

**Disembodiment and Dissemination:
The Chinese Factor**

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Japanese Poetry in Chinese Translation from the Ming Period

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While Japanese study of China and annotated translations from the Chinese have been an ongoing phenomena since Japan first adopted Chinese characters, for many cultural and social reasons, Chinese study of Japan has been a less well-developed field. There have nonetheless been four eras in which the Chinese have demonstrated considerable interest and even built the beginnings of scholarship concerned with things Japanese: the late Ming (more specifically the Jiajing 嘉靖 and Wanli 萬曆 reigns), the decade from the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) through the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), the 1930s and first half of the 1940s (from the Manchurian Incident of 1931 through the conclusion of World War II), and the present period (roughly the past 30 years).¹ With the exception of the last of these, in each of the first three eras, it was war that elicited a heightened Chinese interest in Japan—even the final contemporary period (as with the others) might be understood as Chinese interest aroused by a desire to know a potential enemy.

1 This view is shared with Wu Anlong 武安隆 and Xiong Dayun 熊達雲, *Chūgokujin no Nihon kenkyū shi* 中国人的日本研究史 [History of Chinese Japanology] (Tokyo: Rōkkō shuppan, 1989), pp. 14–16; Watanabe Mitsuo 渡辺三男, “Chūgoku kobunken ni mieru Nihongo: *Kakurin gyokuro* to *Sho shi kaiyō* ni tsuite 中國古文獻に見える日本語: 鶴林玉露と書史會要について” [Japan as seen in old Chinese documents: The *Helin yulu* and the *Shu shi huiyao*], *Komazawa daigaku kenkyū kiyō* 駒澤大学研究紀要 [Bulletin of studies from Komazawa University] 15 (March 1957), pp. 155–156. Wang Yizhong cites a total of 81 Chinese works from the Ming period about Japan, and there were certainly many more; see Wang Yizhong 王以中, “Mingdai haifang tuji lu 明代海防圖籍錄” [Texts on coastal defence and maps from the Ming period], *Qinghua zhoukan* 清華週刊 [Qinghua weekly] 37, no. 9–10 (May 1932), pp. 141–162.

The essay that follows emerges from the first of these periods, the least well studied anywhere.² After a brief discussion of pre-Ming traces of Japanese writings in Chinese texts, I focus on a corpus of medieval Japanese poems translated, annotated, and explicated in Chinese in an utterly magnificent edition. Sadly, we know next to nothing about how this work was done or much of the specific background.

Prior to the late Ming, there were any number of efforts over the centuries in which Chinese authors attempted to represent Japanese proper nouns in particular—in fact, such efforts predate the transmission of any written language to Japan. Only in the Ming, though, did Chinese writers try to come to terms with aspects of the Japanese language that distinguished it from Chinese; in other words, to see Japanese as a significant entity in its own right and not just a kind of crippled Chinese. For example, the existence of the *kana* syllabaries were not unknown before the Ming, but it was only in the late Ming that Chinese scholars began to study them seriously, to explain Japanese grammar by parsing the structure of the Japanese sentence, and preparing long lists of words with Chinese pronunciation guides.

All too often taken as a transparent vessel, language reflects, contains, and indeed transports the social, political, and cultural contexts of its speakers and writers. Prior to the twentieth century, virtually all educated Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and others inhabiting what I have called the Sinosphere³ looked to China for moral, political, and cultural leadership, and they understood that mastery of the written Chinese language was an essential part of the package of becoming a civilized people. Knowing Chinese thus became a definitional index to the level of one's erudition, and given the close linkage between knowledge and morality in Sinic culture, knowledge of Chinese thus became a basic part

2 See Joshua A. Fogel, "Chinese Understanding of the Japanese Language from Ming to Qing," in *Sagacious Monks and Bloodthirsty Warriors: Chinese Views of Japan in the Ming-Qing Period*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Norwalk: EastBridge, 2002), pp. 63–87.

3 See Joshua A. Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 4–5.

of one's self-cultivation and broader elite social cohesion.

Chinese, however, rarely made the effort to learn a foreign language prior to the tail end of the Qing empire, and those who did were often seen as decidedly odd. For example, when the Qing scholar Weng Guangping 翁廣平 (1760–1843) introduced his study of Japan and the Japanese, the *Wuqi jing bu* 吾妻鏡補 (Commentary on the *Azuma kagami*), he virtually apologized for being a man who “by nature enjoys strange books.”⁴ The obvious exceptions are marked by the conquest dynasties of Yuan and Qing, at which time a fair number of Chinese perforce learned Mongolian and Manchu, respectively. In these instances, power politics dictated language acquisition, and refusal to do so might be seen as a form of proto-nationalism. Otherwise, there was simply little or no cultural capital to be gained by Chinese attempting to acquire a foreign language—any foreign language—while there was vast cultural capital associated with other East Asians acquiring Chinese. To the extent that they evinced any interest in Japan at all, elite Chinese would have seen it solely as a function of how well they judged the efforts of Japanese scholars and writers to compose Chinese poetry and prose, write commentaries on the Confucian classics, and in these ways contribute to a larger Sino cultural endeavour.

As the foregoing should readily indicate, language was inextricably bound up with culture in the minds of East Asians, never simply a linguistic or political concern. This is, of course, still true in many parts of the world today. That the Chinese felt self-sufficient with literary Chinese was, to be sure, something they shared with other East Asian elites, and it is a quality that set each apart from his fellow nationals of the lower classes. Because of a shared sense of culture within East Asia, Chinese and Japanese (and Korean and Vietnamese) scholars might have

4 Cited in Wang Baoping 王寶平, “*Wuqi jing bu* zhuzhe Weng Guangping kao 吾妻鏡補注者翁廣平考” [A study of Weng Guangping, author of the *Wuqi jing bu*], in *Zhong-Ri wenhua luncong—1996* 中日文化論叢—1996 [Essays in Sino-Japanese culture—1996], ed. Hangzhou daxue Riben wenhua yanjiusuo 杭州大學日本文化研究所 and Kanagawa daigaku jinbungaku kenkyūjo 神奈川大學人文學研究所 (Hangzhou: Hangzhou daxue chubanshe, 1996), pp. 156–157.

felt a stronger cultural and hence personal attraction to one another and the civilization all were creating together than they would have to peasants in their home countries.

The first reference to a Japanese word in a Chinese text appears in the section on the “people of *Wa*” (*Woren* 倭人), the ancient name for “Japan,” in the *Wei zhi* 魏志 (Chronicle of [the kingdom of] Wei) by Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297). The *Han shu* 漢書 (History of the [Former] Han) and the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (History of the Later Han) both have extremely brief mentions of “*Wa/Wo*,” but it is not until the *Wei zhi* that we get an extended treatment. The famous passage there contains numerous Japanese proper nouns: toponyms, official titles, a handful of personal names such as that of the female sovereign Himiko 卑彌呼, and a whole host of state or country names within what are now the islands of Japan.⁵ These are not treated in any linguistic fashion but simply as renderings of foreign words. Given the fact that the *Wei zhi* was composed at a time prior to the use of Chinese characters (to say nothing of any native written language) in Japan, this transcription of these early Japanese words in Chinese characters marks the first time that any Japanese words were ever written down—at least as far as we know from the evidence before us now.

Later dynastic histories that contain treatises on either “*Wo*” or “*Woren*” frequently include similar Chinese-character transcriptions for Japanese

5 The literature on this section from the *Wei zhi* is one of the most commented upon pieces of writing in all of Japanese scholarship, comprising hundreds of books and far more articles. There are even books about all the books and articles within this scholarly literature. For annotated translations, see Ishihara Michihiro 石原道広, *Yakuchū Chūgoku seishi Nihon den* 訳註中国正史日本伝 [Treatises on Japan from the Chinese dynastic histories, translated and annotated] (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1975), pp. 14, 18, 22; Wang Xiangrong 汪向榮 and Xia Yingyuan 夏應元, *Zhong-Ri guanxi shiliao huibian* 中日關係史料匯編 [Collection of historical materials on Sino-Japanese relations] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), pp. 8–13, 18–21. See also the early English translation in Ryusaku Tsunoda and L. Carrington Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories* (Pasadena: P. D. and Ione Perkins, 1951), pp. 14, 16, 20; and more recently in J. Edward Kidder, *Himiko and Japan's Elusive Chieftdom of Yamatai: Archaeology, History, and Mythology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

proper nouns. These would include the listing of the “five kings” of *Wa* and their embassies to various Chinese courts, given in the entry on *Wo/Wa* in the *Song shu* 宋書 (History of the Liu-Song dynasty). In each case, the “Japanese” king was requesting investiture within the ritual system surrounding the Chinese court. The entry on *Wo* in the *Sui shu* 隋書 (History of the Sui dynasty) includes the names of the kings of *Wa* and various Japanese place names as well.⁶

Thus far, we have looked solely at the standard, official history or *zhengshi* 正史. Certain private collections of poetry and prose also include, on occasion, reference to something Japanese or cite Japanese terms in Chinese-graph renderings. The Chinese monk Yichu 義楚 (Mingjiao Dashi 明教大師) from the Five Dynasties era (907–960) incorporated a section on “States, settlements, prefecture, and towns” in his *Shishi liutie* 釋氏六帖 (Six models of Buddhism). In it he included a subsection on Japan, which he certainly never visited, that carries the following note about Mount Fuji: “Over 1,000 *li* to the northeast is a mountain by the name of Fuji. . . . A single flower soaring on high, its summit is covered in mist.”⁷ There are many similar notes in middle-period and early modern Chinese literature, including as many as several hundred such in Chinese poetry of the Tang period (618–907), and interestingly this is not the first mention of a Japanese mountain in a Chinese text. The entry on “Japan”

6 Wang Xiangtong and Xia Yingyuan, *Zhong-Ri guanxi shiliao huibian*, pp. 31–32, 44–45; Ishihara Michihiro, *Yakuchū Chūgoku seishi Nihon den*, pp. 25–26, 49, 50; Tsunoda and Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories*, pp. 29–30, 40. See also Watanabe Mitsuo, “Zuisho Wakokuden no Nihongo hitei 隋書倭国伝の日本語比定” [Identifying Japanese words in the “Treatise on Japan” in the *Sui shu*], *Komazawa kokubun* 駒沢国文 5 (October 1966), pp. 1–8.

7 Yichu 義楚, *Shishi liutie* 釋氏六帖 [Six models of Buddhism], in vol. 5 of *Xiandai Foxue daxi* 現代佛學大系 [Modern compendium on Buddhism] (Taipei: Mile chubanshe, 1982), p. 433. It is not known precisely but believed that, because he had not travelled to Japan himself, Yichu gained this information from a Japanese monk, Kanpo 寬輔 (Kōjun Daishi 弘順大師) who travelled to China in 958; see Wang Xiangrong, “Guanyu Riben kao 關於《日本考》” [On the *Riben kao*], in *Zhong-Ri guanxi shi wenxian lunkao* 中日關係史文獻論考 [Essays on documents in the history of Sino-Japanese relations] (Beijing: Yuelu shushe, 1985), p. 242.

in the *Sui shu* of several centuries earlier refers to Mount Aso 阿蘇山, which occasionally still appears in the news as an active volcano.⁸

All of the above notwithstanding, prior to the Song era we can point to no effort on the part of the Chinese to say anything about the Japanese language itself. Luo Dajing 羅大經 (Jinglun 景綸, *jinshi* 進士 or metropolitan graduate of 1226), a Southern Song scholar and poet from Luling 廬陵 (in what is now Jiangxi Province), notes in his important diary, *Helin yulu* 鶴林玉露 (The glittering dew drops of Helin), of a meeting he had as a young man in Zhonglu 鐘陸, Zhejiang Province, with a visiting Japanese monk called Ankaku 安覺 (1160–1242). Ankaku, it turns out, was a Rinzaï Zen 臨濟禪 (Linji Chan) monk who came from the Kōshōji 香正寺 in Chikuzen 筑前 domain and was originally known as Shikijō Ryōyū 色定良祐. He was said to be a brilliant young man who, reportedly, had mastered the entire massive Buddhist canon by the age of 20; he then travelled to China shortly after the year 1200 and stayed there for more than 10 years. He spent his time in China memorizing the Buddhist texts that comprise the canon and returned to Japan in 1214.⁹

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- 8 Ishihara Michihiro, “Chūgoku ni okeru Nihon kan no tanshoteki keitai: Zuidai izen no Nihon kan 中國における日本觀の端緒的形態：隋代以前の日本觀” [The emergence of views of Japan in China: Views of Japan before the Sui era], *Ibaraki daigaku bunrigakubu kiyō (jinbun kagaku)* 茨城大学文理学部紀要 (人文科学) [Bulletin of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Department of Ibaraki University, Humanities Division] 1 (March 1951), p. 203; Ishihara Michihiro, “Nichi-Min tsūkō bōeki o meguru Nihon kan: Mindaï no Nihon kan (ni) 日明通交貿易をめぐる日本觀：明代の日本觀 (二)” [Views of Japan surrounding Japanese-Ming communications and trade: Views of Japan in the Ming era, part 2], *Ibaraki daigaku bunrigakubu kiyō (jinbun kagaku)* 5 (March 1955), p. 20.
- 9 Luo Dajing 羅大經, *Helin yulu* 鶴林玉露 [The glittering dew drops of Helin], *juan* 16, pp. 5b–6a (repr., Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 1990); Ishihara Michihiro, “Chūgoku ni okeru rinkōteki Nihon kan no tenkai: Tō, Godai, Sō jidai no Nihon kan 中國における隣好的日本觀の展開：唐・五代・宋時代の日本觀” [The development of a friendly view of Japan in China: Views of Japan in the Tang, Five Dynasties, and Song periods], *Ibaraki daigaku bunrigakubu kiyō (jinbun kagaku)* 2 (February 1952), pp. 53–54; Watanabe Mitsuo, “Chūgoku kobunken ni mieru Nihongo,” p. 157, citing works such as the *Nihon Bukkyō jinmei jisho* 日本佛教人名辭書 [Biographical dictionary of Japanese Buddhism] and the *Honchō kōsō den* 本朝高僧傳 [Biographies

Luo briefly recounts Ankaku's career to date and describes something of the Japanese language that Ankaku taught him. He notes 20 Chinese terms and their Japanese translations which are given in Chinese-character transcriptions (see Figure 1-1).



Figure 1-1

of eminent monks of our era]; Zhang Yaqui 張雅秋, “Cong *Helin yulu zhong de yize shiliao kan Songdai Zhong-Ri wenhua jiaoliu* 從《鶴林玉露》中的一則史料看宋代中日文化交流” [Song-era Sino-Japanese relations as seen from the historical material in the *Helin yulu*], in *Zhong-Ri wenhua luncong—1996*, pp. 205–206. I have followed this last essay by Zhang Yaqui (p. 208) for Ankaku dates, although Watanabe offers slightly different ones. Wang Yong 王勇 refers to pieces of this sort about Japan in the Tang, Five Dynasties, and Song eras as the “prehistory of Chinese Japanology” in his essay, “Chūgoku ni okeru Nihon kenkyū no zenshi 中国に於ける日本研究の前史” [The prehistory of Japanese studies in China], in *Zhong-Ri wenhua luncong—1991* 中日文化論叢—1991 [Essays in Sino-Japanese culture—1991], ed. Hangzhou daxue Riben wenhua yanjiusuo and Kanagawa daigaku jinbungaku kenkyūjo (Hangzhou: Hangzhou daxue chubanshe, 1991), pp. 132–146.

The first three are political terms for which Ankaku gave not transcriptions but actual Japanese translations (or, at least, Japanese equivalents), and the fourth term is a mixture of direct translation and Chinese graphs used to render Japanese morphemes. The remaining 16 are single-character terms given in Chinese which are followed by Japanese pronunciations approximated by Chinese characters. This process is known among Japanese linguists as *kan'yaku* 漢譯 (*hanyi*) or *on'yaku* 音譯 (*yinyi*). For example, in the image above, the Chinese term *yu* 雨 (rain) is followed by two graphs (in contemporary Mandarin pronunciation) which read *xiami* 下米, an approximation for Japanese *ame* (rain); Chinese *tou* 頭 (head) is followed by *jiashiluo* 加是羅 which approximates the Japanese term for head, *kashira*.¹⁰

In all such cases, one must not forget that we are comparing contemporary pronunciations of Chinese and Japanese terms. Chinese and Japanese topolects and chronolects have undoubtedly changed dramatically over the eight centuries since this exchange took place, and this is the intellectual juncture at which trained linguists can make a great contribution. Nonetheless, even the ear of an untrained linguist can easily detect the equivalencies in Luo's list. That said, Luo's enumeration was the only one of its kind prior to the Ming era.

It would not be until the Ming period that the two Japanese *kana* syllabary alphabets were introduced to Chinese readers, and Ming-era texts about Japan would expand Luo Dajing's word list many times over. We have no extant Chinese-language texts about Japan or the Japanese language for the Yuan period, but the Mongol conquest certainly would have exposed elite Chinese, especially those who served in its government, to the Mongolian language. The Mongols themselves had only acquired a

10 Luo Dajing, *Helin yulu*, *juan* 16, pp. 5b–6a. For a more detailed and specialized study of just one of the terms in this text, see Asayama Shin'ya 朝山信彌, "Kakurin gyokuro no 'ōbo' nado ni tsuite 鶴林玉露の黄榜などについて" [On the expression "huangbang" in the *Helin yulu* and other matters], *Kokugo kokubun* 國語國文 [Language and literature] 7, no. 12 (December 1937), pp. 116–120; see also Arisaka Hideyo 有坂秀世, "Jōdai ni okeru sagyō no tōon 上代に於けるサ行頭音" [Initials in the *sa*-line in antiquity], *Kokugo to kokubungaku* 國語と國文學 [Studies in Japanese language and literature] 13 (January 1936), p. 96.