Recalling the Fruits of "Japanese Instructors" in China

By Wang Min

JAPAN is viewed as the "mentor of Asia" owing to its two revolutionary undertakings, the Meiji Restoration during which it succeeded in Westernization and its rise and regeneration from the ruins left by World War II. Japan emphasizes that both these successes were the fruits of education.

China has long put an effort into having its citizens study in Japan as a means for learning from Japan. From 1896 in the waning years of the Qing Dynasty (13 students), without any break through the fall of the Qing Dynasty (1911, the Republican Revolution) and up until such exchanges were suspended due to the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), it is estimated that there was a total of 100,000 Chinese who studied in Japan, including both those who went at government expense and those who paid their own way. Since relations between the countries were reestablished with the signing of the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty (1978) after the war, we have entered an era of unprecedented and flourishing study in Japan by Chinese students, and 80,000 Chinese youths are currently studying in Japan.

In this way, we are immediately reminded of Chinese students studying in Japan. But the fact that a large number of Japanese teachers were dispatched to China and achieved considerable results in our modern and contemporary history has been almost completely forgotten. This was carried out under the prodding of the Japanese government on both occasions, the waning years of the Qing Dynasty and after the signing of the Peace and Friendship Treaty.

THE forerunners of the Japanese instructors were the schools run by Japanese in China. Pioneering schools run by Japanese that were established in Shanghai just before the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) were soon closed, but these schools reopened and flourished after the war was over. It is undeniable that these schools went side by side with the influx of Japanese into China at the time. Not only were schools set up in Shanghai, but also in Beijing, Nanjing, Tianjin, Xiamen, Hankou, Fuzhou and elsewhere. Some of them were established for the purpose of educating Japanese, whose numbers in China were increasing, but many of the schools run by the well-known educational group, the "Toa Dobun Association," adopted as a slogan "Develop the public morals of the Chinese people," and those allowed to enter the school were exclusively Chinese students. Instructors were brought over from Japan, and they taught various Western sciences.

THE Qing Dynasty had early on imitated Western schools. The first case was the Jingshi Tongwenguan in 1862, but other than foreign languages, the curriculum was focused on the Four Books and Five Classics. It did not teach Western sciences. The school opened in Shanghai in 1863 by Li Hongzhang, a leader of the pragmatic faction that aimed at building a "rich nation and strong army" by adopting Western science and technology, had the same curriculum. This shows that the qualities desired for a bureaucrat were still to be a loyal servant and to respect the emperor, and that the basic understanding rooted in Confucianism was not altered. Even as China was attacked by the Western powers after the Opium Wars (1840-42), the lessons learned from these losses were not applied to the educational system.

However, even the center of the Qing government finally ended up acknowledging the harmful effects of Confucianism-centered education at the beginning of the 20th century. The text known as *Zouding Xuetang Zhangcheng* or *The Regulations for Junior Primary Schools*, written by Zhang Zhidong, who was in charge of education, was promulgated in 1904, and schools modeled on those of the West began to be established. The Regulations for Junior Primary Schools imitated almost to the slightest details the school system promulgated in Japan 32 years earlier in 1872.

Since local government was obligated to establish schools, a total of 48,000 schools had been established throughout China by 1910, the eve of the fall of the Qing Dynasty. It goes without saying that the schools run by Japanese, which were enjoying success all over China, served as models not only for school subjects but for instructors as well. The issue was talented people capable of teaching the Western curriculum. There were almost no Chinese instructors who had been trained in the Western curriculum. They relied on the Japanese.

ALREADY in 1901, there was a Japanese man who had advised Li Hongzhang to employ Japanese instructors. This was Nakajima Tatsuyuki, who was in charge of general instruction at the "Beijing Dongwen Xueshe," a school in Beijing which taught Chinese people. Li agreed, and it is said that he expressed his intention to hire 2,000 such teachers. He subsequently sent bureaucrats in the pragmatic faction serving under him to Japan and had them enlist the cooperation of the Japanese government. The Japanese government established a program of dispatching Japanese teachers to China by the "Teikoku Kyouikukai" or Imperial Education Association, and put a system in place for this purpose.

Many supporters appeared in Japan. Major efforts to assist were made by Kano Jigoro, the principal of the Tokyo Higher Normal School. Kano, who is also known as the founder of the

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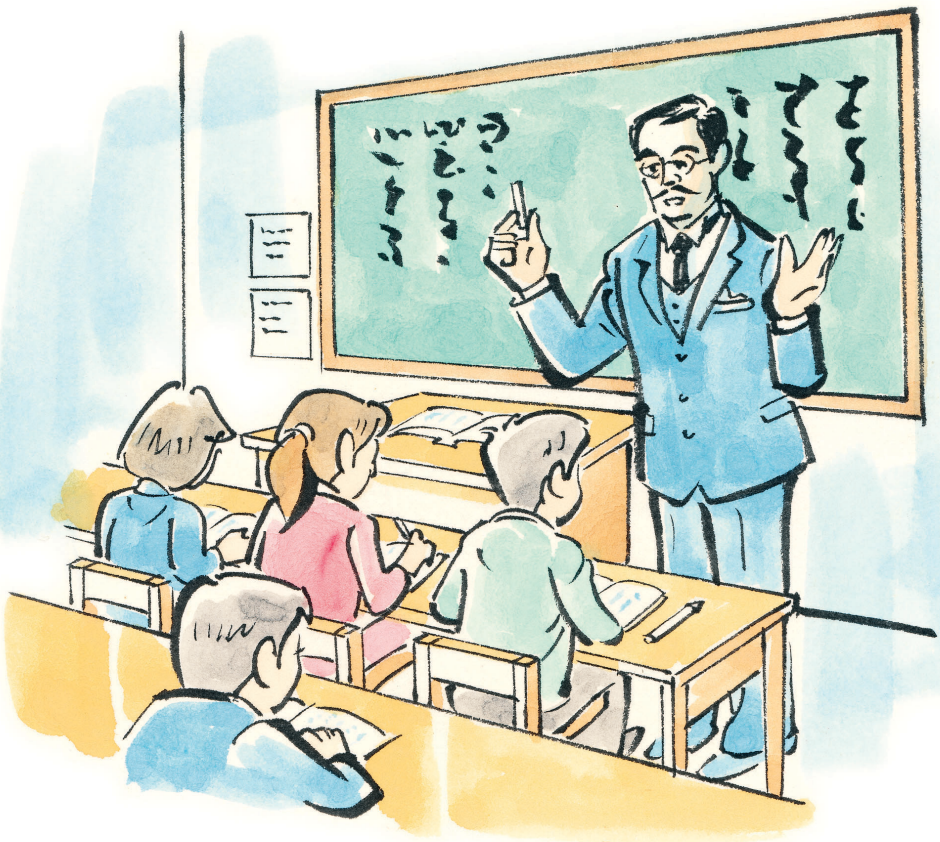

Kodokan Judo Institute, was an educational thinker and practitioner. Around 1905, a large number of Japanese instructors made their way to China.

The Japanese who were chosen as instructors lived not only in China's metropolises, but were scattered throughout the country. They went to places like Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou Provinces, and a female Japanese teacher went to Kalaqinqi (Kalachinsk), a place that even Chinese teachers refused to go to teach. They included remote places that took two months or longer to reach because transportation was so poor. The Japanese instructors had among their ranks such eminent people as Yoshino Sakuzo, who later battled with the power holders in Japan as a democratic Japanese thinker, and Hasegawa Tatsunosuke, who made his name as a literary giant under the pseudonym Futabatei Shimei. Matsumoto Kamejiro, who was employed as a middle school instructor in Japan, went to China at the request of Kano, and after he returned to Japan in 1912 following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty he devoted himself to preliminary instruction in the Japanese language for Chinese students studying in Japan. It is said that approximately 20,000 Chinese benefited from the Toa School that he established until it was closed due to the second Sino-Japanese War. It is said that the motivation that sustained his effort was the desire to return the favor to China for its many contributions to Japan during the course of the two countries' long history.

LIKE Matsumoto, almost all the Japanese instructors in China returned home to Japan in 1912, and the employment of Japanese instructors essentially came to an end. However, the tradition of Japanese instructors was revived in the new socialist China. China requested that Japan send instructors there in order to regenerate the educational system, which had stagnated during the Great Cultural Revolution. The first wave came in 1979, and its core was made of up of currently employed teachers who were selected in every prefecture in Japan. This time as well, Japanese instructors fearlessly took up posts in remote places like Sichuan Province, and taught Chinese students for one to two years. There were lots of stories about the difficulties encountered, like the lack of textbooks and how the teachers created their own mimeographed handwritten teaching materials. It goes without saying that the young Chinese who were stimulated by such devoted guidance are now exerting themselves for Sino-Japanese friendship.

ALONG with Japan's acceptance of foreign students studying in that country, the sending of Japanese instructors is a major source of support for developing countries. Japan is currently emphasizing the importance of education for developing countries, and is supporting this through its official development assistance (ODA), but this appears to be biased towards the provision of material support, such as campuses for schools and educational materials. The sending of experts through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)'s Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer Dispatch Program is inadequate. I feel that Japan itself has not fully learned the lesson of the results of the three attempts that it undertook to send Japanese experts to China in the last 100 years. The institutionalization of the dispatch of Japanese instructors may be one idea. The sending of talented Japanese people who can get to know the local people in developing countries could indeed be an international contribution of Japan as an advanced nation.

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*Note: In writing this essay, I relied on the study *Shinkoku Oyatoi Nihonjin* "Japanese Employed by the Qing Dynasty" by Wang Xiangrong (translated by Takeuchi Minoru, published in 1990 by Asahi Shimbunsha).