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The internationalization of universities in the Republic of China: Perspectives from modern Japanese academic overseas students studying in China

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Abstract: The internationalization of higher education began to take shape during the period of the Republic of China. This trend manifested in various forms and encompassed a rich array of activities, including the construction of teaching staffs, the exchange of international students, and the presence of overseas scholars giving lectures in China. Between 1899 and 1945, Japanese institutions sent nearly 200 academic overseas students to China. With the establishment and improvement of the internal system of universities in the Republic of China, these students were able to study and interact with Chinese scholars. The forms of communication were diverse, the content was rich, and the channels were smooth, making the process lively and interesting with distinct characteristics of the era. Consequently, this group became both participants and witnesses in the internationalization process of universities in the Republic of China. However, the full-scale Anti-Japanese War disrupted the internationalization of universities, causing it to deviate from its normal trajectory. Some Japanese academic overseas students who had previously studied in China became instruments of Japanese imperialism's cultural invasion and educational colonization. These students played a significant role in promoting the "alternative internationalization" of universities in the Republic of China. In short, examining the involvement of Japanese academic overseas students providing us a unique insight into the general situation and processes of internationalization at universities in the Republic of China during different historical periods.

Keywords: modern Japan; Japanese academic overseas students; universities of the Republic of China; internationalization of higher education; Chinese scholars

1. Introduction

The advent of modern higher education in China began in the late Qing Dynasty, and experienced significant progress during the Republic of China era. Various universities were established during this time, which incorporated internationalization into their frameworks—from institutional philosophy and curriculum design to talent cultivation and faculty recruitment. The internationalization of universities in the Republic of China¹ can be categorized into four main aspects: (1) the influx of Chinese international students who enriched the teaching staff at various universities; (2) faculty members from these institutions traveling abroad for study, lectures or academic conferences, facilitating cross-border cultural and educational exchanges; (3) the presence of foreign students in China, engaging in study and research at Chinese universities; (4) invitations extended to overseas teachers and scholars who contributed to academic discourse through lectures and conferences hosted in the

universities of the Republic of China. At present, the existing literature focuses on the “going out” activities of teachers and students from the Republic of China universities, such as studying abroad or conducting research during academic vacations. However, less attention has been given to the “coming in” component, which involves the academic exchanges of foreign university personnel in China, such as Japanese students studying in China and foreign scholars delivering lectures at Tsinghua University, etc². Overall, the current research on the internationalization of universities during the period of the Republic of China (1912–1949) has a substantial literary foundation.

However, rarely have scholars explored the internationalization process of the universities of the Republic of China from the perspective of Japanese academic overseas students studying in China. Therefore, this paper aims to address the following questions: (1) What was the general situation of Japanese academic overseas students studying in China? (2) What kinds of exchanges occurred between Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese scholars from an internationalization perspective? (3) How did the “alternative internationalization” of Republic of China universities manifest during the full-scale Anti-Japanese War?

Regarding the first question, there has been little in-depth discussion in both Chinese and foreign existing literature, with no clear classification of Japanese academic overseas students studying in China. For the second question, available studies lack systematic and comprehensive analysis, calling for further discussion. The third question is scarcely discussed in existing literature, as the full-scale Anti-Japanese War led to the suspension or relocation of many Chinese universities. During this national crisis, the internationalization of universities seemed insignificant and was largely unremarked upon.

2. Overview of Japanese academic overseas students in China during 1899–1945

In modern history, Japan has sent a significant number of students to China across different types of educational programs. This trend began in 1899 when the Ministry of Education of Japan dispatched Hattori Unokichi, marking the beginning of Japanese academic overseas students studying in China. Since then, the number of Japanese students in China increased steadily, reaching nearly 200 by 1945 (Su, 2019).

2.1. Dispatching institution and the number of Japanese students

Between 1899 and 1945, various types of institutions were responsible for sending Japanese academic overseas students to China. These institutions can be categorized into three main types: (1) Official Institutions: Ministry of Education of Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Korean Governor-General’s Office (2) Private Institutions: Private universities (e.g., Waseda University, Keio University), Organizations such as Kyoto Uenoikueikai, Osaka Kaidokuto, Mukyukai, Banks and enterprises (3) Half-Official and Half-Private Institutions: East Asian Archaeological Society, Academic Promotion Association, Oriental Culture Institute. The dispatch system exhibited characteristics of being “half official and half private”, combining standardization with flexibility, featuring both institutionalized and non-

institutionalized components.

Among these institutions, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Korean Governor-General’s Office had the most comprehensive systems and policies for sending students overseas. While private universities like Waseda and Keio had regulations for studying abroad, their scope was more restricted compared to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, often being limited to a single university or college. In contrast, institutions such as Kyoto Uenoikueikai, the East Asian Archaeological Society, and Osaka Kaidokuto did not have clearly defined systems for overseas study.

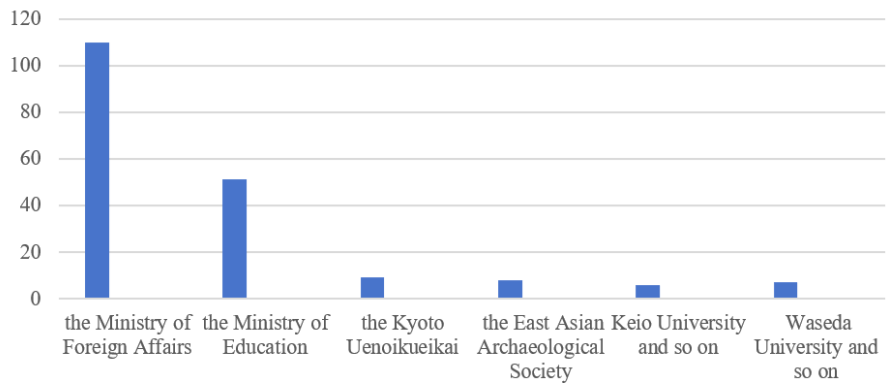


Figure 1. Various dispatching agencies and their numbers in modern Japan.

As shown in **Figure 1**, the number of Japanese students dispatched by various organizations to study in China from 1899 to 1945 varied significantly among institutions³.

In total, 193 students were dispatched to China by these various institutions. Although the number of Japanese students studying in China from 1868 to 1931 was far less than those studying in Europe and the United States (Tan, 2018), the figure remains significant for the development of Sinology and the cultural and educational exchanges between China and Japan. These students played crucial roles in establishing and advancing Sinological studies in modern Japanese higher education. As academic elites in the field of Sinology, they largely met the needs of faculty positions in modern Japanese universities, especially the Imperial Universities.

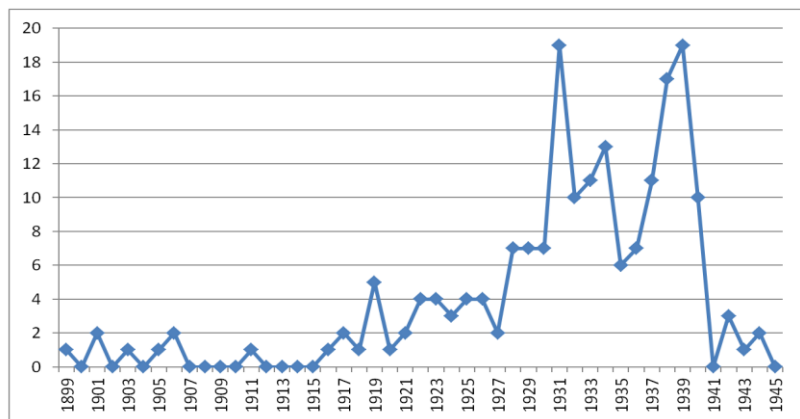


Figure 2. Numbers of Japanese academic students studying in China during¹899–1945.

Figure 2 (with the vertical axis representing the number of students and the horizontal axis indicating the years) illustrates the trends of Japanese students studying in China over the 46-year period from 1899 to 1945. On average, about 4.2 students were sent each year. The chart indicates several key periods:

- 1) 1899–1920: This period displays slight fluctuations, with roughly 1–2 students sent each year, reflecting a slow developmental phase.
- 2) 1921–1937: During these 16 years, the number of students dispatched rose to more than 2 per year, peaking at 19 students in one year. This period marks the pinnacle of Japanese academic overseas students studying in China.
- 3) 1937 onwards: Following the onset of the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, another peak is noted, despite the period being characterized by hostilities between China and Japan. Studying abroad during wartime deviated from normal expectations.
- 4) The number of students declined sharply from 1940 onwards due to the negative impacts of the war, making this period less comparable to peacetime years. In summary, the trends can be categorized as follows: slow development (1899–1920), golden period (1921–1936), period of decline (1937–1945).

2.2. Studying identity and school origin

The identities of Japanese students studying in China were diverse, owing to their backgrounds, the institutions involved, and their individual compositions. These students included both on-the-job teachers (assistants, lecturers, associate professors, and professors) and recent graduates. An example is Egami Namio from the East Asian Archaeological Society, who went to China immediately after graduating from Tokyo Imperial University in March 1930 for further study and research. Similarly, Hama Masao graduated from the Faculty of Law and Literature of Kyushu Imperial University in 1928 and was selected as the third general supplementary student by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1931.

There were notable variations in their identities when studying in China. There were the third general supplementary students and special researchers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, overseas students and researchers from the Ministry of Education, foreign researchers from the Korean Governor's Office and Gijyuku overseas students from Keio University. Regardless of their designation, their primary aim was to study Sinology and Chinese culture, typically with a clear research focus. For the purposes of this article, all these individuals are collectively referred to as Japanese academic overseas students studying in China.

The studying identity of Japanese overseas students is closely linked to their school origins. The distribution of students from various institutions is as follows⁴. In total, as shown in **Figure 3**, 11 universities dispatched more than three students each, amounting to 160 students, which represents 82.9% of the total number of dispatched students (193). The Tokyo and Kyoto Imperial Universities were the top institutions for higher education in Japan during modern times. Likewise, Keio and Waseda Universities, the leading private universities, also made significant contributions. Selecting students from these prestigious schools, known for their strong academic and research capabilities, and granting them high studying identities was a strategic choice in modern times.

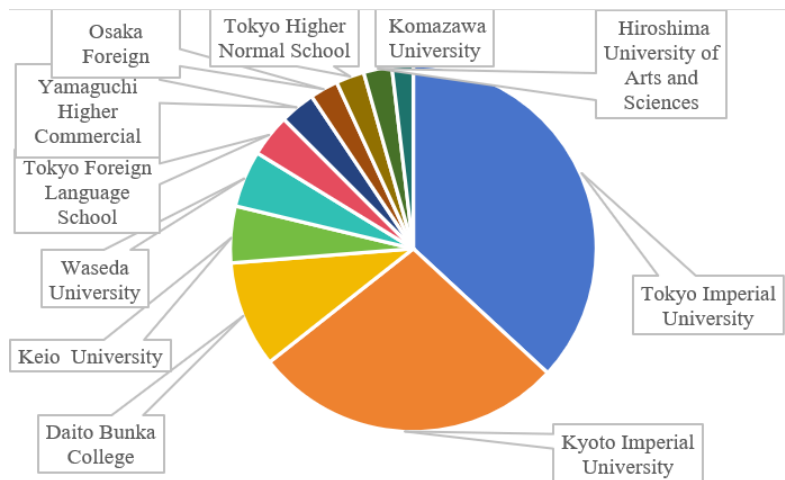


Figure 3. Overview of Japanese overseas students graduating schools and universities.

2.3. Disciplines and research topics

While the natural sciences and social sciences in modern China were not as developed as those in Europe, America, and Japan, various fields of study still attracted Japanese academic overseas students. These students primarily engaged in disciplines that were particularly relevant to their personal and academic interests and the intellectual and cultural relationship between Japan and China. In the next section, we will explore the specific sciences, disciplines, and research topics that these students focused on during their studies in China.

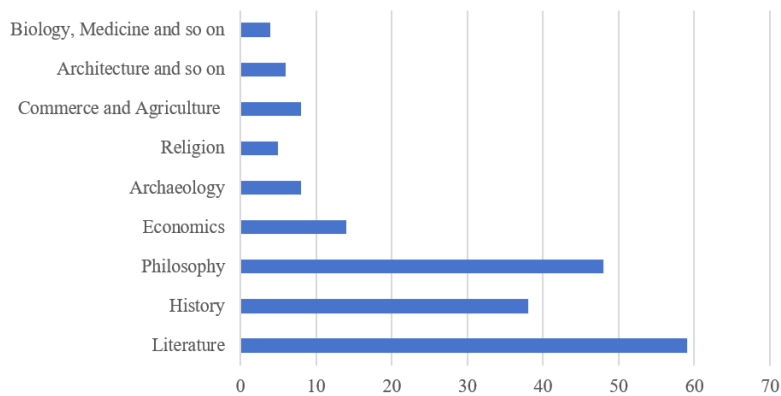


Figure 4. The distribution of overseas students in specific disciplines and majors.

According to the statistics, as shown in **Figure 4**, the distribution of specific disciplines and majors among the 193 Japanese academic overseas students who studied in China is detailed as follows: 59 in literature, 38 in history, 48 in philosophy, 14 in economics, 8 in archaeology, 5 in religion, commerce, and agriculture are both 4 students; architecture, political science, and law are both 2; art, biology, medicine, and science are both one person. These figures indicate that most students were from disciplines and majors within the humanities and social sciences, with a particular emphasis on Chinese literature, history, and philosophy. These three disciplines alone accounted for 145 students, representing 75.1% of the total number of Japanese academic overseas students (193).

In addition to literature, history, and philosophy, there were also students in fields like engineering, art, and economics, with some connections to history and philosophy. For example, research topics included the history of Chinese architecture, the history of Oriental art, and the history of economic systems. The unique characteristics of Chinese literature, historiography, and philosophy made them “a critical area” that Japanese scholars could not overlook. Furthermore, the extensive and profound nature of Chinese culture, its long history, and the rich academic resources made it an attractive destination for Japanese academic overseas students.

The content of study and research undertaken by these students was generally closely related to their pre-existing majors and disciplines. Many went to China with clear research topics⁵. These examples illustrate that Japanese academic overseas students studying in China had specific disciplines and majors, often accompanied by clear research topics. This focus on targeted and relevant research was a defining characteristic of this group.

After understanding the profile of these overseas students, an intriguing question arises: What is the relationship between Chinese university scholars and these Japanese academic overseas students, and how did these two groups collaborate or communicate? This interplay will shed further light on the academic and cultural exchanges between China and Japan during this period.

3. The micro perspective of internationalization: Communication between Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese scholars

The internationalization of universities is not merely an abstract concept; it manifests through specific activities and interactions. From a micro perspective, this section explores the forms, channels, content, processes, and characteristics of exchanges between Chinese university faculty and students and Japanese academic overseas students studying in China.

3.1. The improvement of university systems and the admission of Japanese overseas students

The progression of time has fostered the establishment and enhancement of internal university systems in China, thereby promoting their internationalization. Two key systems that significantly contribute to this process are the academic leave system for faculty and the student auditing system.

The academic leave system allows university teachers to take short-term breaks for academic research after serving a specific number of years at their institutions (Tian and Wang, 2018). This system has been implemented at national universities such as Peking University, Tsinghua University, Jiao Tong University, and Wuhan University, with clear regulations and effective execution. Additionally, private and church-affiliated universities, such as Yenching University and Jinling University, are actively exploring similar measures and have established regulations like the “Interim Measures for Current Professors of Jinling University on Leave for Further Study” (Liu and Wang, 2020). In summary, the establishment and refinement of the academic leave system in Chinese universities have facilitated opportunities for faculty to “go out,” serving as a vital measure to enhance the internationalization of higher education.

Another key factor driving university internationalization is the student auditing system. Commonly perceived in academic circles as primarily benefiting domestic students (Huang, 2016), this system also serves international students. Many foreign students do not pursue degrees in Chinese universities due to the perceived lag in the natural and social sciences compared to Western institutions; instead, they often study Chinese, immerse themselves in Chinese culture, and engage in research related to China. Since the Republic of China, the student auditing system has progressively improved, with many colleges allowing auditing, making it a common sight on campuses during that period.

Notably, foreign students who audited courses at Peking University during the Republic of China included Japanese, Koreans, Americans, Canadians, and Russians, with Japanese auditors comprising the largest group and primarily dispatched by various Japanese institutions. From 1920 to 1945, 93 Japanese auditing students were recorded at Peking University (including the pseudo-Peking University), of which 35 were classified as academic overseas students studying in China (Su, 2019). A notable example is Komai Kazuchika, who audited courses at Peking University but is not reflected in official records. Beyond Peking University, other institutions, including Tsinghua University, Beijing Normal University, and Fu Jen Catholic University, also hosted significant numbers of Japanese auditors. This influx of Japanese students studying in China played a crucial role in promoting the internationalization of Chinese universities and contributed positively to the development of modern higher education in China.

3.2. Communication forms and channels

The communication between Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese scholars is characterized by diverse forms and smooth channels.

First, the modes of communication are varied and flexible. Existing literature identifies several forms of interaction between Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese faculty, which include: (1) auditing classes at various universities; (2) visiting Chinese scholars both on and off campus, either individually or in pairs; (3) engaging in dinners at restaurants or the private residences of university scholars; (4) participating in observations and discussions at research sites; (5) forming friendships at ancient book markets and tourist attractions; (6) exchanging letters; and (7) establishing academic organizations to attend lectures and reports by university scholars.

Japanese academic overseas students, having received relatively systematic higher education, possess significant research and academic literacy, mainly focusing on research topics related to China. Consequently, they often do not pursue long-term and fixed study courses at Chinese universities. Instead, they engage with Chinese scholars according to their research needs and academic goals, thereby utilizing various communication forms. This flexibility in exchanges aligns well with their objectives for studying in China.

3.3. Communication content and process

The form and content of communication complement each other; after all, the

form and channel of communication serve the content of the exchange. The interactions between Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese university scholars encompass a rich variety of topics. These include academic discussions, course studies, daily life matters, and culinary culture, making the communication process engaging and memorable. Below are several snippets and cases that detail the content and process of these interactions.

Komai Kazuchika, a Japanese academic overseas student from the East Asian Archaeological Society, traveled to China to study in April 1928. Shortly after arriving in Beijing, he visited Ma Heng, a professor at the Archaeology Research Office of Peking University. Komai was deeply impressed by his first visit to Ma Heng. He notes: “The main building of Peking University’s Research Institute is located in Beiheyuan, a two-story building, some distance from the Peking University headquarters, classrooms, library, and other red brick school buildings. Several rooms in the two-story building are used as research rooms for archaeology. Catkins fluttered in the sky in front of the door. When I visited Mr. Ma, he was sorting out Yuan Dynasty murals from Xinghua Temple in Shanxi Province. The murals, each cut into two square feet, covered the room’s floor. Upon my entry, he explained the age of the murals and other contents, and also showed me a pile of bronze chariot and horse ornaments unearthed in Mengjin County, Henan Province” (Komai, 1976). This type of “physical communication,” where Komai received professional explanations from Chinese scholars, was an eye-opener for him.

Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese scholars often enjoyed Chinese food and drinks at off-campus restaurants. This setting allowed them to experience the personality and charm of Chinese scholars up close, providing both material enjoyment and spiritual edification. Okuno Shintaro, a special researcher of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, was frequently entertained by Professor Qian Taosun from Peking University. Okuno recounts that each time they arrived at a restaurant, there would be a sign at the entrance stating, ‘Mr. Qian XX day XX o’clock.’ These occasions uplifted their spirits. Okuno remarks, “Mr. Qian is a ‘shi tong’ (a person who pays attention to food and drink) in Beijing and we never went to Tongheju alone” (Okuno, 1990). Sharing meals with Professor Qian allowed Okuno to see him as a caring and human scholar, not as a distant figure.

Another student, Takeshiro Kuraishi, was dispatched by the Japanese Ministry of Education to study in Beijing. Before returning to Japan, he traveled to the Jiangnan region and planned to depart from Shanghai. He visited Professor Huang Kan at the National Central University. Huang recorded in his diary: “On the 12th day of Wuwu (Monday 7th July), rainy. A Japanese man named Takeshiro Kuraishi (named Shi Huan) came to visit. He mentioned that he once paid homage to Zhang Taiyan in Shanghai, and Zhang instructed him to visit me. Kuraishi, an assistant professor at Kyoto Imperial University, is said to be good at annotations. He is a disciple of Naoki Kano and Hunan Naito. Having studied in Beijing for two years, Kuraishi’s Chinese is very good” (Huang, 2007). Huang Kan affirmed Kuraishi’s proficiency in Chinese. While the specific content of their exchange is not known from Huang’s diary, Kuraishi did record the conversation in his own writings.

Kuraishi’s Shuxuezhai Diary entry on July 7 reads:

“In the morning, I went to Central University and first visited Mr. Wang Xuchu at room No. 22, but he was not there. Next, I visited Mr. Huang Kan at No. 4 Dashiqiao. Huang Kan welcomed me and spoke very fluently and knowledgeably. He mentioned that the ‘Guwen Shangshu’ is undoubtedly false, but the characters used are authentic. He also noted that his studies originated from scholars of the Jiaqing and Daoguang periods. He said he first learned annotation techniques, and then he was able to understand the judicial interpretations of Qing Dynasty scholars. He suggested beginning with ‘Duan Zhu Shuowen’ before referencing different interpretations of ‘Shuowen.’ Moreover, he advised that while reading, one does not necessarily need to generate new ideas, but understanding the thoughts of the ancients is sufficient. This insight suggests that Huang followed the learning methods of Zhou scholars. After saying goodbye to Huang Kan, I headed to Jinling University to the west.” (Takeshiro Kuraishi, 2002).

Additionally, on Saturday, 17 January 1931, Takeshiro noted an interaction in his diary during a class at Peking University:

“Japanese scholar Kojiro Yoshikawa came and brought 16 pages of photos from the Five Dynasties block-printed book ‘Tang Yun.’ He mentioned that the photos were obtained from a specific photographer’s studio, and he intended to copy them during the week he had borrowed them. Upon examining them briefly, it seemed to be ‘Tang Yun,’ which has fewer characters than ‘Guang Yun,’ and does not differentiate between upper and lower tones. There are entries such as ‘Thirty-one Xian’ and ‘Thirty-two Xuan.’ At the end of each page, there are entries like ‘Eleven Boards’ and ‘Sixty-seven Boards,’ marking the earliest engraved words” (Yang, 2014).

This diary is Qian Xuantong’s record of Kojiro Yoshikawa, a Japanese overseas student auditing at Peking University. Yoshikawa informed Qian Xuantong that the photos were borrowed from a photo studio, yet Qian, an expert in linguistics, could not fully comprehend the contents of ‘Tang Yun.’ Some Japanese academic overseas students attended and audited classes in Chinese universities, fostering clear impressions and memories of their university professors, and these classroom interactions exemplify the internationalization of Chinese universities.

Hu Shi’s diary briefly recorded his interactions with Japanese scholars from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan:

- 21 March 1933, Tuesday: “Japanese doctor of law Takikawa Masajiro [Professor at Chuo University, Japan] and Fukui Koujyun [lecturer at Waseda University, Japan] visited. Takikawa is proficient in Heian era law and Chinese law, while Fukui specializes in the history of Chinese thought. They discussed the book ‘Muzi’s Theory of Confusion.’”
- 14 October 1934, Sunday: “Today’s event is Bannong’s memorial service. Speeches were given by Zhou Qiming, Qian Xuantong, and Wei Jiangong. Three young Japanese scholars, Ogawa, Yamamuro, and Mekata, attended” (Hu, 2003).

The first diary entry illustrates Hu Shi’s academic engagement with Takikawa Masajiro and Fukui Koujyun, emphasizing Fukui’s study of Taoist temples and their sacrificial activities, which aligned with the topics of the discussed book. The second entry mentions the visit of Japanese scholars Ogawa Tamaki, Yamamuro Saburo, and Mekata Makoto to express their gratitude to Hu Shi for the opportunity to audit classes at Peking University, reflecting their integration into the academic environment.

In summary, the communication between Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese university scholars occurred in various settings such as private homes, restaurants, and schools. These exchanges covered a wide array of topics, including academic discussions, course arrangements, and everyday life conversations, often involving meals and social interactions. The communication process is well-documented in diaries, essays, and personal treatises by both Japanese and Chinese scholars. Notably, the primary purpose of Japanese academic overseas students in China was academic research. In the 1930s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan established the Peking Daxing Society to facilitate academic communication, which became a significant platform for interactions between Japanese students and Chinese scholars. However, the outbreak of the full-scale Anti-Japanese War led to the departure of many Chinese scholars from Beijing, resulting in a decline in these communications and the internationalization of Chinese universities.

3.4. Communication features and meaning

The communication characteristics between Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese university scholars are primarily reflected in four aspects.

- **Academic Nature.** The main purpose of Japanese academic overseas students studying in China is to engage in various academic research topics related to China. This holds true irrespective of whether their dispatching organization is the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the East Asian Archaeological Society, or the Kyoto Uenoikueikai. The communication between these students and Chinese scholars is intensely academic, focusing on scholarly discussions and research. This differentiates them from other types of Japanese students in China, such as those studying language, conducting military reconnaissance, or engaging in industrial investigations. Furthermore, many of these students work in higher education and research institutions upon returning to Japan, continuing to engage in teaching and scientific research, which highlights their strong academic focus.
- **Diversification.** The forms of communication between Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese university scholars are varied. The content is rich, and many channels exist for communication. Additionally, the venues for these exchanges are not limited to university corners—they include restaurants, ancient book markets in Beijing, and private residences of scholars. Japanese academic overseas students come from diverse dispatching agencies and funding departments in Japan, each with different majors, research topics, and specialized areas. This diversity facilitates varied forms of communication and is a significant feature of the internationalization of Chinese universities.
- **Humanistic Approach.** Most Japanese academic overseas students graduated from humanities and social sciences disciplines such as literature, history, and philosophy. Their focus on specific research in these fields underscores their humanistic approach. For instance, Kato Jyouken, a Japanese academic overseas student from the Korean Governor's Office, planned to study the Chinese family system and expressed an interest in observing Chinese funerals and weddings (Oriental Society, 2000). Despite the general disdain for China among many

Japanese nationals who won the Sino-Japanese War, these students were polite and humbly sought advice from Chinese scholars. This attitude highlights the humanistic nature of their academic communication.

- **Openness.** During the Republic of China period, universities moved from a closed to a more open system, integrating with the broader society, nation, and cities. Institutional mechanisms, such as the academic leave system and the student audit system, provided more opportunities for teachers and students to develop their academic interests, fostering cross-border flow of people and cultural dialogue. This openness is an inherent characteristic of the internationalization of universities. The inclusive and enlightened mindset of Chinese scholars, coupled with the Japanese students' willingness to learn and engage in communication activities, illustrates this characteristic.

The communication between Japanese academic overseas students and Chinese scholars holds considerable significance: **Increased Mutual Understanding:** Such interactions have fostered better understanding between Chinese and Japanese academic circles, especially in the humanities and social sciences, leading to more dialogues and intersections. **Bridging Cultural Gaps:** The Japanese academic overseas students acted as bridges of social interaction, sharing their observations and experiences in China with Japanese society. **Promoting Internationalization:** These students contributed to the internationalization of Chinese universities, adding diversity and facilitating academic exchange. **Cultural Envoys:** Some Japanese students became cultural envoys promoting Sino-Japanese relations, especially in the period after World War II and before the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Japan.

However, these communications also had negative implications, particularly during the war of resistance against Japanese aggression. Chinese scholars such as Zhou Zuoren and Qian Taosun, who remained in Beijing and had regular interactions with Japanese personnel, including academic overseas students dispatched by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were later criticized as “cultural traitors” by their fellow Chinese.

4. The “alternative internationalization” of universities in China during the Anti-Japanese War

The period of the full-scale Anti-Japanese War (1937–1945) marked another stage of the internationalization of Chinese universities. Influenced by the Japanese invasion, the internationalization process during this period deviated from its usual path and can be described as “alternative internationalization” during a special period.

4.1. Diverse internationalization: Different fates of Chinese universities during the Anti-Japanese War

During the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, the universities of China had different encounters and experiences. According to the spatial layout and the actual controllers of the universities, there are roughly three categories: one is the universities in the areas occupied by Japan; the other is the universities in the areas controlled by the Kuomintang government; the third is the universities in the liberated area controlled

by the Communist Party of China. During the period of the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, the international content of three types of universities still existed, and their internationalization levels were from high to low: universities in the occupied areas by Japan > universities in the Kuomintang-controlled areas > universities in the liberated areas of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

The universities of the Republic of China was concentrated in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhan and other culturally, educationally, and economically developed areas, and these areas were under the stampede of Japanese imperialism during the full-scale Anti-Japanese War. The occupied universities by Japan became a typical example of the “alternative internationalization” of the Republic of China universities. Even under the influence of the war, universities in the occupied areas by Japan were not lacking in “internationalization” in terms of source of teachers, dispatch of overseas students, curriculum setting, selection of teaching materials, university management and personnel system and so on. Universities in the occupied areas of Northeast China, North China, East China and other places are directly or indirectly controlled by the Japanese, and universities dominated and controlled by foreigners are manifestations of “alternative internationalization”. Universities in the occupied areas by Japan were under the political control, cultural aggression and educational rule of Japanese imperialism, and various pseudo-universities and spy universities emerged one after another to cultivate various talents for Japan’s comprehensive invasion of China and the construction of the so-called “Greater East Asia Co-Prospersity Sphere”. Like Japan’s full-scale invasion of China, various pseudo-universities and spy universities are disappeared after only eight years, which is very different from the independent universities of the Republic of China.

At the same time, the internationalization of the universities in the Kuomintang-controlled areas during the period of the full-scale Anti-Japanese War suffered a huge impact. Squeezed by the strategic space of Japanese imperialism, the Kuomintang government had to retreat to the central and western regions. Many universities in the Kuomintang-controlled areas migrated from the east (such as the Southwest Associated University and the Northwest Associated University), most of which are temporary schools with difficult conditions and are often invaded by the Japanese army; it is not difficult to imagine the difficult situation of the universities in the Kuomintang areas. Even so, there are still hundreds of overseas students and teachers who still go abroad to study and research; well-known scholars such as Yang Zhenning, Li Zhengdao, and Ye Duzheng went to study abroad during their studies at Southwest Associated University. Of course, there are still some overseas students who have enriched the faculty of the universities in the Kuomintang-controlled areas, and some teachers can still go overseas to participate in international academic conferences. All of these are the important contents of the internationalization of the universities in the Kuomintang-controlled areas.

In addition, the liberated area universities are basically schools founded by the Communist Party of China to train military and political cadres. Liberated area universities founded by the Communist Party of China in the process of revolutionary practice, such as the Chinese People’s Anti-Japanese Military and Political University, North China United University, North China University, etc. Due to the double blow

of Japanese imperialism and the dictatorship of the Kuomintang, the universities in the liberated areas mainly served the revolution and the war of resistance. During the period of the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, their internationalization level was low, but there were still many factors of internationalization, including the communication and cooperation between the internal personnel of the university and the Soviet Union, and some teachers have the background and experience of studying in the Soviet Union, Europe, America, and Japan.

In short, the universities of the Republic of China had different fates and development directions during the period of the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, and their internationalization contents and forms were also quite different.

4.2. Full-scale Anti-Japanese War and the “alternative internationalization” of Chinese Universities in Japanese-occupied areas

The war of aggression against China launched by Japan led to the destruction and devastation of universities in Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai, and other key locations. Except for a select few church-run universities that continued operations, most national, provincial, and private universities lost their normal teaching, research, and social service functions. They became tools for direct management or indirect control by the Japanese, marking the onset of “alternative internationalization” in Chinese universities within occupied areas.

The Japanese implemented a policy of “using China to control China” in politics, economy, culture, and education of the territories they occupied. This led to the creation of several pseudo-regimes in regions such as Northeast China, North China, and East China. Following military aggression, cultural aggression began to take hold as the Japanese took over various universities, including Peking University and Peking Normal University. By late 1937, both institutions had suspended classes and were converted into barracks for the Japanese army. Later, under the Wang Jingwei puppet regime, they were transformed into pseudo Peking University and pseudo Beijing Normal University, respectively. Similarly, the Wang puppet government established Guangdong University, Central Police Academy, Jiaotong University, and pseudo Zhejiang University in 1942, all of which were controlled by Japanese invaders. Some pseudo-universities bore the same names as universities operating in Kuomintang-controlled areas—a rare occurrence in modern Chinese higher education history. This demonstrated the conflict between the Japanese invaders’ educational control and the persistence of Chinese culture.

Japanese puppet universities prioritized Japanese students for admission. After the establishment of pseudo Peking University, few Japanese were mere auditors; most became formal students. This represented a stark contrast to the situation before 1937, highlighting the university’s transformation into a colonial institution under Japanese imperialism, similar to Seoul Imperial University. Throughout the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to dispatch academic overseas students to China, maintaining communication with some scholars who remained in Beijing. For instance, in 1938, Shintaro Okuno, a special researcher for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, was given a farewell party by Qian Taosun at the Tongheju restaurant before returning to Japan. Takeuchi’s diary notes this event

on 9 March 1938:

“(1938) On March 9, accepted the invitation to attend the farewell party held by Mr. Qian for Okuno Shintaro, and went to Tongheju together. In addition to Okuno and Nakamaru, there were also Hiraoka, Kiyoshi Yabuuchi, and Takeo Odake of the Kyoto Institute of Oriental Culture. There are many delicacies, ended around ten o'clock” (Takeuchi, 1981).

In recent years, the diary of Zhou Zuoren from 1939, documenting his time in Beijing, has been made public. Some records highlight his interactions with Japanese academic overseas students:

25 May 1939: “Sunny. I visited Taosun in the morning and returned in the afternoon. In the afternoon, Nakashima came, and Mrs. Chuntai came.” 2 August 1939: “Sunny. In the afternoon, Pingbai, Jisheng, and Nakashima came together. Hama Kazue came from Japan and stayed overnight.” 18 November 1939: “Sunny. Pingbai came in the afternoon, took away nine attached books. It’s almost over. Take a bath. Ozawa, Sakai, Kawai, and Nakamura visited my home.” 30 December 1939: “Sunny. Qiwu came in the afternoon. Nakashima, Yasuda, and Goto came to my home. Yasuda gave me a box of snacks” (Zhou, 2016).

In 1939, Eiichiro Nagashima, Bunshiro Ozawa, Shigemasa Kawai, and Tetsu Sakai were notable Japanese scholars interacting with Zhou Zuoren. These individuals were part of the third kind of ordinary supplementary students from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1936 and 1939. Noteworthy is the fact that Nagashima had to postpone his studies for half a year in 1938 because he served as an interpreter for the Japanese Army (JACAR, Ref. B05015639900). As the war progressed, many Chinese scholars from prestigious institutions like Peking University and Tsinghua University relocated inland or returned to their hometowns to escape the conflict. Consequently, after 1937, the opportunities and frequency of communication between these supplementary students and Chinese scholars significantly diminished. Continued contact with scholars such as Zhou Zuoren and Qian Taosun, who remained in Beijing, illustrates the decline of internationalization efforts in universities within occupied territories. For Japanese academic overseas students, studying in China during the war years was significantly compromised.

4.3. From overseas students to teachers in occupied China: The lesser-known side of Japanese academic overseas students

The “internationalization” of universities in Japanese-occupied areas also extended to the appointment of university teachers, though this form of internationalization was essentially an act of cultural aggression and educational colonization during the period from 1937 to 1945. Many former Japanese academic overseas students, who initially went to China for scholarly pursuits, ended up serving the interests of Japanese imperialism, militarism, and colonialism during the full-scale Anti-Japanese War by becoming university teachers in the occupied territories. This unique aspect of internationalization, driven by the conflict, is notable in the history of both Chinese and global higher education.

An illustrative example is the transformation of Peking University and Beijing Normal University into pseudo-universities under the control of the Japanese military and puppet governments. Many professors from these universities who decided to stay

in Beijing formed the core of the faculty at these pseudo-universities. Concurrently, the Japanese military strategically placed a number of Japanese professors within these institutions through organizations like the Xingya Institute (He, 2017).

At pseudo Peking University, several Japanese academic overseas students, sponsored by various Japanese organizations, took on teaching roles. According to declassified archives, such individuals included: Agricultural College lecturers Onaomi Shinlei and Harada Masami, the Law School lecturer Ikeda Suetoshi, the Faculty of Literature associate professor Yasuda Masaki, and the engineering college lecturer Garasawai. Additionally, there were prominent figures like Uno Tetsuto and Yamaguchi Satsujyou who were Japanese overseas students supported by the Ministry of Education of Japan, and they held honorary professor and associate professor positions in the School of Literature at pseudo Peking University. Imanishi Shunju, sponsored by the Kyoto Uenoikueikai, served as a professor. Hattori Shiro, funded by the Academic Promotion Association, became a lecturer at the pseudo-university in 1941.

The trend was not limited to Peking University. At pseudo Beijing Normal University, Japanese lecturers Sakai Tetsu, Katsuya Kenjiro, and history professor Matake Nao were installed (JACAR, Ref.B02031709300). Kobayashi Tomoo served as an associate professor at the Faculty of Literature at Fu Jen Catholic University until his repatriation after the war's end. Similarly, Fujisawa Akio worked at Yenching University.

Not only in North China, some universities in East China and Northeast China also have Japanese academic overseas-students to be teachers. For example, Haratomio served as a lecturer at the pseudo National Shanghai University from 1944 to 1945, and Sato Kusogen served as an associate professor at the puppet Manchuria Jianguo University. Regardless of the subjective wishes of Japanese academic overseas-students, they have become part of Japan's cultural and educational aggression against China. This cannot be denied because they are engaged in teaching or academic research, the nature of their cultural and educational aggression is clearly revealed. An intriguing contrast is that Japanese academic overseas-students became teachers and they are sent by the Japanese government to China during the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, it is a huge difference from the Japanese who came to China to teach in the early 20th century. The former is that the Japanese government and agencies that took the initiative to send Japanese to China to serve cultural aggression and educational colonization, the latter is that the Chinese government took the initiative to hire Japanese as teachers to serve the modernization of Chinese education.

5. Conclusion

The cultural and educational communication between China and Japan saw significant development during the Republic of China period. With the advancement of higher education, both countries experienced fruitful exchanges of teachers, students, and other personnel. For academic research purposes, groups of Japanese academic overseas students were dispatched to study in China by various organizations, including departments of the Japanese central government, private foundations, academic organizations, and private universities. Predominantly

dispatched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education of Japan, these students carried diverse titles and identities but shared the common goal of conducting focused research.

Given that modern Chinese natural sciences and social sciences lagged behind those in Europe, America, and Japan, Japanese academic overseas students mainly concentrated on Chinese literature, history, philosophy, and other humanities disciplines. These fields were highly compatible with their studies in Japan, and many had graduated from Japan's prestigious Imperial Universities, providing a strong foundation for their studies in China. Coupled with the establishment and improvement of internal systems within Chinese universities, these students could audit courses, engage in classroom interactions, hold restaurant gatherings, make door-to-door visits, correspond via letters, and participate in societal classes, thereby facilitating rich academic and personal exchanges with Chinese scholars.

However, many unfavorable factors, such as complex and changeable diplomatic relations, military conflicts, and political confrontations between China and Japan, influenced these interactions. During the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, the role of Japanese academic overseas students became more antagonistic, reflecting the tumultuous state of Sino-Japanese relations. The internationalization of Chinese universities faced significant challenges, leading to distinct paths: Universities in Japanese-Occupied Areas became examples of "alternative internationalization," with their faculty and management influenced by Japanese aggression institutions such as the Xingya Institute and the Greater East Asia Province. Japanese enrollment increased significantly, and some academic overseas students served as teachers within puppet regimes, facilitating Japan's cultural and educational colonization of China. Universities in Kuomintang-Controlled Areas suffering from territorial and strategic pressures, faced substantial disruptions but maintained some levels of international exchange. Notable scholars studied abroad, enriching their home institutions upon return, and some faculty participated in international academic conferences. Universities in CPC-Controlled Areas primarily served revolutionary purposes with minimal internationalization. Nonetheless, there were instances of international collaboration, particularly with the Soviet Union, and some faculty members had international educational backgrounds from the Soviet Union, Europe, America, and Japan.

During the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, Chinese universities' internationalization suffered, leading to the formation of distinct categories of universities with varying degrees of influence from Japanese imperialism. The study abroad activities of Japanese academic overseas students were largely overshadowed by political, military, and cultural aggression, significantly reducing the value and significance of their academic endeavors.

In conclusion, the history of Japanese academic overseas students studying in China—spanning nearly half a century—concluded with the end of World War II. Analyzing this history through the lens of these students allows us to explore the different development processes of the internationalization of Chinese universities. Despite the challenges, this era of academic exchange underscores the resilience and adaptability of higher education amidst geopolitical turmoil.

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Notes

- ¹ The University of the Republic of China refers to the various universities that existed in China during 1912–1949, including national, public, private universities and other types of universities, including the pseudo-regime universities in the occupied areas by Japan (such as the pseudo-Peking University), and the Westward University in the Kuomintang-controlled areas (Such as Southwest United University) and Liberated Area University.
- ² In recent years, the representative works of research on the internationalization of the universities in the Republic of China include Wang Heng. *Research on the Internationalization of Higher Education in the Republic of China—An Investigation Centered on National Universities*, (PhD diss., Zhejiang University, 2021). Liu Chao, Wang Hexin. *Hughes and Oxford University’s Chinese Studies: The History of Sino-British Cultural Exchanges in Modern Times*, *History Teaching*, No.8, (2020): 33–34; Xiao Lang, Su Qing. *The Many Faces of “Alternative” Study Abroad and Exchange—A Preliminary Study of the Third Kind of Ordinary Supplementary Students Studying in China by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Modern Times*, *Journal of Zhejiang University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, No.5, (2019): 13–36; Guo Faqi. *Dewey’s Trip to China: A Century of Echoes of Educational Thought*, *Education Research*, No. 4(2019): 28–33. Tan Hao. *A History of Overseas Students Officially Dispatched to China by Modern Japan (1871–1931)*, Peking: Social Sciences Academic Publishing Press, 2018; Gu Jun. *The First Group of American Students in Peking*. Zhengzhou: Elephant press, 2015.
- ³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 110; Ministry of Education: 51; Kyoto Uenoikueikai: 9; East Asian Archaeological Society: 8; Korean Governor-General’s Office: 3; Keio University: 3; Oriental Culture Institute: 2; Waseda University, Osaka Kaidokoto, Mukyukai, and others: 5 students in total.
- ⁴ Tokyo Imperial University: 59, Kyoto Imperial University: 44, Daito Bunka College: 15, Keio University: 8, Waseda University: 8, Tokyo Foreign Language School: 6, Yamaguchi Higher Commercial School: 5, Osaka Foreign Language School: 4, Tokyo Higher Normal School: 4, Hiroshima University of Arts and Sciences: 4, Komazawa University: 3, Tohoku Imperial University: 2, Kyushu Imperial University: 2, Toyo University: 2, Tokyo Higher Commercial School: 2, Kokugakuin University: 1, Risho University: 1 student.
- ⁵ For instance: Masaru Aoki dispatched by the Ministry of Education of Japan, engaged in the research of modern Chinese opera while focusing on Chinese literature; Saneto Kesyu selected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in 1938, researched “Modern Sino-Japanese Cultural Relations and Chinese Studies”; Kazuo Komai and Egami Namio funded by the East Asian Archaeological Society, studied ancient Chinese stone tools, bronze tools, and mausoleums; Hattori Unokichi funded by the Academic Promotion Association, conducted research on Oriental languages in Northeast China.

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