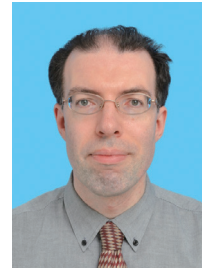


Uchiyama Shoten: Rethinking Interwar Sino-Japanese Intellectual Exchange

By Andrew T. Kamei-Dyche



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Jun'ichirō Tanizaki Visits a Bookshop

It is early 1926, and the influential writer Jun'ichirō Tanizaki (1886-1965) is visiting Shanghai. Eager to meet Chinese intellectuals, he has been advised by friends to visit Uchiyama Shoten, a Japanese bookstore (*Photo 1*). The store is an active place, with tables where Chinese and Japanese customers enjoy reading and discussing topics over tea. Upon meeting the proprietor, Kanzō Uchiyama (1885-1959), Tanizaki is surprised to learn how many young Chinese frequent the shop for Japanese books, through which they can follow the newest trends in science, art and literature in Japan and the West. This amazes Tanizaki, who has previously tended to see the Chinese through romanticized stereotypes. Uchiyama introduces him to some of the local writers, including Tian Han (1898-1966) and Guo Moruo (1892-1978), and they attend a party together.

Tanizaki's experiences, which he enthusiastically wrote about ("Shanghai Kōyūki", *Josei*, May, June, and August 1926), were not exceptional. During the 1920s and 1930s, many Japanese writers, thinkers and artists visited China, and sought to meet their Chinese counterparts. Shanghai was an especially lively center of Sino-Japanese intellectual exchange. Yet today this is not widely known, another casualty of what might be called the long shadow of war.

The Long Shadow of War: Historical Problems

Historians spend a lot of time contemplating war. Although military history is less popular among academics than in decades past, many scholars study the culture of countries at war, or their economic systems, or their ideologies. War itself remains a major part of historical studies, and this is not surprising: wars are devastating, traumatic events that can transform

every part of the societies involved. Moreover, the aftershocks of a major conflict can echo down the generations, as anyone studying international relations in East Asia today can attest.

What we are less aware of, however, is that this also works in the other direction: after a war occurs, our perspective of everything that came before changes dramatically as we seek the causes of that war. Historians of Japan used to discuss the interwar era largely in terms of *sensō e no michi*, the "road to war". While this is a valid approach to history, it can also push us to only focus on events and people connected to the later conflict, or alternatively, to assume that *everything* is connected. Yet history is more than a countdown to the next war. It is essential to understand the people of an era on their own terms, and not just through the lens of a conflict that occurred later. If we forget this then we risk distorting our understanding of the past.

In the case of Sino-Japanese relations, conventional wisdom holds that during the 1920s and the 1930s relations between Japanese and Chinese intellectuals broke down. This was seen as a consequence of the deteriorating relationship between the Chinese and Japanese states, due to the latter's pursuit of expansionistic policies. However, this was not in fact the case. Japanese and Chinese intellectuals maintained active relations through the course of the era. Neither were these relations sanitized and devoid of politics: rather, many intellectuals discussed politics forcefully, but they were also capable of seeing each other as individuals whose values and ideologies were not necessarily synonymous with those of their governments.

The Problem of Sources

Another reason why this active intellectual exchange is not well known is that studying it requires collecting together sources that are not easily accessible or reprinted. Scholars of literature and philosophy in Japan often depend upon canonical collected works (*zenshū*) of major figures, which may leave out minor writings such as travel accounts or descriptions of networking with foreign colleagues. Further, as historian Joshua Fogel observes, many Japanese intellectuals wrote selectively about their travels in China, or not at all (*The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China, 1862-1945*, Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 250). As a result, Japanese readers today may be aware of Chinese students coming to Japan at the start of the 20th century, but they are far less likely to be aware of Japanese visiting China in the following



Uchiyama Shoten in the late 1920s

decades.

A striking example is Lu Xun (1881-1936), arguably the single most influential modern Chinese writer and today the subject of a great amount of Japanese research. There was very little written in Japanese about him in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but most Japanese intellectuals were aware of him and eagerly sought to meet him when they visited China. This case neatly demonstrates the difficulties of historical research, and the gaps between what is commonly thought about an era and what that era was really like. We know that at that time Japanese and Chinese intellectuals enjoyed meeting each other, and exchanging works and ideas. We also know that Shanghai was a center of such intellectual exchange, and that everyone interested in it knew to visit Uchiyama Shoten – which brings us back to bookstores.

Bookstores & the Intellectual World

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, bookstores were a major part of the intellectual landscape. All across the industrialized, and parts of the industrializing, world, bookstores flourished. For educated urbanites, bookstores provided intellectual nourishment in the form of books and opportunities to network with their fellow readers. It was not surprising that bookstores could turn into salons where students, thinkers and artists would regularly gather. Such salons could be found in London, Paris, Tokyo, and other major cities.

Shanghai was no exception. A thriving cosmopolitan city, in the interwar era it was also the heart of the Chinese literary world, with many writers, publishers, and of course, hundreds of bookstores. In the words of Chinese literary scholar Leo Ou-fan Lee, “For Shanghai writers the most important pastime, aside from going to the movies, was going to the bookstores” (*Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945*, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 120). Many of those writers knew Japanese, and the city also had a “Japantown” (Photo 2). Shanghai was therefore an excellent location for a Japanese bookstore. Uchiyama Shoten, however, was to become something quite special: the primary

meeting spot for Japanese and Chinese intellectuals.

Uchiyama Sets Up Shop

Uchiyama Shoten was originally founded by Kanzō Uchiyama’s wife Miki in 1917, shortly after the couple moved to Shanghai. Originally they sold Christian books from their porch, but soon expanded their offerings and acquired space for a proper bookstore. The rapidly-expanding bookstore gained a large Japanese and Chinese clientele, and soon became the largest Japanese-owned bookstore in China. As it expanded, it also transformed, becoming by 1923 a full-fledged intellectual salon. Local intellectuals went there to meet their colleagues, and when Japanese intellectuals, who had been coming to Shanghai since the end of the 19th century, began visiting the city in ever greater numbers, the bookstore served as a perfect locale for them to meet their Chinese counterparts.

Uchiyama Shoten became a center for Sino-Japanese intellectual exchange, as well as an essential waypoint for Japanese intellectuals visiting China, ranging from Zen Buddhist popularizer Daisetsu Suzuki (1870-1966) to publisher Shigeo Iwanami (1881-1946). There they could meet Chinese intellectuals like the aforementioned Tian Han, Guo Moruo, and of course, Lu Xun. The salon culture included meetings of the Chinese Drama Research Society, and the monologue or “comic chat” (*mandan*) group, the latter of which was a particularly good way for visitors to meet resident intellectuals. The *mandan* group became nicknamed “Shanghai customs” because it was considered a required experience for Japanese intellectuals visiting the city. Masamoto Ozawa, an editor of the *International Review* at the Japan Foreign Affairs Association, began to patronize Uchiyama Shoten in late 1935, and later recalled days spent in lively conversation among friends both local and foreign (*Uchiyama Kanzō Den: Nicchū Yūkō ni tsukushita Idai na Shomin*, Banmachi Shobō, 1972, p. 126). The salon also became well-known for its excellent tea, which was perhaps not surprising because Miki Uchiyama hailed from Uji and was skilled at traditional tea preparation.

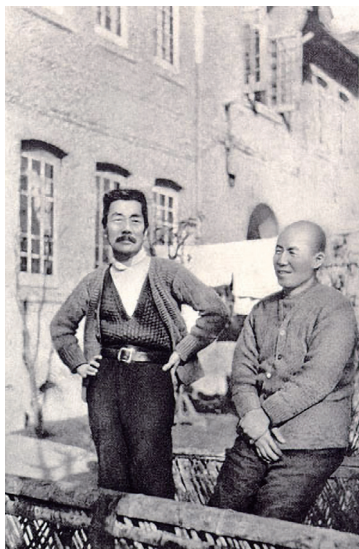
Uchiyama: Mediator & Friend

Successful intellectual exchange needs more than a locale; it needs a mediator, a person able to facilitate that exchange in a thoughtful and respectful manner. Key to the success of Uchiyama Shoten as a site of intellectual exchange was the role of the proprietor, Kanzō Uchiyama, as just such a mediator. He had developed a deep admiration for Chinese culture, and was bothered by what he perceived to be Japanese ignorance of contemporary China. He went on to produce many books attempting to explain aspects of the country, the most famous of which, *Ikeru Shina no Sugata* (Gakugei Shoin, 1935) carried a preface by Lu Xun. Uchiyama was familiar with most of the young Chinese writers, but also had a wide network of Japanese contacts, making him well-suited to introducing Chinese and Japanese intellectuals to each other. His openness, candor, and easygoing nature also likely contributed – even intellectuals from different camps who did not get



Hongkou Japantown area of the International Settlement in Shanghai in the interwar era

Photo 3: Public domain



Lu Xun and Kanzō Uchiyama, early summer 1933

along with each other became salon regulars.

All this made Kanzō Uchiyama and his store salon ideally situated to serve as mediator and site of intellectual exchange for Lu Xun when he arrived in Shanghai in the autumn of 1927. The two men in fact became close friends (Photo 3). At times Lu Xun, as a leftist writer, was in danger from the authorities, and Uchiyama helped protect him. Uchiyama Shoten was a safe haven for Lu Xun to send and receive works and correspondence, and

Uchiyama routinely smuggled books and other items in and out of the country for his friends. This proved helpful for getting the writings of Chinese intellectuals out of China, and Japanese writings into China for the Shanghai readership. Uchiyama Shoten thus provided Lu Xun with protection and a communications network, which were conducive to engaging in intellectual encounters. At the same time, Uchiyama played the role of mediator, introducing Lu Xun, now a central figure in the Uchiyama Shoten salon, to numerous Japanese intellectuals who were eager to meet him. Examining some of these encounters can help us to understand more about Sino-Japanese intellectual exchange during this era.

Lu Xun's Encounters with Japanese (I): Varied People, Varied Perspectives

Through Uchiyama and his salon, Lu Xun encountered numerous Japanese intellectuals from a variety of callings and political persuasions. While many left no accounts of their meetings, the accounts of other members of the salon, and sources such as memoirs and photographs, can enable us to reconstruct elements of these encounters. Lu Xun did not record in his diary the names of all the Japanese he met, but nearly all of those he did were introduced to him by Uchiyama, while most of the others he met at an inn chosen by, or a party hosted by, Uchiyama. We know, for instance, that in 1931 alone Lu Xun met Mitsuhashi Kaneko, Nyozeikan Hasegawa, Daisetsu Suzuki, Takanobu Murofushi, Fumiko Hayashi, Itaru Nii, Saneatsu Mushanokōji, Yoshirō Nagayo, and more, through Uchiyama (Seisuke Numano, *Rojin to Nihon*, Bungeisha, 2004, p. 84). Uchiyama also helped orchestrate the most famous encounter between Lu Xun and a non-Japanese, George Bernard Shaw, in early 1933.

Most of Lu Xun's encounters with Japanese intellectuals did not become as famous as his meeting with Shaw, but in addition to their

great number these encounters are noteworthy for their variety. Lu Xun met a wide range of intellectuals, including not only influential writers, but also artists and teachers. For example, there was Uchiyama's younger brother, Kakichi, a woodcut artist and teacher who was one of the figures most responsible for Lu Xun's interest in woodcuts. When visiting Shanghai in the summer of 1931, Kakichi taught a woodcut class to Chinese students at Lu Xun's request. Lu Xun also met with teachers and students from the Tōa Dōbunshoin, the major Japanese school in China which was established in 1901, and other schools. A photograph from August 1934 shows Lu Xun and Uchiyama with Professor Tetsuo Hayashi of the Tōa Dōbunshoin, and a Professor Inoue from another institution (Photo 4).

The Japanese intellectuals Lu Xun encountered also had a range of opinions on contemporary issues. For instance, some held strong opinions concerning Japanese imperial efforts in China. Haruo Satō, a Chinese literary scholar, spoke out in favor, while the writer Yonejiro Noguchi went so far as to argue that China should welcome colonization by Japan, a notion Lu Xun found intolerable. This makes a sharp contrast to the writer Nyōzekan Hasegawa, who rejected the subjugation of one people by another, or Professor Tomi Kōra, a devout Christian and pacifist who rejected violence and war for any purpose. When she stopped off in Shanghai to meet Lu Xun in January 1932, Kōra was on her way to seek Gandhi's support in trying to defuse the looming struggle between Japan and China.

Lu Xun's Encounters with Japanese (II): Risks & Friendships

Some of Lu Xun's encounters were risky, such as his association with leftist activist Takiji Kobayashi, killed by the Japanese special police in February 1933 and immortalized by Chinese leftists as a class struggle martyr. Then there was the peculiar case of Wataru Kaji, a writer of proletarian literature who moved to Shanghai and first met Lu Xun in early 1936. Kaji regularly discussed issues with Lu Xun at Uchiyama Shoten and translated some of his essays, but his politics were far more radical. An outspoken critic of Japanese

Photo 4: Public domain



Left to right: Kanzō Uchiyama, Prof. Tetsuo Hayashi, Lu Xun, Prof. Inoue, Aug. 23, 1934

imperialism, in the wake of Japan's 1937 invasion Kaji toured China drumming up support for an anti-war alliance, volunteered for Jiang Jieshi, and tried to recruit Japanese POWs to his cause, stressing the need for Chinese and Japanese cooperation against imperialism.

Some of Lu Xun's encounters led to more enduring relationships. For instance, there was Hotsumi Ozaki, a well-connected journalist at *Asahi Shimbun's* Shanghai branch now known mostly for his role in the Sorge Affair. Ozaki joined the Uchiyama salon early on, became fast friends with Uchiyama and Lu Xun, and was well-known in the Chinese literary scene. With his colleague Seigi Yamanoue, Ozaki produced the first Japanese translation of Lu Xun's *The True Story of Ah Q*.

Lu Xun also enjoyed a long friendship with Wataru Masuda, a Chinese literature student who had worked with Haruo Satō. Through Satō, in March 1931 Masuda met Uchiyama, who then introduced him to Lu Xun. Masuda was a longtime admirer of Lu Xun, and was translating his *Abridged History of the Chinese Novel*. Over several months Lu Xun met with the student frequently, and helped him understand the work. The two stayed in touch after Masuda returned to Japan, and Masuda has since become known as Lu Xun's Japanese disciple.

Rethinking Interwar Sino-Japanese Intellectual Relations

By the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Uchiyama Shoten had become something of a tourist attraction among Japanese intellectuals, who saw visiting it and meeting Chinese counterparts like Lu Xun as a rite of passage. Relations did not always run smoothly. Some Chinese intellectuals, lacking an equivalent opportunity to visit Japan, disliked the possibility that they were just entertaining Japanese intellectual "tourists". There were writers who were suspicious of all Japanese, even those who were invested in the community and culture like Uchiyama. At the same time, there were cases when Japanese writers misrepresented their Shanghai encounters in Japanese publications, something which bothered Lu Xun enough that he complained about the problem in a letter to Masuda.

By and large, however, encounters among Chinese and Japanese intellectuals were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The great numbers and wide range of people involved in the intellectual exchange in Shanghai, especially involving famous figures like Lu Xun, challenge the notion of diminished Sino-Japanese intellectual exchange. Yet today even when Japanese and Chinese intellectuals of this era are studied together, there is usually the assumption of a limited and antagonistic relationship – even though the sources indicate that the intellectuals themselves did not see it that way.

This situation reveals a problem with the tendency to reduce intellectuals to their nationalities or simplistic political categories, an issue found in both academia and the mass media. The tendency has been to generalize interwar Japanese intellectuals as apologists for imperialism, and Chinese intellectuals as anti-Japanese socialists,

but this is simply not accurate. There were certainly intellectuals who fit those descriptions, but there were also many that did not. For instance, even among Japanese intellectuals who supported Japanese imperialism, and those who critiqued it, we find a diversity of opinion. The individual and social aspects of intellectual exchange have been overlooked in a rush to categorize intellectuals in ways that tell us more about postwar ideology than the reality of the interwar era.

In Shanghai today, Uchiyama Shoten is remembered as a symbol of international cooperation. This idea sounds encouraging, but it is really just another example of the same mistake. Intellectuals are still being reduced to just their nationalities, only in this case in a cooperative rather than antagonistic way. What made Uchiyama Shoten effective, however, was that it could transcend such simple thinking. Regular participants like Lu Xun were able to distinguish among individuals, and between their culture and the policies of their government. In this way they could discuss political and social issues forcefully while enjoying each other's company. Uchiyama had created an environment in which Japanese and Chinese intellectuals could reach out to one another, overcoming the problems faced by many of their countrymen who held paternalistic views of foreigners or just saw them as a threat. His success at mediating intellectual exchange reminds us that intellectuals are human beings, and that personal social networks are often more important than simple national frameworks.

Conclusion

Interwar Sino-Japanese intellectual exchange has been misunderstood because of a lack of conventional historical sources and the influence of the long shadow of war. The lively culture of Japanese and Chinese intellectuals in Shanghai, best represented by Uchiyama Shoten, was all but forgotten after World War II. The intellectual exchange of the era came to be seen as limited and antagonistic because this was convenient for postwar ideologies.

To better understand the history of intellectual exchange, it is vital to consider all available sources, not just published collections. At the same time, considering the places and mediators involved in that exchange can help us to begin to reconstruct the encounters that characterized it. As discussed, the writer Lu Xun's encounters with Japanese intellectuals in the late 1920s and 1930s make a particularly good case study. The role of Kanzō Uchiyama in mediating intellectual encounters among Japanese and Chinese, and the position of Uchiyama Shoten as a point of contact that enabled these encounters to occur, reminds us that intellectual exchange has a fundamentally human element that we cannot afford to overlook.

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