Introduction to the English Edition

Daqing Yang and Andrew Gordon

In his letter to the prospective contributors to the *Cambridge Modern History*, one of the greatest collaborative works of history published in the twentieth century, British historian Lord Acton triumphantly declared that “the long conspiracy against the knowledge of truth has been practically abandoned, and competing scholars all over the civilized world are taking advantage of the change.” Citing the principle of the *Cambridge History*, he reminded his contributors that “our Waterloo must be one that satisfies French and English, German, and Dutch alike; that nobody can tell, without examining the list of authors, where the Bishop of Oxford laid down the pen, and whether Fairbairn or Gasquet, Liebermann or Harrison took it up.”1 Such optimism about universal history was not uncommon then. After all, as Leopold von Ranke, another great nineteenth-century historian, famously put it, historians’ task regarding the past was simply to show “how it really was.” Under such a conception, historians’ own subjectivity rarely mattered.

Today, such a confident claim to the universal truth about history is viewed by most historians with skepticism. Two trends have contributed to this. To begin with, the rise of Relativism in the latter half of the

twentieth century has greatly undermined the positivist view within the historical profession. Historians’ quest for “objectivity” has become a “noble dream.” If one can accept the notion of “everyone his own historian,” then each group—ethnic communities in particular—is entitled to its own historical narrative. Moreover, nationalism has always exerted a potent influence on the writing of history in modern times, even though historians have often denied it. This influence has strengthened in many parts of the world with the end of the Cold War, as the once influential supranational ideologies such as Communism have been greatly undermined. In some cases, the resurgence of nationalism and the accompanying myth-making about the past in the wake of the Cold War has been blamed for inciting bloody ethnic conflicts.

Just as the fall of dictatorships has also given “truth” about the past a new legitimacy and even urgency, post-conflict peace-making is increasingly incorporating “knowing the truth” and “sharing history” as an essential objective. Exactly because nationalist historiography and myth-making about the past have been mobilized and have contributed to conflicts, professional historians now increasingly face challenges from the real world of recent or ongoing conflicts. Hence, the Balkans, which saw the worst ethnic conflict in post–World War II Europe in the 1990s, now provides a fertile ground for cross-national dialogues such as the Scholar’s Project—historians from different sides of the former Yugoslavia have tried to reconstruct that painful history, together. Similar efforts are now underway to bring together historians to engage in Israeli-Palestinian and Turkish-Armenian dialogues. To be sure, such efforts at dialogue often go beyond national or ethnic divisions. The Parallel History Project of the Cold War—known as PHP—specifically builds on efforts by historians on the two sides of the Cold War division once known as the “Iron Curtain.” All in all, notes Elazar Barkan, “because group identity is shaped by historical perspectives, historical narratives have explicit and direct impact on national identities, and historians can thus play a role in adjudicating historical narra-


3. The example of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission following the end of apartheid has been followed in a number of countries that have undergone democratization, including South Korea.
tives according to ethical norms, and can contribute to reconciliation among nations.”

East Asia, which has seen its own conflict over history flaring up in recent decades, has also produced numerous joint efforts to overcome its un-mastered past. International conferences continue to bring historians together for brief exchanges, but the new millennium is witnessing a more sustained form of historians’ dialogue similar to those described above. The Japanese government’s approval of a middle-school history textbook written by a group of vociferously nationalistic authors in Japan in 2001 (discussed by Mitani Hiroshi in this book) sparked official protests from the governments of China and the two Koreas. However, this “textbook incident” also provided the catalyst for a new wave of cross-national dialogue about history in East Asia. In that year, a group of historians, activists, and schoolteachers from Japan, China, and South Korea embarked on an ambitious project to produce a regional history textbook. Additionally, in 2002, to help defuse the tensions over the history textbook issue, the Japanese and Korean governments initiated a two-year program of joint historical research by academic historians from both countries. In addition, different groups of historians and history teachers in South Korea and Japan also engaged in a variety of bilateral history dialogues. These efforts bore fruit in a number of publications including jointly written history books. In 2005, the first jointly written trilateral modern history of East Asia was published simultaneously in China, Japan, and Korea. On the one hand, in 2007, after fifteen rounds of meetings over a ten-year period, historians from a Japanese university and a Korean university jointly published a general survey of Japanese-Korean exchanges throughout history. On the other hand, Japanese and Korean historians belonging to the government-sponsored Japan-Korea Joint Historical Research project engaged in in-depth discussions but did not reach agreement on several key issues. Consequently, they published essentially parallel historical studies of


Korean-Japanese relations in late 2005, although both sides agreed to embark on the second phase of continued dialogue and to set up a sub-committee devoted to history textbooks. Reports of the second phase were published in March 2010. A similar China-Japan Joint Historical Research project was launched by the two governments at the end of 2006, in the wake of several years of intense dispute over history issues. In early 2010 the project released research reports by its Chinese and Japanese members.

In the context of this wider trend toward cross-national dialogue over the history issue, this volume brings to English-language readers the results of an important long-term project of historians from China and Japan addressing contentious issues in their shared modern histories. In this context, our volume can be read as both a progress report and a case study of the effort to overcome as yet un-mastered issues of history in East Asia.

As described in more detail in the introduction and postscript to the Japanese edition, the essays to follow were conceived and drafted in a multi-year collaborative project beginning in October 2001. The editors of that endeavor, Liu Jie, Mitani Hiroshi, and Daqing Yang, have been joined in the production of this English translation by Andrew Gordon, who first learned of the project at a symposium in Tokyo in spring of 2006 marking the simultaneous publication of the Japanese and Chinese editions.

In contrast to his sense of a number of earlier bi-national or multi-national efforts to address contentious issues, which he had joined or observed, Gordon was impressed that the participants were speaking to, rather than past, one another. Also impressed by the high quality of the contributions, he felt it would be valuable to publish these essays.

7. Its findings, as well as information about other Japanese-Korean academic exchanges, can be found at the website of the Japan-Korea Culture Foundation at http://www.jkcf.or.jp/history/ (accessed June 30, 2011).
in translation to make clear to an English-language audience the depth and force of the cross-border historical writing of scholars from Japan and China. The quality of the work highlights the importance of sustained engagement for any successful intellectual work: these chapters were prepared through a process of ongoing discussion; the group met more than twenty times over a five-year period as it put together this volume. To be sure, the cooperative effort was helped by the fact that the Chinese participants are all scholars who have spent significant parts of their adult lives outside China, principally in Japan or in the United States. This both facilitated communication and afforded a certain distance from political pressures that would have been felt more strongly in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). But the facts of simultaneous publication of the original book in Japan and in the PRC, and the ready participation of scholars from China as well as Korea, Japan, and the United States in a follow-up gathering at Harvard in 2008 to discuss some of these chapters and address the question of possibilities for historical reconciliation, suggest that national divisions are blurring. Clearly, transnational endeavors to write a common history are worth pursuing, even if politics and nationally grounded concerns remain ever-present.

As Liu and Mitani note in their introduction and postscript, respectively, the project began with the sensible idea of building a common ground for interpretation by working from a shared body of documentary sources. A shared commitment to the empirical method can be seen here. Of course, this point of departure in no way guarantees a consensus in conclusion. As Kawashima Shin discusses in more detail in the concluding chapter, it is possible—indeed, inevitable—that historians, whether of one nation or many, will read the same texts and sources and come up with divergent interpretations. Yet there is still a reasonable logic to this approach, in that it offers a certain transparency to readers seeking to understand where, and why, historical interpretations diverge.

To be sure, not all skeptics will be satisfied. Some may doubt whether such a dialogue is even necessary since professional historians are by definition transnational, speaking, at least in theory, to a universal audience. Other skeptics may question the “cross-national” emphasis of such a dialogue, since there are important differences within the same national communities. Still others may ask whether a “discursive community”
across national boundaries is a realistic goal. These are legitimate issues, but as Liu points out, these essays constitute part of an ongoing endeavor. The final judgment of its success rests with each reader.

Apart from serving as a useful progress report on the ongoing history dialogue in East Asia, this book is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarly works on modern Chinese-Japanese relations. The study of the interactions between China and Japan has seen a mild explosion in the last few decades. Political scientists have often taken the lead in recent years in examining what may be the most complex and important relationship shaping the East Asia region. The conflict between the two countries over history has received some attention, again from political scientists. The present book, however, is the first major collection of essays on the major contentious issues in the entire modern history of Sino-Japanese relations to be published in the English language in decades. To be sure, it does not cover every aspect of their multifaceted interactions and has left out important areas such as cultural-intellectual, economic, and even social history. The edited volume *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895–1937*, examines a broad range of political and economic issues associated with Japan’s expansion.
into China in the early twentieth century. In comparison, this collection focuses renewed attention on “controversies” that are largely political and historiographical in nature. Though issue-centered, it covers the entire period of modern Sino-Japanese interactions from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Several themes are explored in great depth, such as wartime collaboration and atrocity, and relations in the postwar period, which historians have only recently begun to examine in depth on the basis of newly available evidence.

As a translated work, this book also serves the purpose of bringing to the attention of English-language readers the latest Japanese- and Chinese-language scholarship on important aspects of modern Japan and China and their interactions. Translated scholarly works from Asian languages once played a key role in influencing English-language scholarship. With a few exceptions, such a trend has all but stopped in recent decades. Certainly Asian scholarship is accessible to many scholars in the West who read Asian languages. Yet a vast majority of students of Asian history in the Anglophone world can still benefit from translated works, if only to learn of the latest scholarship, appreciate different modes of analysis, and gain valuable information about Asian-language sources. This book certainly makes these things possible.

The essays in this volume generally follow one of two analytical approaches, with some grounded in both. A number of the contributions jump into the fray and offer their own version of a particular historical event, whereas others step back to a historiographical perspective, analyzing how different historians, over time and in different countries, have approached a topic. To make this point somewhat arbitrarily with two examples, Liu’s “Sino-Japanese Diplomacy during Cycles of Mutual Antagonism” exemplifies the former; by delineating the “two-track” diplomacy employed by China (one track for a domestic audience and another directed toward Japan), he presents a convincing argument that a clash between Japan and China over Manchuria was inevitable at least from 1930. Among other things, this conclusion renders debate over exactly who was aware of and responsible for the Mukden Incident itself a minor issue.

The next essay, by Hattori, effectively follows the latter approach, introducing the quite different views that persist among historians in Japan, China (PRC), Taiwan, the United States, and Russia as to the existence and authenticity of the so-called Tanaka Memorial. The analysis reveals that there is a relatively narrow gap between the views of those who see the document in circulation as not the “true” memorial, but who nonetheless believe that somewhere a “hidden but true” memorial does exist, and those who see the document in circulation as a pure forgery with no “hidden original” document actually existing. Yet, as Hattori shows, despite this narrow gap, those who hold to these two views see themselves as sharply at odds. Why is this? Does it not rest in the fact that the memorial, whether forged or an imperfect copy, is so prescient about the events that followed? In other words, the fact that a forgery written in the late 1920s, probably by Chinese critics of Japan, could so accurately predict the future makes it clear that the signs of that future were visible for those willing to look for them. This is a fact that makes many historians in Japan uncomfortable to this day.

Although all the essays in the book bring the past into dialogue with present-day concerns and issues (or vice-versa), perhaps those by Murai and Yang on postwar politics and memorialization in Japan, and on reparations and compensation issues in Sino-Japanese relations, do so most directly. Read together, these essays make the important point that the 1978 enshrinement of “war criminals” at Yasukuni, and the subsequent worship at that shrine by political leaders, undermined the logic of political reconciliation between Japan and the PRC agreed to just a few years earlier. To understand the harsh reactions in China, especially among political leaders, to Japanese politicians visiting the shrine, it is crucial to note this point. Visits to the shrine, that is, symbolically repudiate—and still repudiate—the understanding reached in the normalization negotiations. This understanding gave Chinese leaders the political daylight to abandon their reparations claims; they could argue that a small group of war criminals misled and harmed people in both countries, who can be reconciled because they are in a sense blameless. Although this logic made for a temporarily effective political resolution, it was at best a superficial historical interpretation. These essays, and the volume as a whole, point to the importance of grounding a politics of reconciliation on a firmer historical foundation.
Introduction to the Japanese Edition

Liu Jie

Translated by Daqing Yang

Since the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, Japan entered a new era: the prewar generation retired from the center stage of politics and society, and a postwar generation has come to determine the future of Japan. China, which shares with Japan a history of wars in the twentieth century, has entered a similar era since the mid-1990s. Therefore, we could have expected the advent of a new era in which the postwar generations of both countries, with no experience of mutual confrontation, would build a forward-looking relationship of mutual trust.

However, despite the deepening mutual dependence of their economies and societies, the extent to which the postwar generations of these two countries share a common vocabulary of historical understanding has actually diminished. It is not so much that the actual “war history” left to us from the prewar generation has created barriers between later generations in Japan and China; what troubles us is rather the issue of “how to remember, narrate, and pass on” that history. Another way to make this point is to note that the generation that experienced the war, more so than the postwar generation, can easily speak to each other. The era of “Sino-Japanese friendship,” taken seriously for over twenty years after diplomatic normalization in 1972, was based on a critical review of the history of the two countries and was nurtured with great care. If
history is understood as a dialogue between the present and the past, then during this time we can say that the China and Japan of that era each engaged in a dialogue with a shared past, and were able to reach with relative ease a consensus on the meaning of that past for the present. Even on historical topics about which those in China and Japan did not agree, they developed a better understanding of each other’s views through such a dialogue.

The policy of “reform and openness” adopted in China since the end of the 1970s not only brought about continuous rapid economic growth for over twenty years, it also expanded access to information as well as freedom of academic research, despite some limitations. A more tolerant social climate naturally also extended to academic disciplines such as history. Paradigms of history, be they “class struggle,” “modernization,” or “a multi-ethnic unified state,” have come to coexist. In the midst of this, among some professional historians it has become common to drop the praise of anti-foreign movements or revolution, which had been regarded as the driving force of history. They have come to reassess the personalities and programs of “foreign affairs” (yangru) and “reform” (bianfa), which had been deemed “reactionary” or “traitorous” during the era when ideological purity was emphasized. Moreover, the role of the Guomindang during the War of Resistance against Japan has been officially affirmed. The declassification of and access to historical materials today would have been unthinkable some twenty years ago. By gaining access to various historical materials and sources, historians have acquired a greater variety of channels to engage in dialogue with the past. Moreover, changes in the environment concerning public expression have increased the opportunity among the masses to speak about history. Since the 1980s, after the start of “reform and openness,” topics like the Nanjing Massacre or the Yasukuni Shrine, which had never appeared in previous textbooks, have become widely known among China’s postwar generations.

Now equipped with multiple channels for dialogue with the past, Chinese historians have revised images of contemporary Japan while engaging in dialogue with Japan’s present and past. At the time of diplomatic normalization, the majority of Chinese held the image of Japan as a pacifist country that had rebuilt itself from the ruins of defeat. Under the political circumstances at that time, the Chinese government view
that “the Japanese people are also victims of Japanese militarism,” or Chairman Mao Zedong’s remark that “The Japanese are a great nation,” sufficiently set the tone for the popular perception of Japan among the Chinese people. However, together with the drastic changes in Chinese society, the view of Japan presented by the government changed greatly. During the fifteen years from normalization to the mid-1980s, almost all Chinese historians engaged in dialogue with Japan’s present and past with the premise that “the Japanese people are also victims of Japanese militarism.” However, as it has become widely accepted that the Japanese society has “turned to the right,” the path of the dialogue of the present with the past has shifted direction toward a primary focus on Japanese military atrocities during the war.

At the same time, in Japan as if in parallel with China’s move toward “reform and openness,” one sees the concomitant emergence of one of the world’s leading economies together with a revision of the historical paradigm that had summarized Japan’s modern history as a negative tale of aggression. This phenomenon goes beyond the historical profession; with slogans like “the final settlement of postwar politics” in the fields of politics and diplomacy, it has permeated popular consciousness. Through debates over textbooks and official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, the phenomenon has exacerbated diplomatic problems with neighboring countries.

Under such conditions, the important historical paradigm established among Japan’s postwar generation can be said to be the “perspective of 1945.” This view considers fundamental changes to have taken place in Japan beginning in that year. It praises the 60-plus years since 1945 as an era without wars, when Japan has built a democratic, pacifist country. It believes that for Japan to return to what it was before 1945 is unthinkable. Such a view is shared by the majority of Japanese people. Therefore, speaking of present-day Japan as if it were a continuation of a prewar Japan that committed aggression makes little sense to Japanese of the postwar generation. When considering various issues in present-day Japanese society, most Japanese of the postwar generation naturally rely on this “perspective of 1945.” As a result, they don’t feel it necessary to engage in dialogue with the prewar era across the clear demarcation of 1945.

In contrast, for China, which has not accomplished the two major goals from the time of the 1911 Revolution—“construction” (moderni-
zation) and "unification" (formation of a unified country)—it is the "perspective of 1911" that serves as the vantage point of modern history. After the 1911 Revolution that overthrew the last imperial dynasty, Chinese society has undergone enormous changes following the "national revolution" and the "bourgeois revolution" led by Sun Yat-sen and his successors as well as the "new democratic revolution" and the socialist revolution led by Mao Zedong. Nevertheless, the goals of "construction" and "unification" are yet to be accomplished. Moreover, Japan’s aggression against China is considered to have been the greatest obstacle to those goals in modern China. In its understanding of contemporary society, whereas the end of the Pacific War in 1945 is of decisive significance to the Japanese, China naturally pays attention to 1911—considered the starting point of the modern nation-state—as it aims at modernization and unification. It is undeniable that such a difference in the perspectives of the postwar generations of China and Japan creates difficulties in efforts at dialogue about the history of the two countries.

Further, in addition to the "1945 perspective," there exists in Japan the historical view that claims the superiority of the Japanese and emphasizes an impeccable record of Japanese history. Such a view stresses the continuity of Japanese history across the 1945 divide. It relativizes Japan’s aggression against China and colonization of Korea by condemning Western aggression in Asia. It dismisses histories that highlight Japan’s aggression in Asia as "masochistic views of history." Although it shares the emphasis on continuity between prewar and postwar with China’s "perspective of 1911," the diametrically opposed value judgment aggravates the conflict of historical understanding between Japan and China. As such a nationalistic view of history emerged to prominence through the course of the textbook controversy, it raised alarms in China and South Korea. Together with the issue of the prime minister’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, this view brought about a deterioration of political relations between the two countries and a confrontation between their respective public sentiments. In the process of this confrontation, the "perspective of 1945" shared by most of the postwar generation in Japan was absorbed into the "perspective of continuity," further aggravating the clash of popular sentiment.

In the twenty-plus years since the gap in historical understanding first became apparent, scholars in Japan and China have repeatedly experi-
enced difficulty in efforts to build historical understanding across national borders. When they realized that the distance in historical understanding cannot be bridged simply by enthusiasm or friendship, some became despondent. Faced with such a reality, many lean toward the pessimistic conclusion that it is nearly impossible to have a shared historical understanding that transcends national borders. But is it not too early to give up trying to overcome the confrontation? In our view, it is possible for historians of China and Japan to engage in a dialogue with their shared past while recognizing both the “perspective of 1945” and the “perspective of 1911.”

The title of this book, Toward a History Beyond Borders: Contentious Issues in Sino-Japanese Relations, embodies our idea: while calmly recognizing the gap between the two countries, engaging in a dialogue so as to understand the respective historical views is the most difficult but also most important step.

In the past twenty years, numerous exchanges and dialogues have taken place between Chinese and Japanese scholars, including historians. In nearly all of them the participants simply conveyed their own views to the other side from their own positions. Although even such exchanges have some meaning, we believe it is possible to go further, seeking a deeper dialogue in the history of Sino-Japanese relations by taking advantage of the fact that we are working from a shared base of historical sources. With the support of the Japan-China Friendship Fund of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, we began a “Forum of Young Historians of Japan and China” in October 2001. In the beginning, it was a loose study group consisting mainly of scholars belonging to a relatively young generation. Our discussions extended to the recent social transformations underway in both countries, which formed the context for the recent upsurge of problems regarding history. Members of the study group strove to understand the starting point and the basis of each other’s interpretations. In so doing, they also became more aware that serious differences existed even among scholars from the same country. It was a particularly important experience to learn that despite various differences, courteous and rational dialogue was possible. As a result, we have come to think that such experience and knowledge can be applied to bridge the gap in historical understanding between the younger generation in China and Japan. We are acutely aware of the need to provide an environment appropriate for fostering dialogue between the younger
generations of the two countries, which are beginning to grow distant from each other.

This book is not just for scholars of history; it is intended as well for those in China or Japan who are studying history or are concerned with Sino-Japanese relations or the future of East Asia. Using primary sources, it surveys representative issues in the history of Sino-Japanese relations that have become controversial from Chinese as well as Japanese perspectives. Our examinations range from the late nineteenth century before the First Sino-Japanese War, through the very recent past, well after the Pacific War. As Sino-Japanese relations in these 150 years repeatedly present complex facets of rivalry and cooperation, they call for multiple perspectives in understanding various historical phenomena. This book explains why various issues have become points of contention between Japan and China, but also strives to suggest ways to resolve these conflicts of interpretation.

The first seven chapters focus on historical developments before the Pacific War and analyzes the historical events and the framework of historical understanding that form the basis of present-day Sino-Japanese relations.

Chapter 1, “Modes of Narrating the History of Sino-Japanese Relations: The Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century,” by Motegi Toshio, examines the agreements and disagreements between China and Japan in their understanding of Sino-Japanese relations before the First Sino-Japanese War. Many have narrated the history of Sino-Japanese relations in the context of conservatism and enlightenment, tradition and modernity, resistance and aggression. An examination of the historical materials of various periods reveals that such frameworks are not always appropriate. Motegi argues that the framing of these dichotomies took shape long ago, soon after the First Sino-Japanese War (1895). As they were applied retrospectively to the previous three decades, they greatly restricted the several possible interpretations for the development of Sino-Japanese relations in the late nineteenth century, and the restrictive impact of these dichotomies can be felt even today.

Chapter 2, “A Prototype of Close Relations and Antagonism: From the First Sino-Japanese War to the Twenty-One Demands,” by Kawashima Shin, deals with Sino-Japanese relations from the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the 1910s, taking the position that in this period the modern concept of “China” took shape. Based on the
understanding that this is also the period when the basis of Sino-Japanese political-diplomatic relations took shape, it raises questions about the structural issues in Sino-Japanese relations over the last one hundred years by moving back and forth between the present and past. As with recent relations between China and Japan, overall relations in these early years grew more intimate even as political and diplomatic relations deteriorated. In the background to such tension lurked the understanding that equated Japan with “a civilized nation” while China was cast as an “uncivilized” one. What should we learn from such a presentation of structural commonalities in Sino-Japanese relations about China’s “formative period” in the early twentieth century and that of the “rise of China” in the early twenty-first century?

Chapter 3, “Sino-Japanese Diplomacy during Cycles of Mutual Antagonism: On the Eve of the Manchurian Incident,” by Liu Jie, explains the structure of “anti-Japanese” and “anti-Chinese” activities in the history of Sino-Japanese relations by examining the process of diplomatic negotiations. Although the Nationalist government envisioned a moderate National Rights Recovery Movement by diplomatic means, it was powerless in the face of rising nationalism and waves of anti-Japanese activities. Condemned by the public as “selling out,” the government strove to avoid deterioration of relations with Japan. However, Japan saw anti-Japanese nationalism as the result of anti-Japanese education and the anti-Japanese policy of the Nationalist government. Added to the exaggerated reports by newspapers, this led to widespread fear and disgust toward China among the Japanese. Such a phenomenon has become an inherent structural problem in Sino-Japanese relations from the May Fourth Movement to the present.

Chapter 4, “Controversies over the Tanaka Memorial,” by Hattori Ryūji, analyzes the debate over the so-called “Tanaka Memorandum” which has long been one of the most contentious issues in the history of Sino-Japanese relations. This document is said to be a memorial outlining plans of aggression in East Asia starting with China, submitted to the emperor by Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi. Hattori surveys the changes in how the memorial has been described not only in Japan and China (including Taiwan), but also in the United States, Russia, Mongolia, India, and the two Koreas. He categorizes the varied perspectives on the document into three groups: some see it as an “authentic document”; some believe an authentic memorial exists or existed, but assert
the available versions of it are inaccurate or inauthentic; and some call it an outright forgery. Whereas many researchers in China and Russia support the first two views, those in Japan and the United States generally back the third. By examining various views and their bases, he reveals the deep gap between the Chinese view that emphasizes Japan’s consistent, premeditated aggression and the Japanese view that emphasizes multiple alternatives and possibilities in the future of Sino-Japanese relations viewed from the late 1920s.

Chapter 5, “Issues in the History of Manzhouguo: Contemporary and Succeeding Perspectives,” by Higuchi Hidemi, describes the gap between the understanding of contemporaries and that of the later generation through the example of Manzhouguo. Although hardly any Chinese or Japanese scholar objects to the view of Manzhouguo as a puppet state of Japan, why did actual participants in contemporary events sincerely consider it to be an ideal state? The author, who recognizes both aspects of puppet state and ideal state, goes on to introduce a third view on Manzhouguo. This perspective explores what kind of changes to the society in northeastern China resulted from the creation of Manzhouguo and its policies.

Chapter 6, “The Nanjing Atrocity: Is Constructive Dialogue Possible?,” by Daqing Yang, deals with the Nanjing Incident as an issue concerning the fundamentals of historical research. Inevitably, historical research is affected by subjective consciousness, especially when it concerns a highly emotional issue. This, together with the nature of the existent evidence and testimony, makes it difficult to reach definite conclusions regarding the number of victims in the event known as the “Nanjing Massacre” or how they were killed. However, it is possible to narrow the differences, not by winning the other side over to one’s own views but by creating a constructive framework for historical research for both sides. Such a framework is simultaneously empirical as well as ethical. It envisions the prospect of overcoming the gap in understanding by seeing the Nanjing Atrocity as an event in Japan’s war of aggression against China, with characteristics common to all wars and organized violence and crimes throughout human history.

himself. At the root of the debate between Chinese and Japanese scholars is the question whether Wang was a traitor to China (hanjian) and whether the Wang regime was a puppet government. As “traitors” have always existed in China, there is the term “a culture of traitors.” Such a phenomenon speaks of the deep hatred of Chinese toward “traitors.” The chapter analyzes the causes of the Chinese hatred of those who collaborated with Japan during the Sino-Japanese War and also reveals the reality of collaboration and “resistance” by the Wang regime.

The remaining six chapters are concerned with issues between the two countries at present and outlines prospects for the future.

Chapter 8, “An Outline of Japan’s History Textbook System and Its Controversies,” by Mitani Hiroshi, offers a detailed explanation so that Chinese readers as well as those in Japan can understand the reality of history education, as well as textbook screening and adoption in Japan. In addition, it deals with domestic debates over history textbooks before and after 2001. It shows that as Japan’s relations with neighboring countries underwent transformation, textbook issues came to take on an international dimension. It surveys and introduces the claims and activities of the “Society for Creating New History Textbooks,” but also shows that even among conservatives in Japan quite a few abhor the policies that led to war and believe Japan’s “national interest” depends on cooperation with neighboring countries. It proposes that the issue of historical understanding should be handled as a moral issue with universal implications instead of a tool for power struggle.

Chapter 9, “Sino-Japanese Mutual Understanding as Seen in History Textbooks,” by Ibaraki Satoshi, compares and examines history textbooks in Japan and China, showing how much weight is given to the other country and how the other country is described in various textbooks. Although the author notes that historical views of the “Society for Creating New History Textbooks” have received much attention in neighboring countries, Japan has pursued peace education, which teaches those born after the war the importance of peace, not just in history education but in social studies consistently throughout the postwar period. In both countries history education is used to cope with the weakening of national identity, and political demands that have arisen for various reasons have shaped history education in both countries.
Chapter 10, “Historical Perceptions of Taiwan’s Japan Era,” by Asano Toyomi, examines how Taiwan’s “Japanese era” influenced Taiwanese identity and cross-strait relations and highlights the contentious issues between Japan and China over Taiwan. The discourse that situates the Taiwanese as subjects of “democracy” and “freedom” and tries to give them legitimacy through history, according to the author, is despised in mainland China as “seeking Taiwan independence through the cultural sphere.” He also shows that “nationalist conservatives” in Japan emphasize Japan’s contribution to Taiwan’s modernization, and thus affirm a historical tie with independence advocates in Taiwan.

Chapter 11, “Politics and Commemoration in Postwar Japan,” by Murai Ryōta, sees the prime minister’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine as an issue about politics and commemoration that has developed over more than 50 years of postwar Japanese history. It divides the Yasukuni issue into three phases: in phase 1, the issue of commemorating the war dead clashed with the issue of interpreting the constitution; in phase 2, the effort to make regular official visits developed into diplomatic issues with neighboring countries, especially China; in phase 3, the Yasukuni issue moved definitively from a constitutional problem to an international problem, and specific discussion began over building a new facility as a solution. Such a survey of politics and commemoration reveals clearly the points of contention both domestically and internationally.

Chapter 12, “From War Reparation to Postwar Reparation,” by Yang Zhihui, argues that the decision by the Chinese government to renounce war reparations from Japan in the end resulted in demands for postwar compensation by non-government actors. He reveals that the expansion of the postwar compensation issue is connected to the expansion of freedom in Chinese society. Moreover, the Chinese government, which had been cautious on this issue, has adopted the view that raising demands for compensation is the right of citizens, and the government cannot interfere; this provides de facto support for these non-governmental efforts. According to the author, in the midst of confrontation between China and Japan over historical understanding, the persistent Chinese demand regarding the compensation issue is for Japanese critical introspection over the war rather than material or money.

Chapter 13, “Historical Dialogue and Documentary Research,” by Kawashima Shin, explores the question of how to pursue historical
understanding beyond national borders. The author emphasizes that memory of suffering during the war was to a great extent formed in the private space of local areas or families, and points to the difficulty in carrying out “dialogue” and forming shared historical understanding between Chinese and Japanese. He argues that one needs to realize that no matter how much progress is made in empirical research based on historical materials, it will not necessarily lead to the solution of the problem. At the same time, his essay also describes the expansion of the framework of discussion among Chinese historians, especially in greater freedom to pursue a wider variety of research topics, progress in empirical research, attention to Chinese studies abroad, and changes in consciousness. In noting the new possibilities for dialogue and joint research, the essay offers a positive outlook for the future.

This book was originally published in Japanese and Chinese editions simultaneously. In recent years, various joint history textbooks have been compiled in East Asia, with the purpose of narrowing the gap in historical understanding. Among them, our effort aspires in particular to be of interest to adult readers rather than students. Our hope is that although far from perfect, this book can help create an environment in which people in both countries can carry on a dialogue. It is undeniable that gaps exist in historical understanding between peoples who have had a history of hostilities. Moreover, there is a clear difference between the positions of perpetrator and victim. Healing the victim can be much more difficult than can be imagined by the perpetrator or bystander. One cannot demand that the other accept one’s own views of history. However, to look at history is also an “issue of the mind.” Is it not the case that to imagine oneself in the mind of the other, to listen to and to respect the views of the other, are the first steps toward genuine reconciliation between Japan and China?