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Friend and Foe: Chou Tso-jen Views Japan in the Shadow of War

NANCY E. CHAPMAN

Among literary figures of twentieth-century China, Chou Tso-jen (1885–1967) stands out as one of the most illustrious. Though his fame has been partially eclipsed by that of his brother, the celebrated writer Lu Hsün (1881–1936),[1] Chou continues to be widely admired among Chinese readers for the gracefulness of his prose and the breadth of his knowledge. He was an early and energetic advocate of the movement to reform the Chinese written language to make it more responsive to new ways of looking at the world, and, to some, his own writing was itself the embodiment of what was to be striven for in the development of new forms and styles of discursive prose. Chou was both an acute observer of the world around him and a prolific writer, his collected essays filling more than twenty volumes. He considered himself a modern Renaissance man, and his varied intellectual career included forays into a dozen national literatures, the Chinese classical heritage, anthropology, entomology, botany, mythology, fine arts, utopian socialism, children's literature, feminism, political affairs, and contemporary manners and morals. In this sense his essays reflect their author, ranging widely across the cultural and social landscape of the time: they include everything from descriptions of traditional Chinese arts and customs, to analyses of Western literature and philosophy, to calls for equal rights for women, to expressions of outrage at warlord violence toward peaceful student demonstrators.

1. Chou Tso-jen in the 1930s.

Chou's eclectic learning and broad interests were a product of the transitional period in which he came to maturity. Born in Shao-hsing in 1885 into a gentry family, he received a classical education as a child in preparation for the traditional civil service examinations and an official career. At the age of sixteen, he enrolled at the Chiang-nan Naval Academy in Nanking, one of a number of hybrid institutions appearing throughout China at the time that attempted to teach both the Chinese classical canon and a smattering of Western languages and natural science. In the summer of 1906, along with thousands of his compatriots, Chou journeyed to Tokyo in pursuit of a modern education, returning to China in 1911 on the eve of the revolution that brought down the Ch'ing dynasty. He eventually found his way to Peking six years later, where he joined a thriving community of scholars and activists that included some of modern China's most innovative thinkers. He soon emerged as a major figure in the May Fourth Movement, a heady period of cultural and social ferment that called into question virtually every aspect of traditional Chinese life and culture and strove for

entirely new modes of thought and expression, some of them inspired by Western models. Throughout this period, Chou published numerous essays advocating social, literary, and linguistic reform.

One of Chou Tso-jen's abiding interests throughout his long life was Japan and its culture. He was also deeply concerned about Sino-Japanese relations. Indeed, despite the pivotal importance of Japan to the course of modern Chinese history, Chou was one of the few Chinese intellectuals to give it serious, sustained attention. His view of Japan was complex: he was at once an admirer of Japan's traditional and modern culture, and a critic of its imperialist ambitions. These sentiments are clearly evident in a series of essays on Sino-Japanese relations he published throughout the 1920s. Together, they provide a sampling of his writing and an indication of the depth of emotion the Japanese could arouse in China long before the onset of large-scale military hostilities between the two countries, even from a man predisposed to think well of them. Chou's writings on this subject represent one man's attempt to make sense of the central paradox of modern Sino-Japanese relations: that Japan could be both China's closest friend and most bitter adversary.

In June of 1927, Chou Tso-jen offered the following observations about China's relations with Japan in modern times:

> The anti-Japanese movement has recently started up again, and it grows more widespread by the day. This is only to be expected. There is no country in the world to which China should feel friendlier than Japan, yet there is also no country to which China should be more strongly opposed. Regardless of whether the aim is to study traditional culture or develop the arts today, China cannot overlook Japan because more than a thousand years of contact has resulted in an unbreakable bond between the two countries. If those who do research on China's history, literature, and art are unaware of the Japanese record in these areas, they will also fail to gain much understanding of Chinese things, and there will always be areas about which they are unclear. . . .
>
> But this relates solely to the area of scholarship and the arts, and in this area friendship between China and Japan is of course necessary, even essential. If, however, we consider the matter from another angle, then opposition to Japan is both obligatory and absolutely essential for the sake of China's future. Authoritarian

> Japan, ruled as it is by militarists and the rich and powerful, will perpetually be a threat to China, and China, if it is to survive, must work actively to stand up to Japan and repel its stratagems before dealing with secondary imperialist powers. Japan constantly proclaims the slogan "Sino-Japanese Co-prosperity and Co-existence," but this is nothing more than a euphemism for invasion: when a piece of pork is eaten by someone and it remains within his body — that is co-prosperity and co-existence.[2]

The hostile standoff that Chou described was to worsen steadily in the years leading up to the Second World War, but China and Japan had not always been so belligerent. Some twenty years before Chou Tso-jen wrote these words, thousands of Chinese students — Chou among them — had journeyed to Japan in pursuit of a modern education, resulting in the first direct encounter of large numbers of Chinese youths with a modernized society, Western-style institutions, and elements of Western thought and technology absorbed by Japan in the Meiji period. This experience touched an entire generation of the Chinese elite, including many individuals who were to make their mark in politics, the military, and the arts and sciences over the following decades.

What impelled this striking movement was the peculiar place Japan had come to occupy in the Chinese imagination in the waning years of Manchu rule. Traditionally dismissed as a lesser civilization by the Chinese, Japan had proved itself remarkably nimble and adept at the very task that had eluded the Ch'ing dynasty: the construction of modern industries and a strong military capable of discouraging foreign encroachment. The initial shock to the Chinese consciousness came with Japan's deft victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, which resulted in a Chinese push to study the Japanese example of borrowing and adaptation from the West, and revitalized China's flagging attempts to modernize. Japan's subsequent defeat of a European power — Russia — in 1905, boosted Chinese confidence and seemed to confirm the wisdom of emulating the Japanese. After decades of humiliation by the seemingly invulnerable powers of Europe and America, Chinese reformers looked with vicarious pride to the success of their Asian neighbor in standing up to the West.

Japan's victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War notwithstanding, the first decade of this century witnessed relatively amicable relations between the two countries. This was especially evident in the area of educa-

tion and learning. Not only did large numbers of Chinese students travel to Japan to study, but a Japanese-inspired system of public education was mandated by the Ch'ing court for establishment in China (though funds sufficient to make the system a reality were never appropriated). Hundreds of Japanese books on social, political, and technical subjects were translated into Chinese, helping to expand greatly knowledge in China about the outside world. Furthermore, numerous Japanese educators set up special schools to receive the large number of Chinese students then flocking to Japan, and many also served in China as teachers in a number of recently founded Western-style Chinese schools. These efforts were in part an expression of the view of many Japanese that Japan should repay its centuries-old cultural debt to China by assisting the Chinese in their efforts to modernize.

Japan was different things to different people. To Chang Chih-tung (1837–1901), a prominent Chinese official of the Manchu court, it was a constitutional monarchy that had achieved wealth and power without sacrificing its imperial institutions and Confucian foundation; to the brilliant reformer Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873–1929), it was an intellectual treasure trove and a safe haven from which to continue publishing his radical journals; to Sun Yatsen (1866–1925), the revolutionary, it was an ally, overseas base, and source of financial assistance. Military trainees saw Japan as the possessor of a modernized, disciplined Prussian-style army and navy, while would-be government servants viewed it as a diploma mill helpful to bureaucratic advancement in China once the traditional route to officialdom, the civil service examination system, had been abolished in 1905. Young Chinese patriots hoped to learn the secrets of Western learning and institutional reform in Japan and thereafter apply them to rescuing China from further decline, whereas their more frivolous countrymen treated it as a playground for debauchery. Japan of the late Meiji period accommodated large numbers of Chinese people with a vast range of motives and intentions, proving a setting conducive to inquiry and debate about China's future at a time when such discussion was proscribed at home. As a result, political agitation, philosophical inquiry, and modern-style journals all flourished in Tokyo's Chinese student ghettos, where most of the sojourners concentrated.

Chou Tso-jen's interest in Japan was first cultivated during the five years he spent in Tokyo as a young man. Arriving in 1906, he joined his brother

Lu Hsün, who had arrived several years earlier. Despite their poverty, the brothers led a carefree, unfettered life that Chou would later remember fondly. As with many Chinese students, formal schooling often took a back seat to the many extracurricular distractions Tokyo had to offer, not the least of which was the vitality of the expatriate community of which the brothers were a part. Chou took an immediate liking to the city of Tokyo, which was at the time a mixture of new Western-style buildings made of bricks and mortar, and traditional wooden structures that, to Chou, resonated with the influence of T'ang China. He spent long hours in the city's plentiful and well-stocked bookstores, making use of the abundant opportunities they offered to learn about the Western world. Though he had ostensibly gone to Japan to study architecture, he spent most of his time reading Greek, European, and Japanese literature, and his five years in Japan are notable less as a period of specialized study than as one of general intellectual growth and self-discovery, much of it self-propelled. It was during this period that his lifelong interest in Japan's traditional and modern culture was born. His marriage in 1909 to a Japanese woman, Habuto Nobuko, served to deepen further his sense of attachment to the country he would later call his "second home."[3]

Chou formed his first impressions of Japan during a time of unusually close relations between the two countries. This hopeful period was, however, regrettably short-lived. In the space of just a few years, it became unmistakably clear that Japan's emulation of its Western rivals would include the very sort of predatory challenges to China's sovereignty that Chinese reformers had hoped to repel. Not surprisingly, bitter resentment against Japan soon came to replace admiration in the minds of many young Chinese. Whereas Japan had served in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a filter for information about the West and a model for reform of the Chinese political, legal, educational, and military systems, progressive Chinese intellectuals of the May Fourth period, including most of those who had earlier studied in Japan, largely discarded the Japanese example and looked directly to Western Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union in their campaign to remake their country's culture and society. Japan would remain, however, a primary irritant to national pride for decades, and the agent of vast devastation and suffering for millions of Chinese.[4]

Although receptive to the influence of Western liberal thought, Chou

2. Chou Tso-jen and his wife, Habuto Nobuko, in Japan in 1910, the year following their marriage. Her brother is pictured at right.

Tso-jen attempted to broaden the discussion of foreign paradigms during the May Fourth period by focusing renewed attention on Japan. Japan, he argued, still had much to offer the Chinese, both in the Japanese willingness to borrow from others and in the achievements that this willingness had made possible. As a writer, he was most concerned with what China could learn from Japan in the field of literature. Japanese writers now recognized as modern literary giants — Natsume Sōseki, Shimazaki Tōson, Mori Ōgai, Nagai Kafū, and others — had already produced some of their most enduring works by this time, but these were little known in China, since most Chinese still discounted or were ignorant of the impressive body of modern Japanese literature that had developed since the Meiji Restoration. Chou set out, therefore, to introduce recent innovations in Japanese literature to Chinese writers, literary scholars, and social reformers, and encouraged them to learn from the Japanese experience. He first addressed this issue in a lecture entitled "The Development of Japanese Fiction over the Past Three Decades" (*Jih-pen chin san-shih nien hsiao-shuo chih fa-ta*), which he delivered in April 1918 at Peking University.[5] He began by stating that the Chinese were in the habit of dismissing Japanese civilization as nothing more than the product of centuries of cultural borrowing from China and the West and, as such, unworthy of study in its own right. While conceding that Japan had indeed borrowed much from these two sources over many centuries, Chou suggested that this was only part of the story. Just as it would be wrong to regard the cultural achievements of modern European nations as merely the inevitable outgrowth of their Greek and Roman roots, the view that Japanese culture was entirely derivative of other civilizations overlooked the crucial role that creativity, artistic sensibility, and indigenous elements had played in the evolution of a distinctive civilization. Chou chronicled the Western-inspired literary schools that had successively appeared in Japan since the Meiji period — realism, romanticism, naturalism, hedonism, and idealism — and cited examples of works that exemplified the spirit of each. He noted that Japanese writers had carefully studied Western literature and attempted to imitate it faithfully; at the same time, however, they had integrated elements of the Japanese literary tradition and the insights and innovations of individual artists to create highly original works. Chou called this process "creative imitation." Its result, he said, was the development by Japanese writers of a modern literature of international standard that was distinctively their own. "Modern Japanese writers have

now caught up with modern world trends," he concluded, "and they are now swimming together [with Western writers] in the 'river of life.' "[6]

Chinese writers, by contrast, had failed to create anything new in the same period. "In China," Chou held, "people have also been talking about new fiction for over twenty years, but with no results. Why is this? In my view, it is solely attributable to the fact that Chinese people are neither willing nor able to model themselves on others." This unwillingness to learn from others was also evident in the books Chinese chose to translate. The works of writers such as H. Rider Haggard, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Walter Scott, Chou asserted, had been popular with Chinese translators in the early twentieth century not because they possessed literary or educative value, but for the simple reason that they were perceived to bear a resemblance to familiar works of Chinese fiction. The Chinese reluctance to imitate had left literature enmired in stultifying forms incapable of conveying new thinking; instead of attuning themselves to modern trends, Chinese fiction writers continued to go around and around in the same small circle, using the restrictive forms of traditional Chinese fiction to convey the same stale ideas. "For this reason," Chou contended, "several types of old-style fiction are still being produced, whereas we still do not have even one book of modern fiction."[7]

> If we want to cure ourselves of this affliction, *we must throw off historically conventional thinking and proceed to imitate others in a sincere spirit.* Then, as the example of Japan shows, our literature will emerge quite naturally from the stage of imitation and transform itself into a unique literature of our own. . . . The current state of Chinese fiction resembles where Japanese literature was in 1884 or 1885. So, at present, it is vitally important that we promote translation and the study of foreign literary works. . . . In sum, *if a new kind of fiction is to flourish in China, we will have to start from the very beginning.*[8]

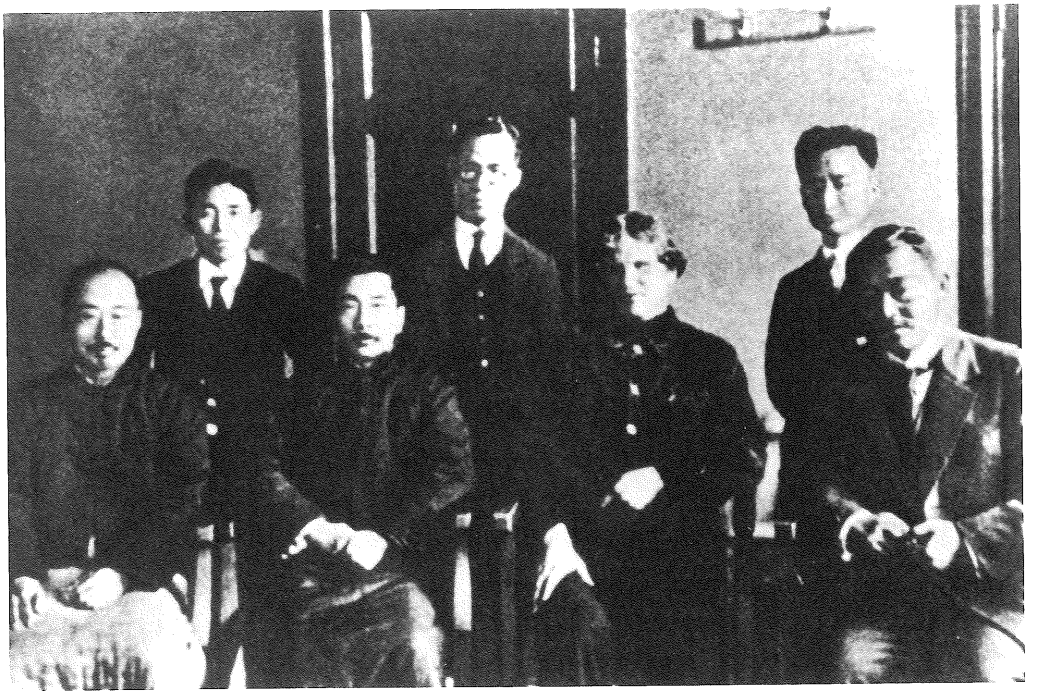
Chou's lecture later appeared in *New Youth* (*Hsin ch'ing-nien*), the most influential journal of the day, and sparked modest interest among Chinese intellectuals in the achievements of modern Japanese authors. Translations of modern Japanese literature — including many by Lu Hsün and Chou himself — became more numerous. Having publicly championed the value of Japanese literature, Chou pressed to have it included in the curriculum at

Peking University as a discrete field of study. A department of Japanese literature was established at the university in 1925, and Chou was appointed its chairman, a position he held for over a decade. His call for emulation of Japanese literary innovations was, furthermore, answered in, among other works, the sensational novella *Sinking* (*Ch'en Lun*), published in 1921 when its author, Yü Ta-fu (1896–1945), was enrolled as a student of economics at Tokyo Imperial University. The confessional style of this obviously autobiographical novel and the ruminations of its tortured hero bear clear evidence of Yü's debt to the contemporary Japanese "I-novel" (*watakushi shōsetsu*), a genre in which the author is the leading character and tells the story, expressing his or her own feelings about the other characters and their surroundings. *Ch'en Lun* resulted in a storm of controversy in China, in large part because of its explicit sexual imagery, which resembled that of the contemporary popular Japanese novel *A Certain Woman* (*Aru onna*), by Arishima Takeo (1878–1923), a work that, not coincidentally, Yü's hero had read. The attention *Sinking* attracted also enhanced its impact, and it helped to usher in countless stories and novels of troubled romantic heros and heroines grappling with societal pressures and inner turmoil that bear the clear imprint of Japanese naturalism.[9]

If Chinese intellectuals had failed to take sufficient heed of the accomplishments of contemporary Japanese writers, as Chou believed, they would not have been able to ignore the very visible and growing Japanese presence on Chinese soil during this period. As early as 1915, the Japanese government had made clear its intention to expand its influence in China by issuing the Twenty-one Demands, a bald attempt to extort economic and territorial concessions from China. By the 1920s, Japanese citizens owned and operated factories in China, ran schools, and published newspapers, and their manufactured goods often displaced China's own in Chinese markets. Japanese also served as political and military advisors to various warlords vying for control of the country, feeding suspicions that they were abetting the continuing disunity of the country. Japanese influence in Manchuria was especially strong, and it was to grow throughout the decade. Chinese cities in other parts of the country also had sizable Japanese communities whose members took full advantage of the special rights and privileges enjoyed by Europeans and Americans in China. That Chinese in an age of testy nationalism would find the Japanese presence in China irksome can well be imagined, and anti-Japanese sentiment among students,

merchants, and political reformers was expressed in repeated calls to boycott Japanese goods and resist Japanese aggression.

Despite his respect and deep affection for Japanese culture, Chou Tso-jen expressed growing anger and indignation throughout the 1920s at Japan's increasingly overt imperialist designs on China. As a scholar, social reformer, and critic, he reserved special scorn for what he saw as an often subtle campaign of Japanese propaganda designed to subvert Chinese society, enervate the Chinese people, and prepare them to become docile subjects of an expanding Japanese empire. He focused most of his ire not on the Japanese government but on individual Japanese who insulted the dignity of the Chinese people through their words and actions and harmed the cause of peace and cultural understanding between the two countries. He identified three groups as especially objectionable: "carpetbaggers" and shiftless adventurers — the *rōnin*; Japanese scholars of Chinese civilization and other self-proclaimed authorities on Chinese affairs who wrote articles and books derogating the Chinese people — the so-called China experts



3. Cho Tso-jen (first row, left) and Lu Hsün (front row, second from left) with friends in Peking, 1923.

(*Shina tsū*); and Japanese who operated newspapers in China that, though published in the Chinese language, were actually mouthpieces for Japanese military and commercial interests. Chou's contempt for these three types of Japanese, all of whom he regarded as invidious and meddlesome stand-ins for actual military invaders, appears repeatedly in his essays. He was convinced that he and his fellow Chinese intellectuals had a special responsibility to awaken the nation to the severe threat to national survival posed by Japan. They should, he wrote,

> expend every effort to nurture in the Chinese populace a distrust of Japan, and let everyone know that the Japanese propertied class, the military, industrialists, politicians, and journalists, as well as some educators (and, needless to say, "carpetbaggers" and "China experts" in China) are all imperialists with the ambition of invading China. . . . We have to understand that Japan is China's most dangerous enemy. We must be on our guard and not trust the Japanese. We must do our best to think of ways to thwart their work. This is a task that Chinese intellectuals, especially those with some understanding of Japan, should now undertake, and a responsibility we must now fulfill.[10]

Of the first group, the *rōnin*, Chou wrote:

> [They] think of China as a territory of Japan and imagine themselves as coming to a colony of which they are the masters to practice on the inhabitants the *bushidō* tradition they have inherited. They proceed to give full vent to the wild impulses they cannot let loose in their own society. In Peking, there are many such disruptive and violent types among the Japanese merchants, and the situation in other places can well be imagined.[11]

A visiting Japanese acquaintance had told him, he went on, that many of the settlers the Japanese government had encouraged to move to Liao-tung and other areas under Japanese control had become reckless, immoral, and untrustworthy after only a few years in China, to the point that they would no longer be able to fit back into Japanese society. Such people, Chou maintained, brought tremendous harm to China.

If degenerate adventurers antagonized Chinese commoners by their wanton actions, Japanese scholars and journalists who fancied themselves ex-

perts on Chinese affairs committed an equally despicable offense, in Chou's view, by publicizing distorted and unflattering images of the Chinese people to the Japanese public as a whole, as well as by poisoning scholarly discourse between intellectuals of the two countries. These self-styled China experts, he wrote,

> have no understanding of China, and make only superficial observations of certain aspects of the old society. After learning a few skills such as reciting and composing lines of rhymed verse, bowing and greeting others in the Chinese manner, playing mahjong, and sitting around drinking tea, they think they know all about China. In fact, all they end up doing is perpetuating evil Chinese habits; all that has happened is that out of nowhere has appeared yet another bad Chinese.[12]

Chou did not explicitly name the Japanese scholars and journalists he had in mind, except to cite a book by a certain Yasuoka Hideo entitled *The Chinese National Character as Viewed from Fiction* (*Shōsetsu kara mita Shina no minzokusei*). In this book, Chou wrote, Yasuoka catalogued various characteristics of the Chinese people as gleaned from fiction of the Yüan, Ming, and Ch'ing periods. He did not challenge Yasuoka's criticisms of the Chinese; indeed, he freely conceded that his countrymen often exhibited a host of vices including "depravity, cowardice, cruelty, lasciviousness, stupidity, ignorance, and mendacity." Neither did he challenge the right of Yasuoka or any other Japanese to make such observations. Rather, he took Yasuoka and other Japanese "China experts" to task for the arrogant, disdainful attitude they brought to the study of China and the Chinese. Europeans who discussed the degeneration of modern Greece, he noted, still expressed respect and gratitude for its ancient civilization. Rather than ridiculing or slandering the modern nation, they adopted a balanced view that did not degrade their own integrity. Chou suggested that Japanese scholars do likewise with regards to China:

> To Japan, China bears some resemblance to Greece and Rome; it certainly is not a total stranger. Japanese people should lament the fact that China has descended to its present level, not treat this as an occasion for glee or entertainment. We do not ask the Japanese either to praise or defend China. We only hope they will offer

4. The cover of *Speaking of Tigers* (*T'an hu chi*), the volume of essays first published in 1928, in which many of Chou's essays on Sino-Japanese relations are collected.

> their advice and even criticism in an honest and principled manner.[13]

The activities of the "China experts," he contended, would in the end redound upon themselves. "Because I am a lover of Japanese culture," he wrote, in an echo of the title of Yasuoka's book, "I do not want this kind of flippancy to become part of the Japanese national character."[14]

Chou reserved his sharpest and most sustained criticism for a Japanese-owned, Chinese-language newspaper published in Peking, the *Shun-t'ien Times (Shun-t'ien shi-pao)*. This newspaper was a constant thorn in his side throughout the 1920s, representing for him the most insidious face of Japanese encroachment on China. Whereas the "China experts" distorted Chinese customs in order to slander the Chinese people, Japanese-sponsored newspapers in China, of which the *Shun-t'ien Times* was a prime example, sought in his view to arrest Chinese social progress and reinforce those aspects of traditional Chinese society most likely to leave China weak and benighted. "All of the positions taken by Japanese-run, Chinese-language newspapers are totally at odds with ours," he wrote. "They oppose everything that we think will benefit China, and promote with all their energy that which will harm China."[15] Though their reactionary views and rumor-mongering were in fact designed to advance the cause of Japanese imperialism, he held, the *Shun-t'ien Times*'s sponsors revealed their deeper motives by publishing their newspaper in Chinese:

> If they printed it in Japanese, it would be for their own countrymen to read and we could more or less ignore it even if what it published was about us. That they publish the newspaper in Chinese and disseminate it in China changes matters, however. The newspaper is clearly directed at us and speaks at every turn in familiar tones about "our nation," when in fact its point of view is entirely that of the Japanese.[16]

In pretending to speak from a Chinese point of view, Chou contended, the newspaper sought to insinuate its influence into the minds of Chinese readers. The influence of newspapers such as this should be combatted, he maintained, because the Chinese public, accustomed to centuries of dictatorial rule, had long grown used to hearing the kinds of absurd notions the newspapers propounded and was unable to distinguish truth from rumor.[17]

Chou saw these motives at work in 1927 during the violent terror inflicted upon the Peking intellectual world by the ruling warlord, Chang Tso-lin. In an essay entitled "The Japanese and Their Good Intentions" ("Jih-pen jen te hao-i"), he excoriated the "good intentions" of the Japanese that led them to lecture their Chinese "countrymen" on the virtues of passivity in the face of warlord violence and repression. An article of May 2 in the *Shun-t'ien Times*, Chou wrote, had lamented the "folly" leading to the execution of his friend, Li Ta-chao, by Chang Tso-lin's troops. Even crickets and ants, the newspaper had said, knew when to value life and fear death. If Li had remembered this simple lesson and not had ideas and ambitions above his station, he would still be alive and could spend the rest of his life composing scholarly essays for the greater edification of his countrymen. Instead, he had sacrificed himself for the sake of ideology, and criminal charges had been heaped upon his head — and all to what end? Chou quoted the words with which the article in the *Shun-t'ien Times* concluded. "I venture to advise my fellow countrymen: in these troubled times for our nation, let us look to our own survival, and not act rashly or impulsively!"[18]

In his rebuttal, Chou dismissed this "advice" as outrageous. Japanese propagandists, he charged, took it upon themselves to lecture the Chinese people about their own best interests, telling them to look to their own survival by becoming docile subjects of the Japanese and rejecting the path taken by "lawless Koreans" who resisted Japanese domination. They even phrased their advice in the words of Chinese sages, when in fact their ultimate aim was the enslavement of the Chinese people. The Japanese themselves were not known for always putting personal security above all else, he argued, a fact clearly demonstrated by many acts of individual bravery during the early years of the Meiji Restoration. Had the Japanese themselves given in to foreign aggression, they would be in the same straits as the Chinese were now, rather than in a position to conduct a "cultural invasion" of China. In fact, Chou reasoned, it was the very spirit of selflessness and bravery embodied by Li Ta-chao that had allowed Japan to cast off the Tokugawa regime and become what it was today. "The Japanese themselves give little care to matters of life or death," he wrote, "but nonetheless take it upon themselves to admonish us to 'look to our own survival.' " He concluded with the observation that not even the British, those consum-

mate masters of imperialism, engaged in propaganda efforts of the likes of the *Shun-t'ien Times*.

In his 1918 lecture on modern Japanese literature, Chou Tso-jen had exhorted his countrymen not to ignore or underestimate the cultural achievements of the Japanese since the beginning of the Meiji period. Seven years later, he amplified this theme and explored in greater depth the obstacles that inhibited the Chinese from achieving a more complete understanding of Japan. That such an understanding was essential for Chinese self-awareness and self-preservation Chou accepted as given. China needed to know its enemy; it also needed to look more closely at its own traditional heritage and future path. To his earlier contention that Japan had evolved a unique civilization deserving the attention of Chinese scholars he added an argument reminiscent of his observations of Japanese buildings, street signs, and dress during his student years, namely that much that had been destroyed or replaced in China by alien dynasties over the centuries had been preserved in Japan intact. For this reason, Chinese people could not afford to neglect the study of Japan's premodern culture if they wished fully to understand their own past. At the same time, Japan's more successful response to the Western forces that the two countries had encountered in the nineteenth century could provide the key to a successful future for China. China was uniquely positioned to understand Japan, he said, and had a special need and opportunity to do so.

Why had the Chinese failed to this point to take adequate account of the Japanese? Again, Chou blamed this failure largely on Chinese arrogance and feelings of superiority. "Chinese people have traditionally felt a kind of conceit that inhibits their study of foreign cultures," he wrote. "Only a small number of people can suppress this feeling and view other cultures in a relatively calm and impartial way."[19] Japanese behavior in China was equally to blame for engendering resentment that inhibited research beneficial to mutual understanding between the two countries. Ironically, similarities in the written languages of the two countries only compounded the problem in his view, since they gave rise to two fallacies. The first was the common assumption that the Japanese language could be mastered in just a few months of study, since the profusion of Chinese characters in written Japanese would greatly speed the learning process. The result of this misconception was that many Chinese seriously underestimated the time and effort needed to reach fluency in the language; having acquired a mere

5. Chou Tso-jen's home in Peking, where he lived from the 1920s on.

smattering of Japanese, they considered themselves well versed and never went any further. The second fallacy was that the Chinese and Japanese were of the "same race and language" (*t'ung-chung t'ung-wen*). While granting that linguistic and cultural similarities did exist, Chou objected to a corollary drawn by Japanese propagandists to justify Japanese imperialist advances, to the effect that the two nations also shared political interests — as defined by Japan. Chou urged his colleagues in the Chinese academic community to resist this distortion of the common heritage of Japan and China which, he maintained, was rooted not in empire and military conquest but in shared traditions of philosophy, literature, and religion.

Although he continued throughout the 1920s to stress the importance of Sino-Japanese friendship and understanding, Chou Tso-jen recognized that the chances for these to develop were growing increasingly bleak.

> If present circumstances persist, with Japanese "China experts" and degenerate adventurers roaming the country, and the *Shun-t'ien Times* fluttering before our eyes, I fear that prospects will not be good for Asian scholarship. People will think that there are only two possible stances toward Japan: one can become either a slave in the service of Japan, or a pawn of anti-Japanese sentiment. This leaves no room at all for the existence of a third group, namely, independents who adopt an attitude of [disinterested] scholarship.[20]

The problems involved in attempting to pursue scholarly research amid an atmosphere of growing hostility had strong personal resonance for Chou Tso-jen, as is evident in one particularly revealing passage:

> In truth, Japan, like ancient Greece, is a country I love. I relate to Japan as I relate to Greece: my knowledge about them is not very profound, but I love everything about them. . . . Indeed, I could settle down anywhere in Japan, and my sense of ease and well-being would not necessarily be inferior to that of life in China.
>
> But, I remain after all Chinese. There are also many Chinese things of which I am fond, and there are many aspects of Chinese culture which, being close to my heart, I could not do without. Perhaps one could say that [in my life] I may have unwittingly gathered similar elements from the two cultures, intermingling and preserving them. But I cannot deny that there are also things about me which are stubbornly and uncompromisingly Chinese. This being so, I am left no choice but to depart from the path of the Japanese and go my own way. . . .
>
> Thus, no matter how much I love Japan, there is always a wide gap between my views and those of the average Japanese person, and I cannot help but feel a kind of rage and hatred on account of some aspects of their behavior — rage because they injure my self-respect as a Chinese, hatred because they upset my sentimental illusions about Japan. My dreams have not yet been destroyed on account of this, but I am not after all some kind of transcendent sage, devoid of hatred and grudges.[21]

Events of the 1930s were to bear out Chou's worst fears about Japanese

intentions with regard to China, especially after the Japanese infiltration of Chinese society which Chou decried in the 1920s was magnified on a massive and far more vicious scale by Japan's all-out military invasion of China in 1937. This, compounded by the ensuing destruction and loss of life, produced a legacy of animosity and suspicion that continues to haunt relations between the two countries to the present day. Even after decades of peace, the mutual respect and trust that Chou Tso-jen sought remain elusive.

NOTES

1. Lu Hsün (Chou Shu-jen) is well known both in China and overseas for his acerbic wit and trenchant indictments of injustice, corruption, and inhumanity. In China, he has, furthermore, been practically mythologized as the patron saint of Communist-inspired literature and art, though the record suggests that had he lived, he most likely would have been an arch critic of the regime that has claimed him as its own. Memory of Chou Tso-jen, by contrast, has been clouded both by his failure to resist pressure to serve in an official capacity during the Japanese occupation when he and his family were stranded in Peking, and by his refusal to align himself with the Communist movement throughout the 1920s and 1930s.
2. Chou Tso-jen, "P'ai-Jih p'ing-i," *T'an hu chi* (Hong Kong: Hsi-yung, 1967), vol. 2, pp. 519–520.
3. Chou Tso-jen, "Liu-hsüeh te hui-i," *Yao-t'ang tsa-wen* (Peking: Hsin-min, 1944), pp. 93–98.
4. For more on relations between China and Japan in the first decade of this century, see Marius B. Jansen, "Japan and the Chinese Revolution of 1911," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 2: *Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911*, part 2, ed. John K. Fairbank and K. C. Liu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 339–374; and Douglas Reynolds, "The Golden Decade Forgotten: Japan-China Relations, 1898–1907," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 4th ser., vol. 2, 1987, pp. 93–153.
5. Chou Tso-jen, "Jih-pen chin san-shih nien hsiao-shuo chih fa-ta," *I-shu yü sheng-huo* (Shanghai: Ch'ün-i, 1931), pp. 263–294.
6. Ibid., p. 265.
7. Ibid., p. 293.
8. Ibid., p. 294. The emphasis here and in the first line of this quotation is Chou's.
9. On the romantic literature of this period in China, see Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973). See his treatment of Yü Ta-fu and *Ch'en Lun*, especially pp. 81–123. See also the discussions by Ch'ing-mao Cheng, "The Impact of Japanese Literary Trends on Modern Chinese Writers," in *Modern Chinese Literature*

in the May Fourth Era, ed. Merle Goldman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 81–84; and C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 102–105.

10. Chou Tso-jen, "P'ai-Jih p'ing-i," pp. 521–522.
11. Chou Tso-jen, "Jih-pen yü Chung-kuo," *T'an hu chi*, vol. 2, p. 500.
12. Ibid., pp. 449–500.
13. Chou Tso-jen, "Chih-na min-tsu hsing," *T'an hu chi*, vol. 2, p. 549.
14. Ibid.
15. Chou Tso-jen, "Jih-pen yü Chung-kuo," p. 501.
16. Chou Tso-jen, "Jih-pen lang-jen yü *Shun-t'ien shih-pao*," *T'an hu chi*, vol. 2, p. 505.
17. Chou Tso-jen, *Chih-t'ang hui-hsiang lu* (Hong Kong: San Yü, 1980), p. 432.
18. Chou Tso-jen, "Jih-pen jen te hao-i," *T'an hu chi*, vol. 2, p. 509.
19. Chou Tso-jen, "Jih-pen yü Chung-kuo," p. 499.
20. Ibid., p. 502.
21. Chou Tso-jen, "Jih-pen lang-jen yü *Shun-t'ien shih-pao*," pp. 506–507.

GLOSSARY

Arishima Takeo 有島武郎
Aru onna 或る女
bushidō 武士道
Chang Chih-tung 張之洞
Chang Tso-lin 張作霖
Ch'en lun 沈淪
Chiang-nan 江南
Ch'ing 清
Chou Tso-jen 周作人
Habuto Nobuko 羽太信子
Hsin ch'ing-nien 新青年
Jih-pen chin san-shih nien hsiao-shuo chih fa-ta 日本近三十年小說之發達
Jih-pen jen te hao-i 日本人的好意
Li Ta-chao 李大釗
Liang Ch'i-ch'ao 梁啟超
Liao-tung 遼東
Lu Hsün (Chou Shu-jen) 魯迅
Meiji 明治
Ming 明
Mori Ōgai 森鷗外
Nagai Kafū 永井荷風
Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石
rōnin 浪人
Shao-hsing 紹興
Shimazaki Tōson 島崎藤村
Shina tsū 支那通
Shōsetsu kara mita Shina no minzokusei 小說から見た支那の民族性
Shun-t'ien shih-pao 順天時報
Sun Yatsen 孫逸仙
T'ang 唐
Tokugawa 德川
t'ung-chung t'ung-wen 同種同文
Yasuoka Hideo 安岡秀夫
Yü Ta-fu 郁達夫
Yüan 元
watakushi shōsetsu 私小說