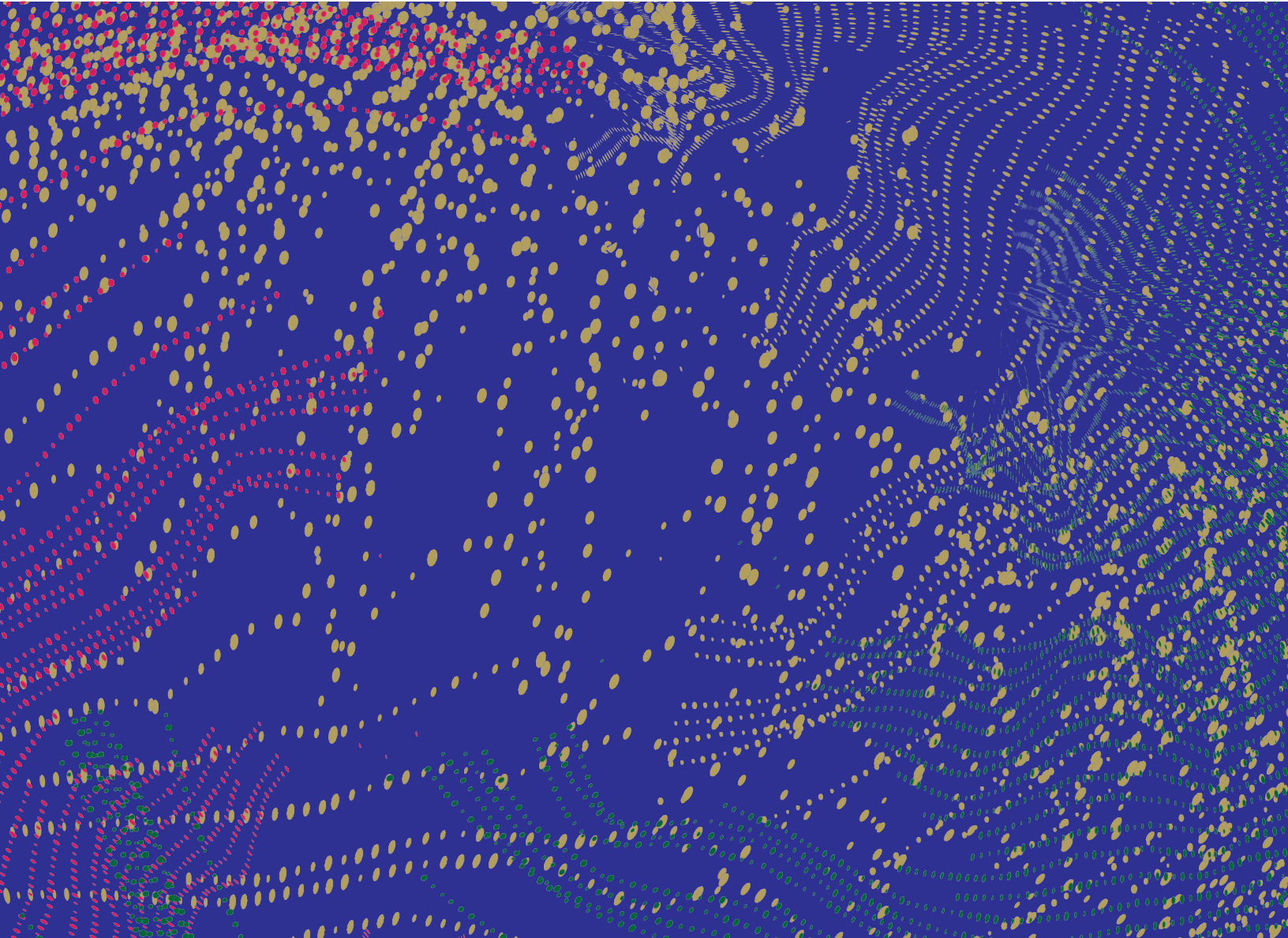


The World Humanities Report

Foreign Literature in China: Japanese and Asian

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Foreign Literature in China: Japanese and Asian

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Although China has for many centuries had close cultural exchanges with surrounding areas, only in the past century did they come to be taken as objects of research and their fortunes thought of integrally in relation to China's own. During the 1920s and 1930s, when Asian literature studies began to emerge in modern China, it was limited to a few scholars' introductions of the literature of individual countries (such as Zhou Zuoren and Xie Liuyi on Japanese literature and Xu Dishan on Indian literature). The study of the literature of various Asian regions *as a discipline* came about only after the founding of the new China in 1949, and only since the 1980s has it been made systematic and institutionalized. As such, Asian literature studies is still an emerging field in China. And as it continues to emerge, Asian literature studies in China exhibits an imbalanced development, as a projection of historical imbalance, between the study of Japanese literature, which as a subfield has always been larger, and that of the rest of Asia.

Because Japan both shares with China the Chinese character cultural tradition in Asia and "left" Asia and "joined" Europe in modern times, discussions around the question "What is Asia?" have figured centrally in the field of Japanese literature and thought in recent years. Reflections on the Chinese cultural sphere (known in China as the Cultural Circle of Chinese Characters, which in addition to China includes Mongolia, Vietnam, Japan, and North and South Korea) and the literature of Japanese colonies have posed the problem of what "Asian" means. After World War II, Japan maintained an advantageous position over other Asian countries in terms of technology and material resources. The situation in Japanese and Asian literature studies in China today reflects the complexity of China's own historical process and experience. For China, a country in East Asia, it is predetermined that "Asian" literature cannot be simply

an object of study. This assumption cannot be shaken off and is a force driving academic growth.

A Discipline Open to World Literature

As with all foreign literatures, the literature of Japan is that of a country “foreign” to China. But China and Japan are two countries “separated by a narrow strip of water that can be crossed in a reed boat.” For two thousand years, they have “appreciated together the lightness of tea, softness of silk, exquisiteness of porcelain, and profound silence of literati painting.”¹ Furthermore, the history of Sino-Japanese relations in the half century after 1895 was extraordinarily complicated. Revitalized after the two countries resumed their engagements in the latter half of the twentieth century, Japanese literature studies has, unsurprisingly, an unusual mission.

The general historical context for the revival and development of the teaching and study of Japanese literature in China was this reengagement between the two countries after World War II. In the mid-1950s, following the conclusion of the Korean War, China devised and began adhering to the so-called Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and during this period, a substantial breakthrough was made in Sino-Japanese relations. By May 1955, three non-governmental trade agreements had been signed between representatives of China and Japan. According to incomplete statistics, between 1955 and 1957 as many as 293 Japanese nongovernmental delegations with 3,272 delegates had visited China. The fields of exchange extended from economy to science, technology, agriculture, and culture.² Demands for Japanese translators in diplomacy and in various trades and professions advanced the teaching and study of Japanese language and literature.³ In the 1960s, with the signing of the

¹ See Guo Moruo’s “Wo de muguo: Zuowei Riben wenxue keti” [My motherland: As a topic in Japanese literature] written in 1936, before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and his “Qinyuanchuan: Zhu Zhong-Ri huifu bangjiao” [To the tune of Qinyuanchuan: Congratulations on the resumption of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations] written in 1972, on the occasion of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Japan.

² Masao Shimada, *Zhanhou Ri Zhong guanxi 50 nian* [Postwar Japan-China relations: 1945–1994] (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 133.

³ According to Chen Hansheng, in the mid-1950s, when Liao Chengzhi participated in the international peace movement and was in touch with Asian countries, he had mentioned his intention to prepare for establishing an Asian studies institute. In it, the vision for Japan studies included politics, economy, law, religion, culture, and education. See Chen Hansheng, *Sige shidai de wo* [Me in four different eras], ed. Ren Xuefang (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi

Memorandum Concerning Sino-Japanese Long-Term Comprehensive Trade and the formation of the Sino-Japanese Friendship Association, Sino-Japanese affairs entered a new stage with the goal of normalizing diplomatic relations. During this period, after Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai gave the instruction to reinforce foreign studies in institutions of higher education and the Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council and the Department of Higher Education formulated a seven-year plan for foreign languages education for 1964–70, various universities and colleges established dedicated Japanese majors or Japan studies institutes. As a result, new opportunities for Japanese literature studies arose. For instance, in 1964 the Institute of Japanese Studies at Northeast Normal University was formed with a research office for Japanese language and literature. In that same year Beijing International Studies University was founded, with the goal of training translators and diplomats.

On the twentieth anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, Lü Yuanming published a monograph on Japanese anti-war literary works that were forgotten because they had not been written in Japan. He treated these anti-war writings, which were undoubtedly created by Japanese writers, as “a page in the literary enterprise of the Japanese nation.”⁴ In an environment where Sino-Japanese relations had been normalized and the Cold War ended, the book introduced the courage, fortitude, progressiveness, artistry, and authenticity inherent in this work to Chinese readers⁵ and stressed that “China is the rock wall of Japanese anti-war literature and its ally.”⁶

Thanks to its historical origin, China’s Japanese literature studies has had from its very beginning an autonomy and openness that are not bound by disciplinary institutionalization. It is because of this that Japanese literature is considered as part of world literature. Lü Yuanming, who published the first Chinese postwar history of Japanese literature, was engaged in the teaching and

chubanshe, 1988), 117. On the training of Japanese translators and the building of the Japanese major in the mid-1950s, see Wang Xueping, “Liao Cheng-zhi to Liao-han no tainichi gyomu tantousha” [Liao Chengzhi and persons undertaking dealings with Japan in the Liao Group], in *Sengo Nitchu kankei to Liao Cheng-zhi: Chugoku no chinichihwa to tainichi seisaku* [Postwar Japan-China relations and Liao Chengzhi: China’s Japanologists and Japan policy] (Tokyo: Keio University press, 2013), 38.

⁴ Lü Yuanming, *Bei yiwang de zai Hua Riben fanzhan wenxue* [Forgotten Japanese anti-war literature in China] (Changchun: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993), 3.

⁵ Keizo Yamada and Lü Yuanming, eds., *Zhong Ri zhanzheng yu wenxue: Zhong Ri xiandai wenxue de bijiao yanjiu* [Sino-Japanese War and literature: A comparative study of modern literature in China and Japan] (Changchun: Dongbei shifan daxue chubanshe, 1992), 42.

⁶ Lü Yuanming, *Bei yiwang de zai Hua Riben fanzhan wenxue*, 3.

study of Soviet literature before he turned to Japanese literature. A book he edited in 1962, *Ya Fei wenxue* [Asian and African literature], had dedicated chapters on Korean, Vietnamese, and Mongolian literature, in which he emphasized the contribution of Asian, African, and Japanese literature to world literature, as well as the relationship among Asian, Japanese, and world history.⁷

Of course, the Cultural Revolution soon interrupted the developments in Japanese literature studies and the revitalization of the Japanese major. Further development had to wait until the end of the 1970s, when two significant events occurred: the establishment in 1979 of the China Association for Japanese Literary Studies, under the joint effort of the Institute of Foreign Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Northeast Normal University; and the launch of *Riben wenxue* [Japanese literature], the first professional journal on the translation, introduction, and review of Japanese literature, three years later.⁸ The openness in the field of Japanese literature in its early years made it easy for research to take on interdisciplinarity when it flourished in the 1980s. Liu Jianhui, one of the first Chinese scholars to obtain a doctorate in Japan, turned his attention to urban culture in his study of Japanese literature during the 1990s. Chen Liwei entered the field of political thought after studying Japanese language and literature, and Yan Shaodang crossed from Japanese literature studies over into comparative literature studies. This inherent vitality of Japanese literature studies made it possible for it to have an impact on modern literature and intellectual history studies in the 1990s. At present, Japanese literature studies still keeps such an open stance. The academic circles, when studying contemporary Japanese literature and culture, often touch upon the issue of Japanese nuclear energy and ecology that directly bears on the basic security and interest of various East Asian countries, or the Japanese animation

⁷ See Lü Yuanming, ed., *Ya Fei wenxue* (Changchun: Jilin shifan daxue, 1962), 1:5.

⁸ According to statistics, during its running period in the 1980s, the journal introduced nearly two hundred Japanese writers in total, held eight lectures on classical Japanese literature and four seminars on Japanese literature. By 1988, when it stopped running due to operational issues and other reasons, *Riben wenxue* had introduced the works of a large group of modern Japanese writers, including Yasushi Inoue, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, Hiroshi Kikuchi, Takiji Kobayashi, Teru Hasegawa, Kobayashi Issa, and Yasunari Kawabata, via such columns like Special Issue on Individual Authors, Review, and Appreciation. Liu Zhensheng, *Xianhuo yu kuji: Riben jinxiandai wenxue xin lun* [Liveliness and stillness: New discussions on modern Japanese literature] (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 2010), 216.

industry that has a wide-ranging influence on their youth subculture.⁹ It is in this sense that Japanese literature studies is still an “emerging” field.

Translation in Sino-Japanese Reengagements

At the beginning of the 1980s, the college entrance examination had resumed, and China’s selection and dispatch of students to Japan had started. This meant that the talent reserve for the translation of Japanese literature fell short, and researchers on Japanese literature often had also to work on translation. Members of the China Association for Japanese Literary Studies (such as Lou Shiyi, Feng Zikai, Wen Jieruo, Lü Yuanming, Liu Zhenying, Li Mang, Gao Huiqin, Ye Weiqu, and Tang Yuemei) translated a large amount of Japanese literature over subsequent decades.¹⁰ However, in recent years, the translation of Japanese literature and culture has made great advances. In the past four decades, domestic training of undergraduate and graduate students in Japanese language and literature has continued uninterrupted, and Japan has been actively promoting Chinese students’ study in Japan. After launching the plan for accepting 100,000 overseas students in 1983, the Japanese government further relaxed requirements for student visas in 2000. Then in 2008, it adopted the plan for accepting 300,000 overseas students. As a result, the translation of Japanese literature acquired an abundant and stable reserve of translators, and Japanese literary works were translated and introduced at a larger scale and more systematically. Meanwhile, the translation and introduction of Japanese literature also advanced in multiple directions to include works by women, popular literature, and anime.

⁹ On the above subjects, domestic researchers mostly adopt an interdisciplinary approach, but do not find enough historical depth. For instance, many articles on anime rely on theoretical summaries by Japanese scholars like Eiji Otsuka, Hiroki Azuma, and Tsunehiro Uno, but do not conduct in-depth investigations into the historical origin of postwar consumption culture. Only a small number of scholars touch upon the relationship between this kind of popular cultural creation and prewar social history (including the wartime mobilization system and left-wing political culture). As for ecological thought or antinuclear thought in contemporary Japanese culture, many studies also stop at describing the phenomenon and do not trace the evolution of Japan’s nuclear-related intellectual discourse in the Cold War context (including the important influence of China in this process).

¹⁰ Relevant book series include the Japanese Literature Series, jointly published by Shanghai yuwen chubanshe and Renmin wenzue chubanshe from 1980; Representative Works of Japanese Literary Schools Series, jointly launched by Haixia wenyi chubanshe and six other presses; Representative Works of Japanese Literary Schools Series, mainly run by the Institute of Foreign Literature, CASS; and Compendium of Oriental Culture, where Japanese literature and culture are covered.

The market economy in China since the 1990s has had a strong influence on this growth, and it is clear that the reading, translation, and appreciation of Japanese literature have escaped the narrow confines of academic research.¹¹ That said, China's translation, introduction, and study of Japanese literature in the past three decades have followed its own historical and intellectual traditions. A conventional view is that from the founding of the People's Republic of China until reform and opening up in the late 1970s, the kind of Japanese literature that was circulated in China was mainly proletarian literature, with the works of Japanese proletarian writers, such as those by Takiji Kobayashi, spreading furthest, and that the translation and introduction of Japanese literature since the 1990s have suffered from the influence of the Nobel Prize in Literature and the like on the market. Before Kenzaburo Oe was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1994, only three of his fiction pieces had been translated and introduced in China, and there were no research papers published about his work. In the second year after the award, however, thirteen research papers were published about Oe's work across the country, and in that same year Guangming Ribao chubanshe announced plans to publish collected works of Kenzaburo Oe. Since then, the translation, introduction, and study of Oe's works have prospered in China.¹² At the same time, however, it must be noted that the post-1954 journal *Shijie wenxue* [World literature] had begun translating and introducing such Japanese proletarian writers as Takiji Kobayashi, Sunao Tokunaga, and Shigeharu Nakano, while China was exploring the "third way" in the 1950s and 1960s amid the international peace movement, Asian Writers' Conference, and Afro-Asian Writers' Conferences. Other than proletarian writers, *Shijie wenxue* during that time introduced Hiroshi Noma's post-war literature, Tamiki Hara's antinuclear literature, and Takakura Teru's review

¹¹ For instance, in recent years, Shanghai yiwen chubanshe published a series of works by Natsume Soseki, including a number of his important pieces like *I Am a Cat*, *Sanshiro*, *And Then*, *The Gate*, and *Botchan*. Beijing lianhe chuban gongsi has published a series on traditional Japanese short verse haiku and tanka. Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe has also published a Beautiful Japanese Writings series. Nanhai chuban gongsi has published a series of works by Yasunari Kawabata. Guizhou chuban jituan has published Fine Essays by Kenzaburo Oe series. Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe has published a series of works by Kunio Yanagita. Japanese literature series like these are too numerous to list all of them. Experts in Japanese language and literature have also participated in the translation and introduction of the more broadly conceived Japan studies, such as Select New Releases from Iwanami Shoten and Japanese History Published by Iwanami Shoten.

¹² "Ribei wenxue zai Zhongguo 30 nian chuanbo licheng" [Thirty years of the dissemination of Japanese literature in China], *Zhongguo tushu shangbao*, May 13, 2008, A02.

“Ya-Fei zuojia huiyi he Riben wenxue” [Afro-Asian Writers’ Conferences and Japanese literature], among other works. The translation and introduction of Kenzaburo Oe that began in the 1990s continued along such lines, as Oe was also an attendee at the Afro-Asian Writers’ Conferences. Beyond the market effects emanating from the Nobel Prize in Literature, the translation of Oe’s work carried forward both the translation and introduction of Japanese left-wing literature that had begun in the 1930s and the postwar reengagement between Chinese and Japanese literature under the framework of world literature, as discussed above.

Take the translation, introduction, and study of Japanese anime in China in recent years as another example. On the one hand, it of course has something to do with the soft-power diplomacy and popular culture’s export that Japan dominated at the beginning of this century; on the other, behind the anime studies of scholars like Qin Gang,¹³ there was also an attempt to break free from consumer culture and to rethink the history of Chinese and Japanese literature in the context of global left-wing culture.¹⁴ Another example is the classic Japanese writer Natsume Soseki. Behind the cultural phenomenon of his work widely translated and read in recent years was also the academic promotion of a group of Japanese scholars who reflected on the recent history and literature of Japan, such as Yoichi Komori, Kojin Karatani, and Shuichi Kato.¹⁵ In sum, we see that the scholarly goals of Japanese literature studies in China have been running through the translation, introduction, and study of Japanese literature, namely, to look at the modern and contemporary history of Japan in the process of world history and to take Japanese literature as an important part of world literature.¹⁶

¹³ Representative works include Qin Gang’s *Bufengzhe Gongqi Jun* [Wind-chaser Hayao Miyazaki] (2015).

¹⁴ See such representative studies as Qin Gang’s “Liulai Zhengmeng de manhua yu yijiusanling niandai Zhongguo zuoyi meishu—Zuowei meijie de Lu Xun yu Neishan shudian” [Masamu Yanase’s cartoon and left-wing art in 1930s China—Lu Xun as an intermediary and Uchiyama shoten], *JunCture: Chao yu de Riben wenhua yanjiu*, no. 6 (2015): 70–85.

¹⁵ See Shuichi Kato’s *Reiben wenxue shi xu shuo* [A history of Japanese literature: The first thousand tears], trans. Ye Weiqu and Tang Yuemei (1995); *Yang zhi ge* [Song of the sheep], trans. Weng Jiahui (2019); and *Binggu xingren wenji* [An anthology of Kojin Karatani], 5 vols., trans. Zhao Jinghua et al. (2011); Yoichi Komori’s *Riben jindai guoyu pipan* [Criticism of modern Japanese *kokugo*], trans. Chen Duoyou (2003); and *Wenxue de xingshi yu lishi* [Literary forms and history], trans. Guo Yong (2018).

¹⁶ As Lü Yuanming has written: “Studying the development of Japanese literature and its experiences is good for its neighboring country China and meaningful for studying the history of world literature.” Lü Yuanming, *Riben wenxue lun shi: Jian ji Zhong Ri bijiao wenxue* [Analysis

Studying Colonial Literature

In 2019 Hong Kong University Press published *Manchukuo Perspectives: Transnational Approaches to Literary Production*, edited by Canadian scholar Norman Smith, who has been studying the literature of the occupied area in Northeast China for years, and American Annika A. Culver, a historian of Northeast Asia.¹⁷ This collection of papers brought together the latest research in the study of history and culture of Manchukuo. With eighteen papers by scholars from China, the United States, Canada, South Korea, Japan, and other countries, it fully reflects the fact that the literature of the occupied area in Northeast China is an important component in the regional culture of Northeast and that its study requires transnational collaboration. Essays by Chinese scholars account for more than half of this collection, which reflects the prevailing advantage that Chinese scholars have long had in this field of study.

Chinese scholars' study of Japanese literature in the occupied area in Northeast China began in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As its economic bubble burst, Japan had a strong urge to internationalize its academia, attaching considerable importance to exchanges with overseas researchers working on Japanese literature.¹⁸ After receiving funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology for joint research with overseas scholars, Keizo Yamada of Kobe University began collaborating with Chinese scholars of Japan, such as Lü Yuanming of Northeast Normal University. Together they launched a joint research project on the situation of Chinese and Japanese literary circles during the Fifteen-Year War,¹⁹ which culminated in an

and interpretation of Japanese literature: Touching also upon Chinese and Japanese comparative literature] (Changchun: Dongbei shifan daxue chubanshe, 1992), 241.

¹⁷ Manchukuo was a puppet state of the Empire of Japan in China and Inner Mongolia from 1932 until 1945. Allegedly multiethnic and utopian, the new state was “intended to corral the creative energies of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Russians, and Mongols.”—Ed.

¹⁸ Shigemitsu Inaga, “Sekai no naka no kokusai Nihon kenkyu o saiko suru—Kokusai Nipponbunka kenkyu sentā soritsu 30 shunenkinen shinpojiumu ‘Sekai no naka no Nihon kenkyu hihanteki teigen o motomete’ no hansei kara” [Rethinking international Japanese studies in the world—Symposium on the 30th anniversary of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, beginning with reflections on “In search of critical proposals on Japanese studies in the world”], in *Sekai no naka no Nihon kenkyu: Hihanteki teigen o motomete. Soritsu 30 shunenkinen shinpojiumu* [Japanese studies in the world: In search of critical proposals. Symposium on the 30th anniversary], ed. Shoichi Inoue (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2018), 247.

¹⁹ In September 1931 Japan invaded northeast China. This was the beginning of what has become known as the Fifteen-Year War (1931–45).—Ed.

edited book published in 1991.²⁰ The essay Lü wrote for the book was expanded into the monograph that came out two years later.²¹ He was the first person to pay attention to Japanese literary works that were written in the occupied area in Northeast China. Lü carried out his research on Japanese culture and literature in Northeast China, which began with collecting and arranging material.²² From the beginning of the twenty-first century, as part of a joint effort with the collaborative research team led by Liu Jianhui of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, a large batch of Japanese-language literary sources from the occupation period were reprinted, including the Japanese-language journals *Manzhou langman* [Manchuria Romanticism] and *Yiwen* [Art and literature]. They are now being used by scholars around the world.

It is generally thought that postcolonial criticism arrived in Japan together with cultural studies in the mid-1990s and in China as a foreign theory of cultural criticism also in the mid-to-late 1990s.²³ But Japanese literature studies during the period when Northeast China was occupied had followed its own historical line of development in part because China's Japanese literature studies in the Northeast assumed the historical mission of rebuilding Sino-Japanese relations. After World War II, with the Northeast region having a strong economy and a special strategic location in China's relationship with Japan, development of both the former Northeastern University (now Northeast Normal University) and Northeast People's University (now Jilin University) was put under the Chinese Communist Party's overall plan for strengthening and liberating the Northeast.²⁴ Wang Changxin, who published the first postwar

²⁰ Keizo Yamada and Lü Yuanming, eds., *Jū gonen sensō to bungaku: Nitchū kindai bungaku no hikaku kenkyū* [The Fifteen-Year War and literature: A comparative study of Japanese and Chinese modern literature] (Tokyo: Toho Bookstore, 1991).

²¹ Lü Yuanming, *Bei yiwang de zai Hua Riben fanzhan wenxue* [Forgotten Japanese anti-war literature in China] (Jilin: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993).

²² Lü Yuanming, "Ribei wenxue yanjiuhui jianli shi de huixiang" [Recalling the days when the Association for Japanese Literary Studies was founded], in *Riben wenxue yanjiu: Lishi zuji yu xueshu xianzhuang—Ribei wenxue yanjiuhui sanshi zhounian jinian wenji* [Japanese literary studies: Historical footprints and current situation—Collection of papers on the 30th anniversary of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies], ed. Tan Jinghua et al. (Nanjing: Yilin chubanshe, 2010), 24.

²³ On Japan, see Wang Zhisong and Shimamura Teru, *Riben jinxindai wenxue yanjiu* [Studies on modern Japanese literature] (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2014). In China, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (originally published in the United States in 1978) was formally introduced in 1999.

²⁴ Wang Zhongchen, "Quyu weizhi, xueke jianshe yu yidai xueren de fendou—Sun Zhongtian xiansheng he ta de Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu" [Regional location, discipline building and the striving of a generation of scholars—Mr. Sun Zhongtian and his studies on modern

history of Japanese literature (in Japanese) in China in 1982, was transferred to the newly established foreign languages major in Northeast People's University in 1956 to engage in the teaching of and research on Japanese language. The following year Lü Yuanming was also transferred to the Teaching and Research Office for Foreign Literature at Northeast Normal University, turning from his earlier teaching of and research on Soviet literature to that of Japan.

Into the twenty-first century, Wang Zhongchen's interrogation of Japanese writers' grappling with Japan's imperial legacy has appeared, along with Shan Yuanchao's study of overseas Japanese writers such as Kenjiro Kitamura and Nobuo Hinata, and Chai Hongmei's research on the group of Japanese writers in Dalian. Generally speaking, however, the situation is similar to the late 1980s and early 1990s in that Chinese scholars' research on the literature of the occupied area in Northeast China is still focused on the literary works authored by Chinese writers who lived through the period of occupation, taking them as continuing along the line of modern Chinese literature after the May Fourth movement. In the field of Japanese literature there is still much more to explore in colonial literature and the literature of occupation.²⁵

Historical Ties within the Chinese Cultural Sphere

China's study of ancient Japanese literature also takes the close association between China and Japan as its basic background, with a particular focus on the common historical foundation of the Sinosphere that is shared by countries in East Asia. As an academic concept, the Chinese cultural sphere began to gain currency among language scholars in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s language scholars in China adopted this concept.²⁶ Since the 1990s, with the unfolding of regional integration in East Asia, the Sinosphere became the

Chinese literature], in *Mianhuan yu jinian: Sun Zhongtian yu Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu* [Cherishing the memory and commemorating: Sun Zhongtian and studies on modern Chinese literature] (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2018), 144–45.

²⁵ For relevant studies, see Wang Zhongchen, *Xiandai wenxue lu shang de mitu gaoyang* [A strayed goat on the road of modern literature] (Beijing: Zuoqia chubanshe, 2020); Shan Yuanchao, *Piaoyanguohai de Riben wenxue: Wei Man zhimindi wenxue wenhua yanjiu* [Japanese literature across the ocean and the sea: A study of colonial literature and culture in the former puppet state Manchukuo] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2016); and Chai Hongmei, *20 shiji Riben wenxue yu Dalian* [20th-century Japanese literature and Dalian] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2015).

²⁶ See Feng Tianyu, “‘Hanzi wenhua quan’ gainian zai Ri Zhong liang guo de xingcheng guocheng” [The formation of the concept of Chinese cultural sphere in Japan and China], *Renwen luncong* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2012).

common understanding of various disciplines related to East Asia. Nevertheless, differences still exist with regard to the definition of this cultural circle, hence the various names such as Confucian cultural sphere, Han cultural sphere, and East Asian cultural sphere of gloss reading [of Chinese characters]. In the field of literary studies, studies of the relationship between Chinese and Japanese classical literature are especially grounded in the Chinese cultural sphere.

From Japan's classical literature studies, there derived the branch of Japanese–Chinese comparative literature in the 1980s.²⁷ Chinese academia also started to formally study the relationship between Chinese and Japanese classical literature and Asian classics in Chinese. Some scholars think that both Japanese–Chinese comparative literature and Asian classics in Chinese have the problem of being self-centered because the former pays more attention to how Japan made unique transformations only after receiving the influence of Chinese culture and the latter attaches more importance to the preservation of Chinese classics in other countries than to their influence.²⁸ But the research of some representative Chinese scholars certainly surpasses these limits. For instance, Yan Shaodang has integrated bibliography and comparative literature into his research. Going beyond the scope of traditional “influence study,” he uses the concept of variants to interpret ancient Japanese literature and further proposes to overcome the limits of literary history through the genealogical study of ancient Japanese literature. Meanwhile, both his combing through the history of China studies in Japan and his cataloging of Chinese books collected in Japan opened up important new fields for Chinese academia.

Although translation and introduction of classical Japanese literature in China since the 1980s have mainly focused on *wabungaku* [Japanese literature written in Japanese] in Japan, a substantial amount of academic research has been in the field of *kanbungaku* [Chinese-language poems and essays by Japanese writers], such as studies on *Kaifuso* [Florilegium of cherished airs], the earliest extant poetry anthology of literary *kanshi* [Chinese poetry] written by Japanese poets, and on the literature of the Five Mountains produced by

²⁷ Formed in 1983, the Wakan Comparative Literature Association Japan consisted mainly of researchers of *kanbungaku* in the field of classical literature. *Kanbungaku* refers to Chinese-language poems and essays by Japanese writers.

²⁸ See Kim Moon Kyung and Shen Yi, “Goujian Dongya bijiao wenxue yu Dongya bijiao wenhua—Zhumin Zhongguo wenxue yanjiuzhe Jin Wenjing jiaoshou fangtanlu” [Building East Asia comparative literature and East Asia comparative culture—An interview with renowned scholar of Chinese literature Professor Kim Moon Kyung], *Guoji Hanxue*, no. 1 (2016): 21–25.

medieval monks. In a broad sense, *kanbungaku* also includes Japanese Sinology. Beyond case studies, relatively systematic works on the history of *kanbungaku* as well as on “Asian *kanbungaku*” as the whole have also appeared.²⁹ Some new research, although belonging to the field of *wabungaku*, adopts the methodology of comparative literature. For instance, scholars working in this vein examine the influence of ancient Chinese poems and essays on ancient Japanese poetry such as *Manyoshu* [Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves] or narrative literature like *Genji monogatari* [The Tale of Genji]; the influence of Ming–Qing novels on early modern Japanese novels; or Chinese and Japanese Buddhist literature.³⁰ In addition to evidence-based research on the origin of the subject matter and the evolution of literary genres, some works also focus on the influence of traditional Chinese cultural ideas, aesthetic theories, and literary concepts of Japanese literature. These mostly belong to what is called “influence study” in comparative literature. The historical background of the Chinese cultural sphere determines where Chinese scholars’ advantages are when they

²⁹ See Xiao Ruifeng’s *Riben Hanshi fazhan shi* [History of *kanshi* developments in Japan] (1992), Wang Xiaoping’s *Yazhou Hanwenxue* [Asian *kanbungaku*] (2001), Gao Wenhan and Han Mei’s *Dongya Hanwenxue guanxi yanjiu* [A study of East Asian *kanbungaku* relations] (2010), Sun Hutang’s *Riben hanwen xiaoshuo yanjiu* [A study of Japanese *kanbun* novel] (2010), and Chen Fukang’s *Riben Hanwenxue shi* [History of Japanese *kanbungaku*] (2011).

³⁰ See Yan Shaodang’s *Zhong Ri gudai wenxue guanxi shi gao* [Manuscript on the history of Sino–Japanese literary relations in ancient times] (1987), Wang Xiaoping’s *Jindai Zhong Ri wenxue jiaoliu shi gao* [Manuscript on the history of Sino–Japanese literary exchanges in modern times] (1987), Liang Jiguo’s *Wanye hege xintan—Hanwen xuci zai Wanye hege zhong de shourong jiqi xundu yiyi* [New explorations in Manyo waka (classical Japanese poetry)—Acceptance of Chinese function words in Manyo waka and their semantic reading and meaning] (1994), Li Shuguo’s *Riben duben xiaoshuo yu Ming Qing xiaoshuo—Zhong Ri wenhua jiaoliu shi de toushi* [Japanese imitation novel and Ming–Qing novel—A perspective on the history of cultural exchanges between China and Japan] (1998), Ye Wei-qu and Tang Yuemei’s *Riben wenxue shi: Gudai juan* [History of Japanese literature: The ancient times] (2004), *Shijie yujing zhong de Yuanshi wuyu* [The tale of Genji in a global context], edited by Research Office for Literature, Beijing Center for Japanese Studies (2004), Yao Jizhong’s *Yuanshi wuyu yu Zhongguo chuantong wenhua* [The tale of Genji and traditional Chinese culture] (2004), Weng Minhua’s *Zhong Ri Han xiju wenhua yinyuan yanjiu* [A study of the drama culture relations among China, Japan, and South Korea] (2004), *Riben gudai shige wenxue yu Zhongguo wenxue de guanlian* [The connections between classical Japanese poetic literature and Chinese literature] by Yin Yunzhen, Xu Dongri, Yu Shanglie, and Quan Yu (2005), Wang Xiaoping’s *Zhong Ri wenxue jingdian de chuanbo yu fanyi* [Circulation and translation of literary classics in China and Japan] (2014), Ding Li’s *Yongyuan de “Tang tu”—Riben Ping’an chao wuyu wenxue de Zhongguo xushu* [The forever “Land of Tang”—Narratives on China in Japan’s Heian Period *monogatari* (legendary literature)] (2016), and Ma Jun and Huang Meihua’s *Hanwen Fojing wenti yingxiang xia de Riben shanggu wenxue* [Japanese literature in antiquity under the influence of Chinese Buddhist canon] (2019).

conduct research on ancient Japanese literature; on the other hand, however, it can also be said that in many spheres where Chinese-language material cannot be made use of and the methods for “influence study” cannot be adopted directly, difficulties remain for China’s classical Japanese literature studies to innovate beyond Japanese academic achievements accumulated over a long period of time.

Of course, the radius of the Chinese cultural sphere is not limited to classical Japanese literature studies. In China’s Korean and Vietnamese literature studies since the 1980s, a major part has long been classical literature studies conducted with the methods of comparative literature, such as the translation and reception of ancient Chinese poetry, remarks on poetry, poetic theories, novels, and the Chinese Buddhist canon in Korea and Vietnam, as well as Chinese-language literary compositions in Korea and Vietnam under this influence.

In general, the historical ties of the Chinese cultural sphere are the foundation and precondition for studying the literary and cultural relations among East Asian regions in ancient times. However, when it comes to early modern and modern East Asian literature, what the Chinese scholars need to face is the process by which this kind of cultural circle dissolved. Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholars largely understood Japan’s reform of spoken and written languages in East Asia, represented by the *Genbun ichi* [Spoken and written as one] movement, as the pursuit of “modernity,” taking it as the frame of reference for the vernacular movement. However, around 2004–5, some scholars began to investigate relevant issues from a more comprehensive and critical perspective. This kind of perspective benefited from some Japanese left-wing scholars’ deconstructive criticism of *kokugo* [national language] and *kindai bungaku* [modern literature], as well as the critique of phonocentrism in Western theories of literary criticism since the 1990s. It pushed forward scholars’ revision of their understanding of the *Genbun ichi* movement, the vernacular movement, and *kokugo*, their reinterpretation of the tradition of the Chinese cultural sphere, and their reflections on the issue of modern system of spoken and written languages, system of academic disciplines, and nation-state. At the level of evidence-based research, through their study of such issues such as written conversation in Chinese, the translation of Jesuits’ Chinese writings into Japanese, and late Qing literati writing in Japan, some scholars shed new light on the role the Chinese cultural sphere played in the modern transformation of

East Asian societies.³¹ In this sense, the Chinese cultural sphere is an issue not only in the study of ancient literature and culture, but also in how to understand twentieth-century “East Asia” and even “Asia” itself.

Modern Literature in an “Asian” Horizon

That Japanese literature occupies an important position in China’s study of Asian literature is reflected not only in the quantity of Japanese literary works that are translated, introduced, and studied, but also in the theoretical importation of Japan’s discourse about Asia in such fields as modern literature, comparative literature, and intellectual history. With the expansion of Japan in Asia since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan developed a genealogy of “Asian” discourse in intellectual and cultural sphere. In postwar Japanese academia, leading the thinking on “East Asia” and “Asia” were researchers on Oriental history like Sadao Nishijima and scholars of modern Chinese literature like Yoshimi Takeuchi. After the end of the Cold War, facing the impact of a new round of globalization and regional integration, Japanese scholars returned to the issue of Asia. The Chinese academia also took up this problem, with a group of scholars with backgrounds in Chinese literature acting as intermediaries. From the mid-to-late 1980s, Japanese researchers of modern literature established collaborations with such academic institutions as the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at Peking University and the Institute of Literature at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. By the 1990s, the exchanges became more wide-ranging. After the mid-1990s, a discursive space around the notion of East Asia gradually came into being. Drawing on Japan’s postwar research on modern Chinese literature, Chinese history, and, more recently, local history, and on reflections over the discourse of universalism in the West, discourses on East Asia seek to put forward Asian theories that are distinct from Western theories, to pay attention to the complicated relations among China, Japan, and Korea within East Asia, and to explore the possibility of building an East Asian knowledge community.

However, this kind of Asia / East Asia discourse that derived from the genealogy of Japanese discourses also faces some difficulties, including how to avoid discourses of Asian essentialism and homogenization, and how to deal with issues like the historical experiences of twentieth-century revolutions and

³¹ See Lin Shaoyang’s *“Wen” yu Riben de xiandai xing* [“Culture” and Japan’s modernity] (2004) and *Dong Ya de bitan yanjiu* [A Study of East Asian written conversation in Chinese] (2015).

wars. Moreover, with the waning support in Japan's political circles for the concept of an "East Asian community," advocated by the former Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, Japan's mainstream political discourse shifted its focus from East Asia to Asia-Pacific.³² Accordingly, a de-Sinicization tendency appeared in Asian studies in the Japanese academia. For instance, opposing Sadao Nishijima's theory of an Eastern Asian world, a group of scholars, including Masaaki Sugiyama, has stressed the concept of Central Eurasia or Eastern Eurasia.³³ In this kind of post-Cold War context, some Chinese scholars, reflecting on the concept of Asia / East Asia, have developed a Chinese perspective on it. For instance, they theoretically reinterpret earlier writing on Asia by Chinese thinkers and revolutionaries as well as the issue of solidarity between Asia, Africa, and Latin America during the socialist era, or specifically study how proletarian cultural movements were carried out in Asia across national borders and the historical experience of the new China in promoting literary exchanges between Asia and Africa.³⁴ In addition, the introduction of Japanese poststructuralism, a left-wing thought resource, also made up for the inadequacies of the discourse about "Asia" in criticizing capitalism and addressing the issue of war responsibility.³⁵

Although not all of China's Japanese modern literature studies is directly related to the context of the issue of "Asia" discussed above, it takes as its basic background the close historical ties within the East Asia region since early modern times. For instance, the Chinese academia's study of schools and intellectual

³² Yukio Hatoyama was the Prime Minister of Japan from 2009 to 2010.

³³ See Huang Donglan, "Zuowei yinyu de kongjian—Ribei shixue yanjiu zhong de 'Dongyang' 'Dong Ya' yu 'Dongbu Ou Ya' gainian" [Space as a metaphor—The concepts of "the East," "East Asia," and "Eastern Eurasia" in the historiography of Japan], *Xueshu yuekan* 51, no. 2 (2019).

³⁴ Representative studies on "East Asia" and "Asia" include the series of theme issues on *Dushu* [Readings] in 1996, Sun Ge's *Zhunei Hao de beilun* [The paradox of Yoshimi Takeuchi] (2005), *Yazhou de bingli* [The pathology of Asia] edited by *Dushu* magazine (2007), Wang Hui's "Yazhou xiangxiang de puxi" [The genealogy of imagining Asia] (in *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de xingqi* [The rise of modern Chinese thought], 2008), *Chong shen Xiandaizhuyi—Dong Ya shijiao huo Hanziquan de tiwen* [Reexamining modernism—Questions from an East Asian perspective about the Chinese cultural sphere] edited by Wang Zhongchen and Lin Shaoyang (2013), *Renjian sixiang—di liu ji: Wanlong—Disanshijie liu shi nian* [Renjian—Thought 06: Bandung—Six decades of the Third World] edited by Gao Shiming and He Zhaotian, and *Yazhou gainian shi yanjiu* [Studies in the history of Asian concepts] edited by Sun Jiang et al. (6 vols., 2018).

³⁵ See the work of Kojin Karatani, Nobukuni Koyasu, Tetsuya Takahashi, and Yoichi Komori. Studies on them include Zhao Jinghua's *Riben Houxiandai yu zhishi zuoyi* [Japanese postmodernism and the intellectual left wing] (2007).

tides in Japanese literature is of course not as in-depth as that by the Japanese academia, but it does pay attention to their influence on modern Chinese literature. In case studies of some major writers (e.g., Natsume Soseki, Mori Ogai, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, and Atsushi Nakajima), a common research approach is to study how these writers understand China and their experiences in China. In addition to providing an overview of these intellectual tides and schools as a whole and conducting systematic studies on a few major writers, many studies of prewar Japanese literature are largely related to China. The objects of these studies can be roughly divided into three overlapping types: first, Japanese literati who had been to China, especially those who had close relations with Chinese writers like Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren; second, Japanese intellectuals who played a role in the transnational proletarian literary and cultural movements; and third, those writers who served in Japan's colonial and invasive wars. In comparison, the domestic study of postwar Japanese literature is not as deep, still focusing on a few writers (e.g., Yasunari Kawabata, Kenzaburo Oe, Yukio Mishima, and Haruki Murakami) and to a great extent being guided by the Nobel Prize in Literature and the popular reading market. But in recent years, there have been signs of a gradually widening research field.³⁶

³⁶ In China, the field of modern Japanese literature has produced a large number of works. Here I can only enumerate a few monographs published from the beginning of this century: Ye Weiqu and Tang Yuemei, *Riben wenxue shi: Jindai juan, Xiandai juan* [History of Japanese literature: The early modern period, the modern period] (2000); Wang Zhongchen, *Yuejie yu xiangxiang: 20 shiji Zhongguo Riben wenxue bijiao yanjiu lunji* [Border crossing and imagining: Essays on comparative studies of 20th-century Chinese and Japanese literature] (2001); Wei Dahai, *Si xiaoshuo: 20 shiji Riben wenxue de yige "shenhua"* [Self-novel: A "legend" in 20th-century Japanese literature] (2002); Xiao Xia, *Langmanzhuyi: Riben zhi qiao yu "Wusi" wenxue* [Romanticism: The Japanese bridge and May Fourth literature] (2003); Wang Xinxin, *Dajiang Jiansanlan de wenxue shijie* [The literary world of Kenzaburo Oe] (2004); Dong Bingyue, *Guomin zuojia de lichang—Zhong Ri xiandai wenxue guanxi yanjiu* [The position of national writers—A study of modern Sino-Japanese literary relations] (2006); Li Qiang, *Chuchuan Baicun wenyi sixiang yanjiu* [A study of Kuriyagawa Hakuson's literary and art thought] (2008); Zhou Yue, *Chuanduan Kangcheng wenxue de wenhuaxue yanjiu—Yi dongfang wenhua wei zhongxin* [A cultural studies approach to Yasunari Kawabata's literary works—Centered on Oriental culture] (2008); Li Dechun, *Zhanhou Riben wenxue shi lun* [A critical history of postwar Japanese literature] (2010); Weng Jiahui, *Tongxiang xianshi zhi lu: Riben "neixiang de yidai" yanjiu* [The road to reality: A study of Japan's "Introverted Generation"] (2010); Wang Zhisong, *20 shiji Riben Makesizhuyi wenyi lilun yanjiu* [A study of 20th-century Japanese Marxist theory of literature and art] (2012); Wang Cheng, *Xiuyang shidai de wenxue yuedu: Riben jin xiandai wenxue zuopin yanjiu* [Reading literature in the era of cultivation: A study of modern Japanese literature] (2013); Wang Shengyuan, *Wenhua zhimin yu dushi kongjian* [Cultural colonization and urban space] (2017); and Zhao Jinghua, *Zhong Ri jian de*

On the whole, the frontier in China's modern Japanese literature studies has gone beyond the traditional framework of national literature by situating Japanese literature within the historical context of Northeast Asia and intersecting with other disciplines. However, a considerable part of the research in this field is still limited to Japan's traditional national literature framework. As a matter of fact, since the 1990s, a basic tendency in Japan's study of its own modern literature has been to go beyond the framework of national literature by not taking "Japan," "Japanese," "early modern / modern," and "literature" as self-evident concepts.³⁷ The Chinese academia needs to broaden its understanding of "Japanese literature" and reflect upon the priorities that were formed in the existing histories of Japanese literature, not only by folding into its horizon more writers and works, including those written by non-"Japanese" or those not written in Japan, but also by necessarily paying more attention to various types of works that were not taken as "literature" in the past (such as criticism, historiographies, and documentary writings). On the other hand, in the 1980s Japanese literature studies within China gradually went beyond the ideology-guided paradigm. However, among the paradigms that replaced it—the aestheticist paradigm that stresses the uniqueness of Japanese culture and the culture studies paradigm that is based on various Western theories of criticism—no comprehensive survey or reflection has been conducted, nor has sufficiently deep study been carried out on the relationship between such methodologies and the situation of depoliticization in Japan under a Cold War / post-Cold War framework.

Other Asian Literature Studies

Currently, in the translation, introduction, and study of Asian literature in China, the greatest weight is put on Japanese literature. This is because of the close geographic relations between China and Japan, but also due to Japan's advantageous position in Asia in the modern times. Japan's long-term attention on and study of "Asia" has also influenced China's discourse around "Asia." However, the paradox is that, as a developed capitalist country that has had a tendency to "leave Asia and join Europe," Japan is not entirely an Asian country or representative of the overall characteristics of "Asia." On the other hand, this

sixiang: Yi Dong Ya tong shidai shi wei shijiao [Thought between China and Japan: From the perspective of a synchronic East Asian history] (2019).

³⁷ See Wang Zhisong and Shimamura Teru, *Riben jinxiandai wenxue yanjiu*.

concept of Asia pertains basically only in East Asia, while other regions have their own regional identifications such as South Asia, West Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. From the way China's foreign literature discipline is institutionalized, Asian literature as a whole is also rarely discussed. The concept of Oriental literature has more currency, with the "Orient" usually referring to Asia and Africa, covering literature in various non-Euro-American languages (second-level discipline) under foreign language and culture (first-level discipline) and the non-Western part in comparative literature and world literature (second-level discipline).

Ji Xianlin founded the Department of Oriental Languages at Peking University in 1946, which began to offer courses on Oriental literature in 1958. Later, in 1978, the department formed the Teaching and Research Office for Oriental Literature. In the series of textbooks this office compiled, "Oriental" was basically synonymous with "Asian-African." As a discipline founded in the new China and influenced by the Soviet disciplinary system, China's Oriental literature from its beginning had an anti-colonialist cast and a socialist political imagination. Because of this orientation, "Asia-Africa" could be taken as a self-evident holistic region. In the 1990s, after the diminution of ideological influence, Chinese researchers began to articulate the wholeness of Oriental literature from the perspective of cultural and civilizational theory. However, problems remain to be solved: how to integrate the complicated differences within "Asia" or "Asia-Africa" and how to prevent the self-othering of the "Orient" before the "Occident" when there is no longer a socialist political imagination.

After Japan, the literatures of Northeast Asia and South Asia are those most studied in China, whereas those of Southeast Asia, West Asia, and Central Asia receive little attention. South Asian literature studies has a significant, if not large-scale, tradition in China. Scholars such as Ji Xianlin, Jin Kemu, and Xu Fancheng have produced in-depth studies, mainly focused on Sanskrit texts and the literary and cultural relations between ancient China and India. Among modern and contemporary South Asian literary works, more translation and introduction are done in China for the English-language literature of India. Due to the complexity of languages and cultures in South Asia, China's South Asian literature studies features a division of labor among scholars working in different languages and uneven development among different subfields.

The Korean Peninsula is located within the scope of the Chinese cultural sphere. China's study of the literature of this area is focused on the comparative

study of classical literature and the sorting out of classical texts. As for early modern and modern Korean literature, Chinese scholars pay special attention to its relationship with nationalist thought and the geopolitics in Northeastern Asia. In the field of translation, much translation and introduction are done of contemporary South Korean popular literature, but the research on it is not yet deep.

Although Southeast Asia is a region that China has been paying considerable attention to in recent years in terms of economics and politics, the translation, introduction, and study of the region's literature still have occurred at only a small scale. As for ancient and early modern literature, scholars have shown interest in Vietnamese literature and the literary relations between China and Vietnam. The study of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian literature focuses on Chinese-language writing, whereas that not written in Chinese rarely receives attention.

With regard to West Asian and Central Asian literature, domestic research has also gotten a late start. The Arabic literature that was translated and introduced in the 1950s and 1960s came mostly through Russian and other language translations. Up to now, the work of researchers in this field still mainly consists of compiling textbooks, translating literary works, and introducing the current overall situation. In translation and introduction, particular attention was paid to a few classic works and individual contemporary writers who have won the Nobel Prize in Literature.³⁸

³⁸ In summarizing the situation of the translation and introduction of the literature of various Asian areas other than Japan, I mainly consulted the following works: *Zhongguo waiguo wenxue yanjiu de xueshu lichen di shi jian Yindu wenxue yanjiu de xueshu licheng* [Academic history of China's foreign literature studies, vol. 10, Academic history of Indian literature studies] by Yu Longyu et al. (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2016), and *Zhongguo waiguo wenxue yanjiu de xueshu lichen di shi'er jian Ya Fei zhuguo wenxue yanjiu de xueshu licheng* [Academic history of China's foreign literature studies, vol. 12, Academic history of studies on the literature of various Asian and African countries] by Meng Shaoyi et al. (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2016); Jin Yi, "Hanguo wenxue zai Zhongguo de fanyi yu chuban xianzhuang zongshu" [Present situation of the translation and publication of Korean literature in China], *Yanbian daxue xuebao (Shehui kexue ban)* 46, no. 4 (2013): 42–48; Tian Yuemei, "Xin Zhongguo 60 nian de Hanguo wenxue yanjiu" [China's South Korean literature studies in the 60 years of New China], *Jiaoyu jiaoxue luntan*, no. 39 (2015): 72–74; Zhu Wenbin and Yue Hanfei, "Zhongguo Dongnan Ya Huawen wenxue yanjiu sishi nian" [The forty years' study of Chinese literature in Southeast Asia], *Zhejiang shehui kexue*, no. 9 (2020): 121–30; and Zhong Jikun, "Alabo wenxue zai xin Zhongguo de liushi nian" [Sixty years of Arabian literature in New China], *Xi Ya Feizhou*, no. 4 (2010): 20–22.

As a whole, China's academic study of the literature in the various Asian languages and countries is obviously imbalanced. The work of translation and introduction of the literature of many regions is still in a preliminary stage. Under the disciplinary framework of Oriental literature, a certain number of literary histories, including a comprehensive history of Oriental literature on the whole, was produced, but due to the absence of research groundwork on the social history of relevant regions in some disciplines, it is hard to go beyond the level of introductory textbooks. At the same time, domestic accumulation in the history of research on many Asian areas is far behind Euro-American academia. As a result, domestic researchers often need to rely on the Western perspective to obtain information. This is especially so in fields like modern South Asian, Arabic, and Hebrew literature. These issues are not restricted to the sphere of literature studies. With China's adjustment of its own position in the world landscape, interdisciplinary area studies are on the rise. Important questions for the future include how we can deepen Asian literature studies and integrate them into comprehensive area studies, and how to establish China's own tradition in the discipline.

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