflict had shown that China sent the People’s Liberation Army abroad only to support, not to dominate. It had consulted with the Korean government

before dispatching its troops and had been the first to withdraw. Economically, the Chinese Revolution had contributed to building peace because it rested on the economic empowerment of the people. “Japan’s history has shown that Japanese colonialism in China and Korea was based on the absence of domestic economic growth. The people were losing their freedom with every day, while the capitalists increased their power. This is the path to invasion, and China is on the opposite path now.” In fact, China represented an economic asset to Japan in as much as relations could now be formed on the basis of independence and equality instead of colonialism.[10]

These arguments lined up all too well with sentiments expressed in Zhou Enlai’s speeches and in *People’s Daily* editorials. They also overlapped with a wider anti-American, pro-Asian nationalism espoused by many prominent intellectuals on the liberal left, including Maruyama Masao and Shimizu Ikutaro. Opposition to the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, which excluded the PRC and guaranteed the United States military bases in Japan, represented a common starting point for action among pacifists of different ideological convictions and formed the core of the Friendship Association’s campaign for the restoration of formal Sino-Japanese relations. The Asia-Pacific Peace Conference, held in Beijing in the fall of 1952 with participants from

40 countries, provided an internationally visible opportunity for “people’s diplomacy” through cultural exchange. Until the last minute, the Foreign Ministry withheld permission for the Japanese delegation of fourteen peace activists (including representatives of the Friendship Association) to travel to Beijing. Preparatory meetings in Tokyo as well as in Beijing attracted wide participation and media coverage. A resolution regarding the “Japan Question,” one of eleven official statements issued over the course of the twelve-day conference, demanded a complete peace treaty with Japan, expressed the Japanese people’s desire to “promote the establishment of an independent, democratic, free and peaceful new Japan by stopping the revival of Japanese militarism,” and called for the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Japanese soil.[11]

The belief among friendship movement activists that peace in Asia would originate in China once American imperialism was overcome appeared to have been powerfully reaffirmed in the Five Peace Principles of Peaceful Coexistence that Zhou Enlai and Jawaharlal Nehru announced at their summit in June 1954: mutual respect for territorial sovereignty; nonintervention; nonaggression; equality and reciprocity; and peaceful coexistence despite rival ideologies. This held enormous significance for the intellectual left as an attempt to apply democratic principles directly to international relations rather than to

domestic affairs alone. Moreover, the left regarded this extension of democracy as having originated in Asia and not the West. It gave intellectuals involved in “cultural diplomacy” a sense of triumph over America and Europe in the realm of political ethics. Shimizu Ikutaro expressed this sense when he wrote:

If we think about the significance of these five principles, it must be seen as only natural that these principles, differing from the great principles and theories to date, were created not in Washington, Paris or Moscow, but in a corner of Asia. That is not in the company of power, but rather in opposition to power. . . . The life of democracy is, through the hands of the peoples of Asia and Africa, being reborn.[12]

The movement to change the basis of international relations in Asia from the U.S.-Japan security alliance to Sino-Japanese friendship rested in part on a new ethnic nationalism centering on Asia. It was a reactionary nationalism in the sense that it was born out of resistance particularly against the United States (and the Cold War system), and thus in some ways resembled the Greater Asianist thought of the Meiji period. But in defining a shared Asian identity and destiny, perceptions of cultural and racial commonality retreated behind a belief in historical progress. For it was in Asia that a new system of

international peace, independence, and democracy promised to replace the old capitalist nationalism that had caused World War II and was still championed by the United States.

### Grassroots Diplomacy

Within the contemporary political environment and from the standpoint of resistance against the state, the Japan-China Friendship Association adopted “people’s diplomacy” as its *modus vivendi*. This term, *kokumin gaikin* in Japanese, was adapted from the Chinese *renmin waijiao* coined by the PRC’s first premier, Zhou Enlai. However, the Chinese term *renmin* (*jinmin* in Japanese) means “the people” in communist terminology, whereas *kokumin* the Japanese appropriation, implies the people of a nation, rather than a proletariat. The Friendship Association did not simply adopt communist terminology but adjusted it to reflect the political realities of Japan. Conceptually, “people’s diplomacy” shifted the agency in foreign relations from states (which conducted wars) to “the people” (who created peace). Practically, the term was used to describe the informal relations between the Chinese “people’s” state and Japanese civic organizations like the Friendship Association. The Friendship Association thereby insisted on the putative unity between the Chinese people and their (communist) state on the one hand, while simultaneously stressing the diametric opposition between the Japanese people and their government under the thumb of the United

States on the other.

“People’s diplomacy” was not only born out of the political realities of the day but in turn shaped the place of critical war memory in public life. Far from simply an opposition movement, the Friendship Association’s work supplemented official policy in ways that even conservative politicians welcomed. Its success in managing Sino-Japanese relations in fact depended on the tacit consent of the government: the Friendship Association persistently lobbied the same state institutions it protested against, so as to ensure its position in brokering relations with the PRC. To be sure, the Association deserved credit for creating and maintaining important channels of communication with the PRC from which official relations, once they were normalized (in 1972) and formally restored (in 1978), could easily be institutionalized. Nevertheless, until then its activities also helped to perpetuate the political arrangement by which relations with China remained outside the political mainstream, while official policy focused on relations with the United States. This political arrangement created the framework in which the Friendship Association’s memory of the war commanded public attention. Acknowledgment of and atonement for Japan’s wartime aggression had its legitimate place in postwar public life—namely, as part of special interest politics. But insofar as this interest remained outside the political mainstream, it did not effectively challenge

official policy, which marginalized China and ignored war responsibility because it was politically expedient to do so in a Cold War context in which the United States was the hegemonic power.

Although the Japan-China Friendship Association established itself within a few years as a political interest group connected with the opposition Socialist Party (and indirectly with the Communist Party) and recognized on the highest bureaucratic level, it styled itself as a “people’s movement.” One of the Association’s efforts to bring together people from all walks of life and establish relations with Chinese people involved a letter-writing campaign on the occasion of the fourteenth anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge incident—the military clash between Chinese and Japanese troops on 7 July 1937 that marked the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War. Between 1 July and 15 August 1951, the Association called on individuals and groups from political, economic, cultural, scholarly, labor, and housewives’ circles to send greetings to Chinese individuals and groups on the mainland and on Taiwan. An article in *Nihon to Chugoku* entitled “Considering August 15th: Let Us Send Greetings to China!” invited people to write down their “heartfelt thoughts and wishes for the Chinese people” and send these letters to the Friendship Association to be mailed to Chinese newspapers (and ultimately collected and published in a single volume). The letters urged

readers to remember the human misery set in motion by the Marco Polo Bridge incident, not only for the Chinese but also for the Japanese, who “were driven into such an aggressive war [by the militarist state]” and for the whole world. Moreover, current circumstances threatened to revive the horrors of that war:

In the past two to three years, as the crisis in Korea poisoned both the international climate and that in our own country, our hopes for peace—acquired at the highest sacrifice—are fading, and the sound of shells and smell of gun-powder have returned. Given Japan’s precarious past, we have to establish friendly relations with our neighbor China. We cannot allow hostile relations to develop nor can we tolerate them. Cooperation between the Chinese and the Japanese is our heart’s desire, . . . and we commemorate this year’s anniversary of 7 July as the most straightforward step toward mutual understanding between our two peoples.[13]

The letters reprinted in subsequent issues of *Nihon to Chugoku*, typically written by presidents of labor unions and other organizations, echoed the sentiments expressed in this passage. They emphasized the unity between the Chinese and Japanese peoples by stressing their common victimization at the hands of Japanese militarists in the past and the conservative Japanese

government in the present.

This characterization of Japanese attitudes toward China closely matched the Chinese Communist Party's official criticism of Japan and exposed the Japan-China Friendship Association to accusations of acting as the CCP's mouthpiece. The *Mainichi shinbun* carried an article on 17 July 1950, even before the Association's official establishment, branding the movement's leaders "a group of spies" who carried out subversive activities against the U.S. military without the knowledge of the majority of its would-be members. At the height of the Red Purge, this amounted to no small threat for the movement, and the Association would have to defend itself against such accusations for years to come. Throughout the months leading up to the signing of the peace treaty in September 1951, moreover, the PRC mobilized youth groups, student organizations, and the councils of every major city in China to send messages to "the Japanese people" encouraging them to protest the treaty. Statements opposing a "partial peace" by the Chinese National Association of Social Scientists and the Association of Natural Scientists dovetailed neatly with the peace appeals issued earlier by Japanese scientists and the Peace Problems Discussion Group around Maruyama Masao and Nanbara Shigeru. Friendship movement activists in Japan translated and distributed all these messages.

Conversely, the Friendship Association accused

the Japanese government of using anticommunist ideology to avoid facing the new political realities in Asia and escape responsibility for Japan's wartime aggression. During the peace treaty negotiations, this was an especially heated argument voiced by much of the opposition on the left. A public controversy unfolded when it became known that Prime Minister Yoshida had secretly written to John Foster Dulles on 10 February 1952 agreeing to conclude a peace treaty with the Nationalist regime on Taiwan without having formally brought this matter before the Diet. An article in *Nihon to Chugoku* denounced the "Yoshida letter" in moral terms, as a continuation of the utter disrespect for China that had caused the war in the first place—and a denial of responsibility for the war against the Chinese people: "If Prime Minister Yoshida felt even an inch of remorse for Japanese militarist undertakings in China, why would he refuse to recognize the government which represents all of China at the present time and instead conclude a "peace treaty" with a government exiled to Taiwan?"[14]

To highlight Japan's past and present practice of construing the political reality in China in its own interest, the statement quoted wartime prime minister Konoe Fumimaro. Konoe had insisted, in 1938, that "we will not deal with Chiang Kai-shek" at a time when Chiang did in fact represent China while Japan supported a puppet regime in Nanjing. Now that Chiang was exiled, the



argument continued, the Japanese government insisted on recognizing him, this time in order to bolster its alliance with the United States. The authors of the statement also pointed to the February 1947 massacre in Taipei of Taiwanese resisting the Chiang regime. They stressed that by recognizing Taipei instead of Beijing, Japan had again allied itself with an aggressor rather than with the communist liberator. Indeed, it was the Association's view that establishment politics in Japan had not fundamentally changed since the war.

Building a people's movement, however, entailed specific organizational strategies in addition to community work. By 1953 the Friendship Association had secured a wide net of political affiliates. Six smaller organizations had joined as members, all offering specialized services in one or another aspect of Chinese culture. In addition, two Japan-China trade organizations, two academic research institutes, and two organizations facilitating repatriation of Japanese from China became close affiliates. The largest, if least structured, reservoir of recognition came from so-called mass organizations across the political spectrum, including seventeen labor unions and eighteen peace groups. In addition, all six main political parties and five powerful bureaucratic agencies (the cabinet, the Foreign Ministry, the Health and Welfare Ministry, the Labor Ministry, and the Agency for Assistance to Returnees) recognized the Japan-China

Friendship Association as a major political pressure group. The Association in turn facilitated the establishment of other China-related organizations such as the Committee to Commemorate Chinese Prisoner of War Martyrs in 1953, the Japan-China Association for Cultural Exchange in 1956, and the Liaison Society for Returnees from China, also in 1956.

People's diplomacy enjoyed almost immediate public visibility and success in relation to the issue of restarting efforts to repatriate Japanese nationals left in China at war's end. After the initial wave of 1,492,397 returnees from China through 1946, the numbers plummeted to 3,758 in 1947 and to 92 in 1951. On 1 December 1952 the Beijing government announced that about 30,000 Japanese still residing in China enjoyed the protection of the Chinese government, lived happy lives, and even sent money back to their families in Japan. It asserted that those who chose to return to their homeland would receive assistance from the Chinese government, but since China could not provide enough ships, it asked for the help of Japanese citizens' groups under the leadership of the Chinese Red Cross Society. The Japanese Red Cross, the Japan-China Friendship Association, and the Peace Liaison Society became the liaison partners on the Japanese side. The Friendship Association immediately contacted some of the Japanese living in China through their newspaper *Minshu shinbun* (People's Newspaper) as well as their

families in Japan. The first ship of Japanese returnees arrived in Japan on 23 March 1953, and the number of repatriates reached 26,051 by the end of the year. The Japanese government had provided the ships but offered few services to help the newcomers relocate in Japan.

The successful repatriation efforts clearly endorsed the Association's "people's diplomacy" and offered an opportunity to convince the public that the Japanese government not only took little responsibility for its militarist past, but in fact continued it. In sharp contrast, the Chinese government appeared willing both to lay the past to rest and build an amicable relationship with Japan and also to share its peaceful progress with Japanese individuals who could now transmit their positive experiences to their compatriots at home. Even before their return, the Japanese left in China had become one of the Friendship Association's constituencies. The Association gave them a voice in Japan by printing their letters in its periodicals and provided mediation services for their return, but also clearly used them to support the Association's political goals.

When the first ship arrived, the Friendship Association's vice-president, Hirano Yoshitaro, personally welcomed the one thousand returnees as "victims of Japan's aggressive war who return not defeated but with important gains from the new China." He expressed regret at the lack of government measures to help relocate them, which demonstrated the state's unwillingness to

assume responsibility for its own citizens as well as for the Chinese killed by Japan during the war. Most of all, Hirano urged the returnees to become ambassadors of China through their personal lives and experiences there: "We believe that you are the people who can connect our two countries because you have first-hand knowledge of the new China. The Japanese people are thrilled to have you home, so please use this opportunity and teach them about the new China and deepen their interest and commitment to friendship with China."<sup>[15]</sup>

Japanese war criminals tried and convicted at Chinese war crimes tribunals received special attention upon their return to Japan in 1956. They had received comparatively light sentences so as not to harm Sino-Japanese friendship, as a Chinese official statement explained, and had undergone significant reeducation during their eleven-year residence in China. Once in Japan, some of them spoke publicly at town meetings and various local committees about their experiences in China and served as cultural ambassadors of the "new China." Most importantly, they brought the issue of war responsibility into sharp focus by strongly criticizing their own wartime actions and forming their own groups built upon the notion of atonement. The Friendship Association reminded its readers that the punishment of these war criminals did not absolve the rest of the Japanese of their responsibility for the war. In a

sense, the war criminals were also victims of Japan's militaristic policies. But unlike the majority of Japanese living in Japan after the war, they had deeply reflected on their crimes during their stay in China.

While the repatriation issue struck a humanitarian chord and thus received public attention, the trade issue played a significant role in the confrontation between the Japanese government and the PRC-backed opposition. Trade with China enjoyed support across political lines. Insofar as the particular political arrangement in which the revival of trade with China took place in the 1950s revealed competing goals, the China trade was an obviously charged issue in both foreign policy and domestic politics. The ruling LDP did its best to keep the China trade outside Japan's international relations framework, which was guided by the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. The JSP, however, sought to use the China trade to attack and eventually alter Japan's international position as a principal ally of the United States. In a speech to the Japan-China Friendship Committee on 13 July 1950, Katsumata Seiichi, head of the Socialist Party's Policy Research Committee, highlighted the connections between economics and foreign policy. He argued that American economic aid artificially propped up the Japanese economy instead of allowing it to develop the self-sufficiency that was vital for true national independence. Even though MacArthur insisted

on the purely economic nature of American aid, the advent of the Korean War had exposed underlying political considerations.

But as long as the focus remained on mutual economic benefits, the restoration of trade relations was marked by successful cooperation because it was desired by all sides, if for different reasons and in different forms. No conservative cabinet—from that of Yoshida Shigeru's to Kishi Nobusuke's and beyond—wanted to sacrifice the China market, even if the Friendship Association accused them of deliberately hindering the people's "natural" aspirations to trade with the Chinese. The conservatives in turn regarded communism in China as "unnatural" and probably short-lived, and were prepared to wait until the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the PRC would no longer demand Japan's abrogation of the San Francisco Peace and Security Treaty. Yoshida had argued in 1951—in defense of his decision to conclude a peace treaty with Taiwan—that formal relations with the nationalist regime on Taiwan did not preclude informal trade relations with the PRC. Picking up on this quote, Democratic Party vice-president Mamoru Shigemitsu opined that Yoshida Shigeru had hoped to speed up this process by "Europeanizing" China through the promotion of trade relations.

In fact, Yoshida's "separation of politics and economics" (*seikei bunri*) and Zhou Enlai's "people's diplomacy" dovetailed rather nicely on

the issue of trade. The Chinese insistence until the mid-1950s on dealing with the Japanese people but not their government only reinforced Japan's policy of treating trade and official diplomacy as separate matters, informally consenting to the former while officially refusing the latter. The work of the Japan-China Friendship Association was clearly welcomed by some LDP politicians and businessmen who recognized China's crucial role in Japan's economy. Murata Shozo, president of the Japan International Trade Promotion and a member of elite financial circles, worked closely with the Association and traveled to Beijing numerous times to negotiate and sign trade agreements with the Chinese. He considered diplomatic relations with the PRC to be premature, given the international situation in the 1950s, and insisted that the establishment of economic relations precede the restoration of diplomatic relations. Murata thus supported the government's position while taking the lead in ensuring the success of people's diplomacy.

And yet, people's diplomacy was also able to challenge, and even undermine, the official separation of politics and economics by working toward closing the perceived gap between "the people" and "government." M. Y. Cho observed a gradual politicization of successive informal trade agreements with China, originating from pro-China organizations and even extending to the cabinet itself. Whereas the first trade

agreement of 1 June 1952 was decidedly apolitical, the third agreement of 4 May 1955 clearly outlined the establishment of mutual and permanent trade representation missions in each country, with personnel to be granted the same status as official diplomats. Moreover, their responsibilities were to include political lobbying within their respective governments for normalization of official diplomatic relations. In this way, pro-China organizations in Japan not only benefited from the increased power vested in them because of the government's *seikei bunri* policy, but in turn used their success in promoting trade relations to advance a broader agenda vis-à-vis the conservative establishment. There were nonetheless significant setbacks, for example the Kishi cabinet's refusal to sign the fourth trade agreement in 1958, after the PRC had openly demanded that Japan commit itself to China's three political principles—"no hostilities against the PRC, no involvement in the two-China conspiracy, no hindering the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations." Despite this temporary failure of people's diplomacy, informal mechanisms remained in place for the quick revival and expansion of economic relations with China in the early 1960s, eventually leading up to Sino-Japanese rapprochement in 1972.[16]

Clearly, the Friendship Association aimed to shelter a wide range of affiliations and constituencies under the umbrella term "people's

movement.” Its commitment to further its aims through people’s diplomacy thus acquired different forms and meanings in different settings. Socialist and Communist Party politicians representing the Association’s interests in the Diet presented themselves as the “voices of the people” vis-à-vis the conservative establishment. Business people who depended on trade with China and their political representatives drew on the contemporary flow of private trade on a regional and business-centered basis, as well as on the desire in financial circles to reestablish China as a principal market for Japanese goods. Japanese repatriates from China as well as Chinese residents in Japan could act as the most direct ambassadors for Sino-Japanese friendship, precisely because they personally bore the marks of Japanese hostility against China. Perhaps most importantly, intellectuals and scholars, for whom intellectual freedom was a concern, practiced a more direct form of people’s diplomacy. As authorities on Chinese affairs, they were able to give the Japanese public an alternative view of contemporary China through lectures and the collection and distribution of documents that were otherwise unavailable. These four constituencies thus highlight the diverse means by which the Friendship Association’s interest politics contributed to the dynamics of war memory in the postwar political arena.

### **Remembering Japanese Aggression**

The Japan-China Friendship Association never failed to emphasize the centrality of cultural exchange in the process of building good relations between the two countries. These cultural activities nevertheless had clear political implications, not only because of the Association’s favorable treatment of Chinese communism, but because of the prominence of cultural policy generally in diplomatic relations among countries all over the world. As Akira Iriye has shown, cultural internationalism became an urgent matter in the aftermath of World War II, reflected, for example, in the establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), whose 1945 constitution declared that “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” So widespread was the belief in the importance of cultural contact for the preservation of peace—perhaps especially among countries that had suffered defeat in war—that a West German Press and Information Bureau release could express perfectly the general aspirations of the Japan-China Friendship Association: “Through alliance policies, you win allies, through trade policies, business partners, through cultural policies, friends.” This could equally well have been the motto of the Japan-China friendship movement. The preface to a joint statement of 51 intellectuals in support of friendly cooperation with China in March 1952 defined friendship as a matter of “civilization”



that manifested itself through cultural exchange.

From the early 1950s on, the Friendship Association collected Chinese printed and visual materials, including newspapers, magazines, research documents, photographs, art, and movies, and distributed them to publishing companies, schools, and its own members. Until its closure in March 2005, copies of these materials were collected in the Japan-China Friendship library, located in the Nitchu yuko kaikan in Tokyo. Unlike the Association’s political work, which was handled mainly by the central office in Tokyo, cultural activities were carried out predominantly on the prefectural and local levels. Local chapters were heavily involved in community work, creating public awareness about the PRC through lectures, movies, photo and art exhibitions, publications of war memoirs, and the distribution of Chinese-language books and magazines.

Much of this cultural activity took place under the rubric of the “movement never again to allow war between Japan and China” (*Nitchu fusaisen undo*) and focused on the commemoration of Japanese wartime aggression against Chinese people. This included observance of the anniversaries of the main war events on the Chinese mainland, in particular the Manchurian incident (1931) and the Marco Polo Bridge incident (1937), which were studiously ignored in the national press until decades later. Most of the war crimes commemorated by local Friendship

Association chapters had taken place in Japan proper, however, and involved Chinese forced laborers and prisoners of war. These local organizations coordinated research into wartime incidents at mines, factories, or farms in 135 locations all over Japan, with the heaviest concentration in Hokkaido, and compiled exact data on the Chinese laborers who had worked and died there.



Map showing all 135 locations of wartime incidents involving the death of Chinese forced laborers [17]

They began by collecting the remains of the Chinese dead and conducting Buddhist ceremonies to honor them before returning them to China in white boxes. The Japanese government apparently did not involve itself in such basic humanitarian work and left the bodies of these Chinese dead scattered in the fields near their workplaces. A gruesome photo of piles of skulls and bones near the Hanaoka mine in Akita Prefecture taken in November 1945 attests to this.[18]



In addition to many small, local ceremonies, large commemorations were held in bigger cities. The first of these took place in April 1953 at the Honganji temple in Asakusa, Tokyo. In February of that year, the Chinese Victims Commemoration Committee had been set up to coordinate these activities. These were Buddhist ceremonies, whose rites were shared by Japanese and Chinese alike, at least in principle. As such, they formed an important contrast to the Shinto ceremonies usually employed for the

commemoration of the Japanese war dead. Later ceremonies, such as a commemoration held in Fukuoka in March 1971, included Korean and Japanese victims of wartime mining incidents as well.



[19]

Throughout the postwar decades, but especially from the 1960s through the 1980s, local Friendship Association chapters erected stone monuments all over Japan to commemorate Chinese victims of Japanese wartime aggression, to reflect on Japan's war responsibility, and to remind subsequent generations of the lessons of that war and the abuse of human rights in the name of imperialism and militarism. Many of these monuments seem to blend harmoniously into their park environs, bearing the characters for "Never again war between Japan and China" (*Nitchu fusaise*) in front and a more detailed inscription in the back or on the sides. Some of

these monuments stand out for their abstract designs. A five-meter-tall stone pillar commemorating the Hanaoka massacre was erected near the mine in 1966 and bears the characters for “growing tradition of friendship” (*hatten dento yugion*) on one side and “against aggressive war” (*hantai shinryaku senjoo*) on the other, using Chinese, rather than Japanese, word order.



Fusaisenhi



Hanaoka Memorial

Photos are courtesy of Japan-China Friendship Association

The inscription on the back of the Hanaoka Memorial reads:

With the support of caring people from both Japan and China, we have erected this monument to friendship and never again to allow war between Japan and China. In 1944–1945, 993 Chinese, who had been brought here illegally under Japanese militarism, lived here in the Chusan Dormitory at the foot of this mud-filled dam, abused and forbidden to speak their native language. On 30 June 1945, these laborers as well as those who wanted to protect the honor of their fatherland rose up as a group to at last

oppose Japanese imperialism heroically. Here lie the remains of 418 people who gave their lives patriotically to this cause. We will forever remember this incident, our prayers never again to allow war between Japan and China chiseled into stone for the grandchildren of both countries.[20]

Although this inscription clearly places the responsibility for this human rights abuse on Japan and “Japanese militarism,” it avoided an opposition between the Japanese and the Chinese people by including Japanese resisters to militarism among the “patriotic” victims murdered here.

The Friendship Association attracted the sometimes violent attention of those who interpreted their activities as politically motivated and in fact dictated by the PRC. Indeed, the American occupation forces themselves lashed out at the group in 1951 (in the so-called People’s Daily Distribution Suppression incident), when it arrested several members for distributing “communist propaganda.” In the Nagasaki incident in May 1958, right-wingers burned the Chinese flag that had been displayed at a local conference to promote Japanese-Chinese trade and cultural exchange. Monument inscriptions that referred to Japan’s war in Asia as unambiguously “aggressive” also invited vandalism. After a wave of popular protests against Japan swept China (and to a lesser extent

Korea) in the spring of 2005, the Japan-China Friendship Association received threats from right-wing groups in Japan that made it cancel the annual meeting scheduled for late May in Awara, Fukui Prefecture, and switch to a new venue in Tokyo in November. According to the China Daily, managing director Yazaki Mitsuharu said in an official announcement that the Association could not guarantee the participants’ and local residents’ safety in the face of these threats.[15] This did not keep the Association from issuing a formal letter on 2 August urging Prime Minister Koizumi not to visit Yasukuni Shrine on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the war’s end out of respect for Chinese suffering at the hands of Japanese militarism during the war.

Throughout the postwar decades, the Japan-China Friendship Association stood committed to the acknowledgment of Japanese war crimes against Asia in general and China in particular. Above all, its shift in focus from the national to the international level and its belief in Chinese-Japanese cooperation as the only way to a peaceful future set it apart from other organizations concerned with war memory. This bilateral focus was supported from various angles, including geographic proximity, economic necessity, cultural affinity, and ideological commitment. The Friendship Association regarded the Cold War split of Asia as reproducing the deeper and longer split

separating Japan and China throughout modern history. At the same time, it recognized the displacement of this historically problematic relationship by the Cold War system and protested it as Japan's "second guilt," to borrow a phrase Ralph Giordano coined for postwar Germany (the first guilt being Japan's condescending attitude and military conduct toward China during the war).

For at least three decades, Cold War divisions continued to define both Japanese and world politics, effectively marginalizing voices such as that of the Friendship Association. And yet the Friendship Association's view of Japan's war and postwar enjoyed an informal, unofficial public visibility that paralleled its political position in managing informal Japanese-Chinese relations. War memory that acknowledged and probed into Japan's war responsibility toward Asia was neither absent from Japanese public life nor actively silenced by a dominant, official narrative. If silencing mechanisms were in place, they did not appear to hinder the Association's extensive public activities—lecturing in schools, maintaining archives open to the public, or erecting memorials to Chinese victims of Japanese aggression. Rather, the Friendship Association's attempt to shift the parameters of public discourse from a national or trans-Pacific understanding of the war and the postwar to one centering on Northeast Asia did not muster the kind of political expediency necessary to

challenge official policy under the Cold War system. Because so much of the Association's work appeared to be an advertising campaign for the PRC at a time when the majority of Japanese held deep suspicions of communism, the Friendship Association's work (and its rendition of war memory) had limited appeal. When the Cold War context gradually dissolved in the 1980s, Chinese-Japanese relations "naturally" took center stage, and the acknowledgment of Japanese war crimes in Asia found increasing public support.

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## Notes

1. *Japan Times*, 12 April 2007.
2. From Nozoe Kenji, ed., *Hanaoka monogatari* Mumyosha shuppan, 1995. Reprinted with the publisher's permission. Franziska



- Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005* Harvard University Asia Center Press, 2006.
3. "Tomen no mokuhyo nitsuite." *Nihon to Chugoku* 20 February 1950. This journal, *Japan and China*, was inaugurated in February 1950 under the auspices of the Japan-China Friendship Association Preparatory Committee and grew into the Friendship Association's main organ after its formal establishment in October 1950.
  4. See Joshua Fogel, "The Other Japanese Community," in Wen-hsin Yeh, ed. *Wartime Shanghai* Routledge, 1998.
  5. For more on Ito Takeo, see Joshua Fogel, ed., *Life along the Manchurian Railway* M.E. Sharpe, 1988.
  6. *Shakai undo chosakai. Sayoku dantai jiten* Kyokuto shuppansha, 1966.
  7. See Okamoto Koichi, "Imaginary Settings: Sino-Japanese-U.S. Relations during the Occupation Years." Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2000.
  8. "Tomen no mokuhyo ni tsuite," *Nihon to Chugoku* 11 December 1953.
  9. See Lawrence Olson, "Takeuchi Yoshimi and the Vision of a Protest Society in Japan" in *Ambivalent Moderns* Roman & Littlefield, 1992, pp. 58 and 45.
  10. "Shinchugoku to Nihon," *Nihon to Chugoku* 11 December 1953.
  11. *Nihon Chugoku yuko kyokai zenkoku honbu, Nitchu yuko undo shishonen shuppansha*, 1980, p. 58.
  12. Quoted in Rikki Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan* Routledge, 1996, pp. 173-74.
  13. "8.15 o mezashite: Chugoku ni aisatsu o okuro!" *Nihon to Chugoku* 10 July 1951.
  14. "Yoshida shokan nit suite no seimei," *Nihon to Chugoku* 15 February 1952.
  15. Hirano Yoshitaro, "Kikokusha no minasan e," *Nihon to Chugoku* 1 April 1953.
  16. A detailed analysis of this process can be found in M.Y. Cho, *Die Volksdiplomatie in Ostasien* (Otto Harrassowitz, 1971).
  17. In *Nitchu yuko kyokai, Shogen: Chugokujin kyosei renkō* pp. 82-83, a booklet accompanying a three-part documentary video made by the Japan-China Friendship Association between 1991 and 2001.
  18. In *Nihon Chugoku yuko kyokai, ed., Nitchu yuko undo no hanseiki* pp. 27-28.
  19. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
  20. *China Daily*, 19 May 2005.