




FORUM ARTICLE

# Saving China and admiring Japan: Cultural traitor Qian Daosun

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(Received 19 February 2023; revised 4 October 2023; accepted 9 October 2023)

## Abstract

Qian Daosun (1887–1966) was imprisoned for collaborating with the Provisional Government in North China under Japanese occupation, and to this day he is labelled as *hanjian* (traitor). Yet, Qian was first and foremost a cultural literatus, librarian, and an exceptional translator with an in-depth understanding of Japanese culture and languages. This article examines the crucial role that Japan and the Japanese language played for Chinese cultural literati in their quest to save China. It also brings to the forefront the dilemmas and agonizing choices Qian faced in his attempt to promote Sino-Japanese cultural exchange in the midst of war, in particular as a librarian. Wartime libraries are highly contested sites of selection, destruction, censorship, preservation, confiscation, and knowledge production. An added layer of complexity was Japan's cultural policy in China that promoted Japanese-language collections and governed libraries such as the Beijing<sup>1</sup> Modern Science Library where Qian worked. What exacerbated Qian's dilemmas was his upbringing, which led him to form close personal connections with like-minded Japanese literati. Lastly, this article revisits the *hanjian* label by comparing Qian's fate to that of other librarians and returned students of Japan, such as May Fourth writer Lu Xun and patriotic bibliophile Zheng Zhenduo. By deliberately examining May Fourth writers alongside *hanjian* and Japanese intermediaries, the intention is to dismount arbitrary labels and divisions that have set them apart and against each other in the resistance versus collaboration dichotomy.

**Keywords:** Collaboration; cultural traitor; cultural exchange; Sino-Japanese War; Qian Daosun

## Introduction

When it comes to writing the history of the returned students of Japan during the Republican period, their ties with Japan are exaggerated if they are denounced as *hanjian*, but are downplayed if they are celebrated as May Fourth writers. Such writers, who sought to create a new vernacular literary language and develop China's own

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<sup>1</sup>Beiping from 1928–1937 and 1945–1949 under the Nationalist regime, and Beijing/Peking under Japanese occupation in 1937–1945 and under the Communist regime 1949 to present. As name changes were frequent during the period I cover here, I use 'Beijing' throughout to avoid confusion.

modern literature during the May Fourth period (which began in 1919), came to be popularly regarded as national heroes. Lu Xun, for example, was even described by Mao Zedong as ‘the chief commander of China’s cultural revolution’.<sup>2</sup> May Fourth writers’ stories have gained popularity due to their contribution to China’s War of Resistance Against Japan of 1937–1945 (known more neutrally as the Second Sino-Japanese War in Western scholarship) because they are useful in the myth-making process that Paul Cohen writes about in *History in Three Keys*. The purpose of the past treated as myth—in contrast to history—is to draw upon it to serve the political, ideological, rhetorical, and/or emotional needs of the present.<sup>3</sup> Just as the Boxers were mythologized as anti-imperialist and patriotic in the 1920s,<sup>4</sup> so too were May Fourth writers. Creating the myth of resistance and staunchly fighting against Japan helps legitimize the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), as many May Fourth writers such as Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao were founders of the CPC.

Patriotic May Fourth writers are often juxtaposed against the ultimate betrayers of the nation: cultural *hanjian*. The general term *hanjian*, translated as ‘collaborator’ or ‘traitor’, refers to those who betray the collective well-being of the national/ethnic community (in this case the Chinese) through working with an external enemy (Japan) for personal gain.<sup>5</sup> *Hanjian* was already in popular use as an integral part of the national salvation movement during the War of Resistance, prior to its use in the *hanjian* trials in the postwar era.<sup>6</sup> The specific term ‘cultural *hanjian*’ applied to those who had held positions working for the Japanese or the Provisional Government-sponsored educational or cultural institutions that harmed the people of China or benefitted the enemy (Japan).<sup>7</sup> Collaborationists were labelled as such by mere association with collaborationist organizations, thus emphasizing collective responsibility rather than individual accountability. As Zanasi shows, this was due to the fact that *hanjian* trials, above all, fed into nationalist feelings, with China having recently gained sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> The cultural *hanjian* label is unofficially further extended to those who stayed behind in Japanese-occupied Beijing, in contrast to the majority of staff and students from Beijing and Tsinghua universities who moved south to join the National South-West Associated University.<sup>9</sup> Those who remained are labelled as unpatriotic *hanjian*, and are assumed to have chosen to side with the Japanese, no matter what reasons may have actually informed their decisions to remain.

<sup>2</sup>Merle Goldman, ‘The political use of Lu Xun’, *The China Quarterly*, vol. 91, 1982, p. 447.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Cohen, *History in three keys: The Boxers as event, experience, and myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 213.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>5</sup>Yun Xia, *Down with traitors: Justice and nationalism in wartime China* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2017).

<sup>6</sup>Yun Xia, ‘Resolutions on preventing Hanjian activities and espionage’, in *Translating the occupation of China: The Japanese invasion of China, 1931–45*, (eds) Jonathan Henshaw, Craig A. Smith and Norman Smith (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021), p. 413.

<sup>7</sup>Xia, *Down with traitors*, Chapter 4.

<sup>8</sup>Margherita Zanasi, ‘Globalizing *hanjian*: The Suzhou trials and the post-WWII discourse on collaboration’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 113, no. 2, June 2008, pp. 731–751.

<sup>9</sup>Issei Yamamoto, ‘The role of students who have studied in Japan at Beijing University during the period of Japanese occupation: Focusing on Qian Daosun and Zhou Zuoren’, *Ueda Women’s University Bulletin*, vol. 41, 2018, p. 49.

Collaboration was what characterized much of China's experience in its war with Japan, rather than resistance.<sup>10</sup> However, memories of Chinese interactions with the Japanese have been erased due to the need to construct resistancialism, whereby Japan is seen as the Other in opposition to China.<sup>11</sup> The polarization between the heroic resisters and traitors who collaborated with the enemy reinforces national unity by casting out a small group of disreputable *hanjian*.<sup>12</sup> The persecution of *hanjian* was justified as a way to address the humiliation China suffered at the hands of aggressors which had led to the loss of national self-confidence.<sup>13</sup> This construction of resistancialism fails to explain the activities of those who do not fit into these dichotomized categories. As Jordan Sand's analysis of recent historiography on the Japanese empire shows, identities are now portrayed as more fluid, dispelling myths of post-colonial nationalism.<sup>14</sup> I build on Duara's work on Manchukuo, whereby the Japanese and Chinese co-produced Manchukuo's ideology and helped contribute to the regime's authenticity.<sup>15</sup> I also draw upon Taylor and Yang who reject the collaboration-resistance dichotomy and disagree with the notion that only those who resisted the Japanese are worth studying, calling instead for a focus on lesser-known figures.<sup>16</sup>

In this article, I choose to examine the life story of the translator and librarian, Qian Daosun (1887–1966). Qian's case speaks for a group of understudied literati, like Japanese-language educator Xu Zuzheng (1895–1978), who orbited in the same circles as many of the May Fourth writers, but were placed in the unpatriotic camp due to their decision to stay in Japanese-occupied Beijing. Qian Daosun was arrested in 1945, imprisoned until 1949, and labelled as a cultural *hanjian* for collaborating with the Provisional Government of the Republic of China under Japanese occupation. Reasons for his *hanjian* label included his service as president of National Beijing University established by the Provisional Government, and his participation in the Greater East Asia Writers' conferences in 1942 and 1944. After his release, he was assigned to Qilu University in 1949 to teach medicine, after which he worked for the Ministry of Health Publishing House and People's Literature Publishing House in the 1950s where he continued to translate Japanese literature into Chinese. In 1966, the Red Guards of the Ministry of Health beat Qian to death.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese agents and local elites in wartime China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup>Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian myth: Nationalism, resistance, and collaboration in modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>12</sup>Fredrick Wakeman, 'Hanjian (Traitor)! Collaboration and retribution in wartime Shanghai', in *Becoming Chinese. Passages to modernity and beyond*, (ed.) Wen-hsin Yeh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 298–341.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>14</sup>Jordan Sand, 'Subaltern imperialists: The new historiography of the Japanese empire', *Past and Present*, vol. 225, no. 1, 2014, pp. 273–288.

<sup>15</sup>Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian modern* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

<sup>16</sup>Jeremy E. Taylor and Zhiyi Yang, 'Towards a new history of elite cultural expression in Japanese-occupied China', *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, December 2020, pp. 189–207.

<sup>17</sup>Qianyuan Wei, 'Tushuguan de linglei guanzhang Qian Daosun', *Yuedu*, vol. 337, 2010, pp. 92–99.

Although he was the first to translate Dante's *Divine Comedy* and *The Tale of Genji* (known as the world's first novel) into Chinese, his life story and impressive accomplishments have been undermined and silenced due to the 'cultural traitor' label assigned to him after the war. In fact, Qian's reputation as a translator is on par with—if not greater than—that of the renowned Zhou Zuoren according to Chinese literary scholar Okuno Shintarō.<sup>18</sup> Qian also rescued Beijing University Library's Japanese, Chinese, and Western book collections, which included rare Chinese-language materials, from destruction during the War of Resistance.<sup>19</sup> However, Qian Daosun has only appeared in English-language scholarship in passing; Japanese scholars have concentrated on his role as a translator of Japanese literature; and Chinese librarians have only just begun to acknowledge his contributions to the Beijing University Library.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, Qian Daosun is an interesting case because his *hanjian* label remains unchallenged, unlike other cultural *hanjian* who have regained their reputations and been exonerated from their past actions. Zhang Wojun (1902–1955), for example, was another intellectual who chose to stay in Beijing when the Japanese occupied the city; his career, as recounted by Craig A. Smith, has earned him recognition as one of the leading figures of Taiwan's New Literature movement of the 1920s.<sup>21</sup> Unlike Qian Daosun, Zhang departed from Beijing in 1946 and re-emerged in Taiwan in 1948, where he managed to continue his cultural activities and thereby avoid prosecution during the *hanjian* trials.<sup>22</sup> Zhang's works have been extensively published and promoted by his sons on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, but archival materials on Qian and even his literary works remain scarce.

Another figure worth considering is Zhou Zuoren (1885–1967), whose status as the most famous cultural *hanjian*, with abundant primary sources on him publicly available, has created space for re-examining his *hanjian* status. Zhou was Lu Xun's brother, a prolific writer, a key advocate of New Literature during the May Fourth movement, and widely considered as one of the leading intellectuals in the formation of modern Chinese literature. During the Japanese occupation, he served as the Minister of Education for the Provisional Government as well as the chief librarian and head of the Department of Literature at National Beijing University. After the war, the Nationalist government sentenced him to 10 years in prison for treason.<sup>23</sup> Zhou's stated reason for staying in Beijing was that he had 13 dependants living under his roof, and that he was made responsible by the university for safeguarding the university's campus and

<sup>18</sup>Sōsō Sū, 'Honyakuka Sen Tōson to nihonjin to no kōryū—Tanizaki Junichiro, Iwanami Shigeo o chūshin ni', *Kokubungaku*, vol. 96, 2012, p. 297.

<sup>19</sup>Jaku Liu and Xuejing Yang, 'Briefing on Qian Daosun's career in Library', *Journal of Academic Libraries*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2014, pp. 116–120, <https://www.zz-news.com/com/daxuetushuguanxuebao/news/itemid-1438888.html>, [last accessed 22 December 2021].

<sup>20</sup>Wei, 'Tushuguan de linglei guanzhang Qian Daosun', pp. 92–99.

<sup>21</sup>See Craig A. Smith, 'From collaboration to commemoration: Zhang Wojun and the ambiguities of identity for intellectuals from Taiwan', in this Forum.

<sup>22</sup>Sōsō Sū, 'Nihon senryōka (1937–1945) no pekin ni okeru "chinichi-ka"—honyakuka Sen Tōson to Chō Gagun o chūshin ni', in *Ajia no mirai e = Toward the future of Asia: Watashi no teian*. Vol. 1, (ed.) Junko Imanishi (Tokyo: Japan Bukku, 2014), p. 219.

<sup>23</sup>Xue Bingjie, 'The transformation of Zhou Zuoren's thought and rhetorical strategies found in his writing', in *Translating the occupation of China*, (eds) Henshaw, Smith and Smith, p. 327.

property.<sup>24</sup> He claimed that he constantly used his position to unobtrusively resist the Japanese.

In Zhou Zuoren's case, a number of supporters from leading universities appealed to the court to consider the circumstances of his collaboration and show him lenience. Arguments made by these supporters included Zhou's role in protecting library collections at Beijing University.<sup>25</sup> After the Marco Polo Incident in 1937, some 300,000 volumes of rare and important books were evacuated from the Beijing University Library to Shanghai's international and French concessions and to Nanjing. A month before the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, some of the books in Shanghai were evacuated to the Library of Congress. When Zhou became chief librarian, he made arrangements to bring some of the books from Shanghai back to Beijing.<sup>26</sup> At his postwar trial, Zhou was asked 'How much of Beijing University's treasures did you preserve on behalf of the university?' to which he replied, 'I don't recall, but to preserve books on behalf of Beijing Library would be an obligation and a duty as a Chinese person.'<sup>27</sup>

Similar arguments could be made in Qian Daosun's case in terms of his role in library preservation. However, my intention here is not to exonerate Qian Daosun. Rather, it is to expand our understanding of Qian's thoughts and actions by moving beyond the narrow scope of what is measured in labelling him as a *hanjian*, as collaborationism had long-term prewar cultural roots and postwar legacies. For this purpose, I take a longer perspective by examining Qian Daosun's family and education, his wartime actions, as well as his postwar persecution. I also highlight his role as a translator and librarian, roles that are often overlooked in comparison to writers who have garnered more balanced and nuanced scholarly treatment. Moreover, I deliberately examine May Fourth writers alongside *hanjian* and Japanese intermediaries in order to overcome arbitrary labels and divisions that have set them apart and against each other in the resistance versus collaboration dichotomy.

### Cultural *hanjian*

Immediately after Qian Daosun's 10-year prison sentence for treason was publicly announced in October 1946, a newspaper article entitled 'Cultural *hanjian* Qian Daosun' was published.<sup>28</sup> The author analysed Qian's sentence, and listed a number of points that made Qian a cultural *hanjian*. For instance, Qian spent a number of years in Japan, he had many Japanese friends, and he had a close relationship with Japan. What stands out in this article is the author's critique of Qian for having blind faith in Japan culturally. Moreover, he described Qian as having the same type of toothbrush moustache as Hitler. What is noteworthy is the distinction the author made between Zhou Zuoren and Qian Daosun. Zhou Zuoren was a negative *hanjian* whereas Qian Daosun was a positive *hanjian* in that Qian was able to identify the authenticity of rare Chinese books and

<sup>24</sup>Timothy Cronin, 'Zhou Zuoren's letter to Zhou Enlai', in *ibid.*, p. 353.

<sup>25</sup>Lu Yan, 'Beyond politics in wartime: Zhou Zuoren, 1931–1945', *Sino-Japanese Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1998, pp. 6–12.

<sup>26</sup>Keiji Okamura, *Nokosareta zōsho: Mantetsu toshokan, kaigai Nihon toshokan no rekishi* (Kyoto: Aunsha, 1994), p. 96.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>28</sup>Chai Bu, 'Cultural *hanjian* Qian Daosun', *Dong nan ri bao*, 24 October 1946.

made positive contributions to his country through his job acquiring books. In other words, his past, signified by his close relationships with Japan, had made him a *hanjian*, but his subsequent job allowed him to contribute to China in a positive manner.

Another newspaper article, entitled 'Qian Daosun's Case', described in detail the various reasons behind the 10-year prison sentence handed down by the Hebei High Court, which found that Qian had conspired against his own country and collaborated with the enemy. The report described how Qian had received a Japanese education since childhood, taught Japanese at various universities in China, and met people through Japanese studies and Japanese literature. As a result, he came to greatly admire and obsessively envy Japanese culture, which cultivated in him a pro-Japanese ideology. Specifically, the report stated that the Court found 'there was irrefutable evidence that the defendant carried out enslavement education during his employment. [The defendant] was pro-Japanese, carried favour with the enemy, was willingly used by them, corrupted the youth, and rebelled against the nation.'<sup>29</sup> It follows a similar logic to the previous article in that there is an acknowledgement of Qian's contribution in preserving rare Chinese books and preventing their loss.

Revisiting the evidence supporting Qian's *hanjian* label, which casts all connections to Japan in a negative light, including his experiences studying in Japan, keeping Japanese friends, and studying Japanese language and literature, he is accused of blindly admiring Japan. Postwar public opinion commended Qian's efforts to save rare Chinese books. However, it is difficult to reconcile the fact that Qian could not have saved these books without taking up the academic positions granted to him by the Japanese. Qian was, above all, a bibliophile who was well versed in Chinese classics and who had a great appreciation for Japanese language and literature. He dedicated his life to translating Japanese literature into Chinese, and to preserving and collecting both Chinese and Japanese books, because he had a profound depth of knowledge in both these fields. Qian Daosun saw Sino-Japanese cultural exchange as his mission and sought to bridge the gaps between Japanese and Chinese language and literature; for him these two goals were inseparable and interconnected. Yet, for the purposes of reaching a verdict and sentencing him, the Chinese aspect of his work was praised and the Japanese aspect, condemned.

Mekada Makoto, who studied Chinese literature at Beijing University in the early 1930s and formed close relationships with Chinese literati such as Zhou Zuoren, Hu Shi, and Yu Pingbo, had particularly strong ties with Qian Daosun. Quoting a visiting Japanese literatus, Mekada once commented that Beijing University would not become Japan's unless they got rid of Qian Daosun. In Mekada's view, Qian Daosun acted as the seawall that prevented Japan from destroying Chinese culture.<sup>30</sup> In his official position and by using his relationship with the Japanese, Qian Daosun was still able to exert some control over the fate of Beijing University in its darkest days.

Hence, unlike many collaborators, Qian's wartime actions were not a result of coercion from the Japanese government, nor necessarily a means to survive under occupation. Nor did Qian choose to collaborate merely for the sake of continuity, like the regional military power who sought to minimize the effects of the occupation

<sup>29</sup>'Qian Daosun's case', *Hua bei ri bao*, 3 November 1946.

<sup>30</sup>Makoto Mekada, *Mekada Makoto chosakushū dai hakkan* (Tokyo: Ryūkeishosha, 1986), p. 40.

on their personal spheres of influence.<sup>31</sup> Sanetō notes that the numbers of Chinese exchange students declined in the 1920s, but picked up again in the 1930s due to the added pressure and urgency to learn about and understand the enemy because of the imminent threat to China posed by Japan.<sup>32</sup> Qian's logic follows Sanetō's observation in that he saw that China was in need of studying Japan's modern history in order to understand the reasons why China had so far failed to modernize in comparison to Japan.<sup>33</sup> The legal and moral discourses that condemned national traitors simplistically assumed that their reasons for collaboration were due to cowardliness or self-interest.<sup>34</sup> The treatment of national heroes who fought against Japan, on the other hand, focused on the notion of self-sacrifice for the nation against all odds. Therefore, the possibility that a *hanjian's* actions could be due to ulterior motives, or patriotism, or a sense of self-sacrifice threatens to blur the distinction between *hanjian* and national heroes, which is why it has barely been explored.

I argue that cultural *hanjian* such as Qian had a heightened sense of their responsibility for saving China precisely because of their profound knowledge of Japan. Qian's first-hand knowledge of Japanese education, his personal friendships with Japanese, and his profound appreciation for Japanese language and literature were not merely reasons to accuse him of acting as a traitor to China. Qian's Japan connections also translated into his ability to use his 'puppet' positions to save valuable Chinese books, and to increase Japanese-language collections that he considered crucial for China's survival against its enemy.

### Foundations of a Japanologist

What stands out about Qian among Chinese-returned students of Japan is his exceptional depth of knowledge of the Japanese language, his unsurpassed ability as a translator of Japanese classical literature into Chinese, and his almost obsessive dedication to curating Japanese-language library collections. These factors are largely due to his upbringing, as he was raised by reform-minded parents who themselves had first-hand knowledge of Japan and Japanese. Qian Daosun came from a long line of scholars, starting with his paternal grandfather Qian Zhenchang (1825–1899) who was a Qing government official. His father, Qian Xun (1853–1927), was a diplomat born in Zhejiang province who served under the Qing reformer Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909). Qian's mother, Shan Shili (1858–1945), having herself come from a family of literati, educated both her sons in Chinese classical literature. Qian Daosun's forward-thinking parents saw from their own experiences the critical importance of learning and absorbing from Japan what would be needed to save China's future.

By the late nineteenth century, China was facing both Western and Japanese encroachment, and the Qing government saw an urgent need to reform and strengthen

<sup>31</sup>Mitter, *The Manchurian myth*, p. 80.

<sup>32</sup>Keishū Sanetō, *Chūgokujin nihon ryūgakushi* (Tokyo: Kuroshio shuppan, 1981).

<sup>33</sup>Sosō Sū, *Nitchū sensō ki no Pekin ni okeru nitchū bunka kōshō. 'Bunka kankan' to yobareta otoko: Man'yōshū o yakushita Sen Tōson no shōgai* (Tokyo: Tōhō Shoten, 2014), p. 38.

<sup>34</sup>Poshek Fu, *Passivity, resistance, and collaboration: Intellectual choices in occupied Shanghai, 1937–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

China, especially after its humiliating military defeat against Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the imperial powers' scramble to dominate China after the Boxer Rebellion (1901). Japan was considered a model for China to emulate at this time, because it had successfully modernized under strong Meiji leadership and was able to fend off Western colonial powers and defeat Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). It was also an ideal destination for studying abroad because Chinese and Japanese share a writing system that facilitated the students' learning process and because Japan was geographically close and more affordable.

At least 10,000 Chinese exchange students went to study in Japan in the 1900s, and they became a leading force in China's efforts to modernize for the next several decades, especially in the face of growing Japanese imperialism. Beginning with 13 students in 1896, Chinese students came to Japan at a rate of over 1,000 annually by 1903, before reaching a peak of over 8,000 in 1905–1906.<sup>35</sup> This was triggered by China's defeat by Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), which prompted Qing reformers such as Kang Youwei to promote extensive translations of Japanese books and send students to study abroad on a large scale. Zhang Zhidong was among the Qing reformers who advocated sending students to Japan in order to strengthen China.<sup>36</sup> Under Zhang's orders, Qian Daosun's father Qian Xun was first stationed in Japan (1898–1905) to oversee the Chinese students from Hubei province, and then served as ambassador to The Netherlands (1907) and Italy (1908).

Qian Xun's wife Shan Shili and his two sons joined him in Japan in 1900. Shan later reminisced that, in time, she came to regard Japan as her home given the frequency of her visits and the lengths of her sojourns with her whole family.<sup>37</sup> Qian Xun did not consider the dismal efforts of the Qing government to send Chinese students to Japan to be anywhere near sufficient. This is why he decided that his son, Qian Daosun, would go to Japan for a longer period, and to fund that privately without any financial support from the government. Hence, Qian Daosun spent his formative years in Japan, attending regular Japanese schools for seven years from the age of 13.

During his father's years in Japan, Qian Daosun learnt from his father how library collections were vital to supporting Chinese students' education and in promoting Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges. In 1898, Qian Xun led a group of exchange students from Hubei to tour Waseda University (then known as Tokyo Senmon Gakkō), three of whom enrolled there the following year and became Waseda's first Chinese exchange students. Statesman and founder of Waseda University Ōkuma Shigenobu personally guided Qian Xun's tour, which impressed the latter greatly, and he soon resolved to send his book collection to Waseda for the use of these Chinese students. One of the donated books has a note written inside its cover, dated 1899: 'Superintendent Qian Xun presents this to the students leaving to pursue their studies in Japan. On this day we firmly exchanged our promises. One day, when you see this note, I want you to know

<sup>35</sup>Douglas Reynolds, *China, 1898–1912: The Xinzhen Revolution and Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1993), p. 48.

<sup>36</sup>Fei Chen, 'Disassembling empire: Revolutionary Chinese students in Japan and discourses on provincial independence and local self-government', *Journal of Asian History*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2017, p. 286.

<sup>37</sup>Hu Ying, "'Would that I were Marco Polo': The travel writings of Shan Shili", in *Traditions of East Asian travel*, (ed.) Joshua A. Fogel (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), p. 148.



the kindness behind the superintendent's gesture.<sup>38</sup> His promise came to fruition two years later. In 1901 and 1902, Qian Xun donated approximately 4,000 Chinese books to what would become the Waseda University Library. This donation formed the basis of its Chinese collection, which has now grown to 90,000 titles.

Waseda University eventually became one of the major destinations for Chinese exchange students, Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu among them, especially after the opening of the School for Chinese Students in 1905. Ōkuma, who was the founder of Waseda University, had strong connections with Chinese leaders and assisted them when they came to Japan. For example, when Sun Yat-sen fled to Japan in 1897 after the failed Guangzhou Uprising, followed by Kang Youwei after the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898, it was Ōkuma who saw to their well-being.

Qian Xun's contributions to libraries continued after his return to China. In 1912, Qian Xun became the chief librarian at the Zhejiang Library. In 1915, he located and recovered over 200 different types of books that had been dispersed due to wars and conflicts for the Zhejiang Library's Complete Library of the Four Treasures (previously known as the Wenlan Library). He also edited the library catalogue for the Tianyi Pavillion, China's oldest existing private library.<sup>39</sup>

Qian Daosun's mother, Shan Shili, was not merely known as Qian Xun's wife, but as a progressive woman in her own right and one of the few female translators in the late Qing period. During her sojourn in Japan, Shan studied Japanese and mastered the language to the point where she could translate and publish works into Chinese. Shan was acutely aware of the crucial role of education in strengthening a country. In 1902, she translated educator Shimoda Utako's *Domestic Science* for her female Chinese audience. She was known as a poet and for her work in classical Japanese literature, and was the first in Japan to create Domestic Science as a discipline. In 1893, the Meiji government sent her to observe the state of women's education in Europe for two years. In 1899, driven by a desire to educate not only upper class women, but women of all classes, Shimoda founded Jissen Women's University in 1899. Shimoda was also an advocate for supporting Chinese exchange students, which began in 1901 at Jissen Women's and led to the creation of the School for Chinese Students in 1905. The feminist and revolutionary martyr Qiu Jin, who was executed for her assassination attempt on Qing officials, had graduated from Jissen.

In 1903, Shan spent over two months with her husband Qian Xun on an extensive trip that began in Japan and continued on through China, Korea, and Russia. She took this opportunity to publish the first travelogue by a Chinese woman.<sup>40</sup> Her purpose was to provide Chinese women with insight into what she learnt from her travels around the world. Her travelogue was not a simple reiteration of what she had experienced, as she consciously observed, compared, and analysed women's status in China against

<sup>38</sup>Rikuo Takagi, *Jiyū kattatsu! Shinkoku makki no gaikōka Senjun to Waseda*, available at <https://yab.yomiuri.co.jp/adv/wol/culture/100714.html>, [accessed 23 October 2023].

<sup>39</sup>Masako Inamori, *Kaisen zenyā no Nitchū gakujutsu kōryū: Minkoku Pekin no daigakujin to Nihonjin ryūgakusei* (Fukuoka-shi: Kyūshū Daigaku Shuppankai, 2021), p. 292.

<sup>40</sup>Changliang Sun, 'The acceptance of Japanese female education in late Qing China: Focusing on Shan Shili, Yan Xiu, and Zhang Jian's Japan inspection', *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 46, 2018, p. 268.

that in other countries. Shan's aim was to awaken China to the need for women's education.<sup>41</sup>

### Qian Daosun as a librarian

Wartime librarians have been lauded as national heroes for saving China's national treasures in libraries. Zheng Zhenduo<sup>42</sup> acquired and shipped rare books and manuscripts from war-ravaged Shanghai to Hong Kong, through the Rare Book Preservation Society. The head librarian of Zhejiang University Library, Chen Xunci,<sup>43</sup> saved the national treasure *Siku Quanshu* (an encyclopedia of classical Chinese literature) by moving it to the interior.

Qian Daosun contributed to the area of librarianship in three major ways. He was one of the pioneers in the modernization of Chinese libraries; during the war he preserved and salvaged Chinese collections, including rare materials in university libraries; and he created a Japanese-language private library that he envisioned for use by the general public. Despite these accomplishments, due to his *hanjian* label, very little of the above has been acknowledged or remembered. Qian Daosun's name does not appear in the history of the National Library of China, Tsinghua University Library, or Beijing University Library.<sup>44</sup>

Qing-era reformers Liang Qichao (1873–1929) and Kang Youwei (1858–1927) were instrumental in advocating for the need for modern libraries during the late Qing through study groups, newspapers, and gaining support from the Qing government.<sup>45</sup> In 1897, Kang Youwei published a 15-volume catalogue of approximately 7,000 Japanese-language books, followed by Liang Qichao who also produced similar catalogues, utilizing the newly adopted Western library cataloguing system.<sup>46</sup> In 1905, Hunan province was seeking ways to develop its newly established modern library, and sent Huang Siai on a mission to observe Japanese libraries. Huang's report laid out all aspects of their library operations, including library policies, organizational structures, cataloguing standards, finance and employment, storage, customer service, library usage, and purchases.<sup>47</sup>

What is now called the National Library of China dates back to the Jingshi Metropolitan Library that was built in 1909, in large part due to Liang's advocacy for modern libraries, which he argued was urgently necessary for scholars to gain access to knowledge in order to build a new China. From 1914, Qian worked for the Metropolitan

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>42</sup>Wenjv Chen, 'Zheng Zhenduo made JNU prestigious university', Jinan University, available at <https://english.jnu.edu.cn/2019/0709/c2025a361723/page.htm>, [accessed 23 October 2023].

<sup>43</sup>Janie Chang, 'The risky journey that saved one of China's greatest library treasures', *Time*, available at <https://time.com/5852229/saving-chinese-encyclopedia/>, [accessed 23 October 2023].

<sup>44</sup>'The NLC's long history', National Library of China, available at [http://www.nlc.cn/newen/newVisitUs/nlcIntroduction/index\\_1.htm](http://www.nlc.cn/newen/newVisitUs/nlcIntroduction/index_1.htm), [accessed 23 October 2023].

<sup>45</sup>Jing Liao, 'The genesis of the modern academic library in China: Western influences and the Chinese response', *Libraries and Culture*, vol. 39, no. 2, Spring 2004, p. 168.

<sup>46</sup>Baoping Wang, 'Chūgoku ni okeru nihon kankei tosho ni tsuite', *Survey on Japanese Documents and Cultural Properties Found in China*, vol. 17, 2002, p. 295.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

Library, and served as the director for the Jingshi library branch.<sup>48</sup> Despite Jingshi being a public library, Qian recalls that it had only 92 patrons in a month at most.<sup>49</sup> This was because it was housed in the remote location of Temple Guanghua, and its emphasis was on preservation rather than public access and attracting readers.<sup>50</sup> With no formal training in Library Sciences at the time of his appointment, Qian spent his evenings learning about library operations through books he had purchased.<sup>51</sup> While he was branch manager of Jingshi, he created regulations for the library. It is clear from the report conducted by the Education Department in 1916, based on 23 libraries across China, that at this time the acquisition of Japanese-language books over Western-language books was a priority.<sup>52</sup>

In the 1920s the United States began to play a more prominent role in the establishment of modern libraries in China, through library school programmes to train future professional librarians.<sup>53</sup> This then led to the New Library movement, which promoted the transition of libraries that were traditionally regarded as book repositories to modern libraries that served as educational and research institutions for the public. Qian was one of the first members of the Beijing Library Association formed in 1924 and the Chinese Library Association established in 1925. He also served as the director of the National Beijing Fine Arts Academy Library in the 1920s. The Nationalist government (1928–1937) further solidified modern librarianship and libraries in China.

In 1931, Qian was appointed as Beijing University Library's interim director. When the Beijing Modern Science Library opened its doors in 1936, he participated as a Japanese-language instructor and an adviser.<sup>54</sup> Qian had a deep appreciation and understanding of librarianship and the importance of books. In 1936, Qian became the chief librarian at Tsinghua University Library; at the opening ceremony of the new semester when Qian took up his position, he gave a speech to the student body emphasizing the importance of protecting and cherishing the books that they borrowed: '...loving the books of our school means loving your alma mater and your classmates; loving your alma mater and your classmates means loving your motherland and your compatriots...'.<sup>55</sup> Qian set aside office hours during the week when library users could come to talk to him directly; he established a cloakroom where students were expected to take off their hats and cloaks prior to entering the library or reading room; he changed the library hours to better suit the students' timetables; and he asked professors to provide their input on books that would be useful for their research.<sup>56</sup> These changes that Qian implemented at Tsinghua Library in the 1930s demonstrate his professionalism and his approach to librarianship.

<sup>48</sup>Sū, *Nitchū sensō ki no Pekin ni okeru nitchū bunka kōshō*, p. 26.

<sup>49</sup>Inamori, *Kaisen zenya no Nitchū gakujutsu kōryū*, p. 204.

<sup>50</sup>Jinhong Tang, 'Educational reform and the emergence of modern libraries in China with special reference to the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1909–1937', PhD thesis, University of Western Sydney, 2004, p. 109.

<sup>51</sup>Inamori, *Kaisen zenya no Nitchū gakujutsu kōryū*, p. 203.

<sup>52</sup>Wang, 'Chūgoku ni okeru nihon kankei tosho ni tsuite', p. 297.

<sup>53</sup>Sharon Chien Lin, 'Historical development of library education in China', *The Journal of Library History*, vol. 20, no. 4, Fall 1985, p. 370.

<sup>54</sup>Sū, *Nitchū sensō ki no Pekin ni okeru nitchū bunka kōshō*, p. 81.

<sup>55</sup>Wei, 'Tushuguan deinglei guanzhang Qian Daosun', pp. 92–99.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

Qian's efforts to collect, preserve, and make publicly accessible library collections was directed towards both Chinese and Japanese books. Already by 1924, Qian had expressed his wish to build a Japanese library in a letter addressed to the owner of Iwanami Shoten Publishers, Iwanami Shigeo, soliciting donations.<sup>57</sup> In 1930, he began to build a Japanese-language library named Senju in his own home, in the hopes of developing it into a large-scale library that would eventually be fully accessible to the general public. An examination of the mission and the founding principles (the first four in particular) of this personal library reveals that Qian saw an urgency in collecting Japanese-language materials. In fact, one of the main reasons Qian stayed in Beijing under the Japanese occupation was because of his large personal Japanese-language collection. The founding principles state:

1. This collection will have as its core works by Japanese authors. It will also have some by authors from other countries related to Oriental studies.
2. This collection will be for the promotion of academic research for Chinese and Japanese academics and not for other purposes.
3. This collection will introduce and publish academic journals and books, and conduct businesses that would [be] beneficial to academic studies.
4. This collection, to the best of our abilities and as requested, will seek to bring Japanese and Chinese academics in communication with each other.
5. This connection will be open to the general public.
6. This collection will be located at Qian's home for the moment. It will be relocated to an appropriate place once we determine how it can be maintained.<sup>58</sup>

Qian's reasons and rationale for setting up a private Japanese collection is laid out in a letter from one of Qian's supporters, Matsumura Tarō, to publisher Iwanami Shigeo written in 1930. Matsumura explained that Qian felt a sense of urgency about the need for a Japanese-language library. He had been collecting Chinese works and purchasing Japanese books under Japan's Cultural Policy, but he was severely disappointed when the policy was limited to the purchase of Chinese books only. In addition, the policy dictated that holdings would not be open to the general public, and the collection would solely serve researchers.<sup>59</sup> Even the National Beijing University, which held the largest collection of Japanese books, had only 2,000 or so volumes of mostly outdated works with very few current offerings, and its Library suffered from a lack of funding. This is why every time a prominent Japanese came to visit, Qian advocated for the urgent need to create a Japanese-language collection.

One of the regular donors to Qian's Senju Japanese collection was historian and Sinologist Naitō Konan.<sup>60</sup> In one of Qian's letters to Naitō, he explains his hope that

<sup>57</sup>Inamori, *Kaisen zenya no Nitchū gakujutsu kōryū*, p. 255.

<sup>58</sup>Inamori, *Kaisen zenya no Nitchū gakujutsu kōryū*, pp. 265–265.

<sup>59</sup>Masako Inamori, 'Quanshou Easter Language Archive: Private archive of Japanese books founded by Qian Daosun', *Studies in Chinese Literature*, vol. 46, 2017, p. 159, available at [https://catalog.lib.kyushu-u.ac.jp/opac\\_detail\\_md/?lang=1&amode=MD100000&bibid=1906431](https://catalog.lib.kyushu-u.ac.jp/opac_detail_md/?lang=1&amode=MD100000&bibid=1906431), [accessed 23 October 2021].

<sup>60</sup>Wanyue Qian, 'The interactions between Naito Konan and the Chinese book industry during the period of the Republic of China: Focused on letters in "Naito Collection"', *Library Journal*, vol. 41, no. 5, 2022, pp. 119–127.

the library would commemorate Qian's father and his life's work. Qian alludes to the fact that Qian Xun was the first to propose sending Chinese exchange students to Japan, and successfully escorted and supervised those students. He also refers to his father's efforts to collect works by Japanese Sinologists (like Naitō Konan) to serve his Chinese exchange students' needs.<sup>61</sup> The Senju Library collected books from a wide range of subject areas, including history, philosophy, medicine, literature, economics, art, and religion, covering both Japan and China and spanning the ancient to modern periods.<sup>62</sup>

The Senju Library closed down with the onset of the Mukden Incident, and thus operated for approximately 20 months. However, even in its first year, the collection had 3,520 books and 830 magazines as a result of what Qian was able to gather from over 400 donors, which surpassed Beijing University Library's Japanese collection of 2,000 books.<sup>63</sup> Wen Jieruo, who edited and translated Japanese literature alongside Qian for the People's Literature Publishing House after the war, recalls how the Japanese books that Qian had collected for his private library, which filled seven rooms, were all confiscated by the Kuomintang upon his arrest.<sup>64</sup> In the 1950s, Qian attempted to recover them from the Beijing Library (National Library of China) and Science Library (National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences) to no avail. Hence, researchers have had to rely on correspondence and records retrieved from the Oriental Library in Japan to trace the history of Qian's Senju Japanese Library.

When Qian became the chief librarian at Tsinghua University Library in 1936 he was also appointed as chair of the library committee and a member of the special book purchase committee. Qian helped implement library management reforms and contributed to the preservation of library books.<sup>65</sup> Following the Marco Polo Incident in 1937, many professors left Beijing and set up universities in the south, but Qian chose to stay and became part of the National Tsinghua University Custody Committee. In August 1937, Qian was designated the 'keeper' of the library in the Tsinghua University Preservation Committee. From 1939 on, Zhou Zuoren was officially head of Beijing University Library, but the bulk of the core work was carried out by Qian. He was in charge of sorting, preserving, and maintaining the library's collections, including the rare book collection Mushi Xuan<sup>66</sup> and books from the Tsinghua Library. Qian also presided over sorting the original Beijing University Publishing Group books as well as book collections of the College of Science students.<sup>67</sup> The third and fourth floors of the library were used exclusively to store Tsinghua Library's books, and two library staff members were chosen to manage the storage and use of this collection. Qian ensured that the collections from Tsinghua Library remained separate from the Beijing University Library's collection, and he personally directed the staff at the Provisional Beijing University Library to carefully sort out the collections of Tsinghua Library and

<sup>61</sup>Inamori, *Kaisen zenya no Nitchū gakujuitsu kōryū*, p. 283.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 304–318.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>64</sup>Jieruo Wen, 'Wo suo zhidao de Qian Daosun', *Doushu*, 1991.

<sup>65</sup>Wei, 'Tushuguan de linglei guanzhang Qian Daosun', pp. 92–99.

<sup>66</sup>Mushi Xuan was a collection of ancient books established by Chinese bibliophile, Li Shengduo.

<sup>67</sup>Wei, 'Tushuguan de linglei guanzhang Qian Daosun'.

to prepare Chinese and Western catalogues.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, Qian required that users outside of Tsinghua submit an official letter to request their books prior to borrowing, and that organizations submit an official letter of introduction to access Tsinghua's books.<sup>69</sup>

These measures ensured that Tsinghua Library's books would be carefully preserved. The library had suffered severe losses during the war, having been taken over during the occupation as the headquarters of the Japanese military hospital. What has been emphasized in the memorialization of Tsinghua University Library's history is the enormous loss of books during the war. This narrative reinforces Chinese victimhood, suffering, and loss in the hands of Japanese imperialists (the Other). The library websites states that the collection lost over 175,000 books, and that only 410,000 remained at the end of the war.<sup>70</sup> What is not acknowledged is Qian's efforts to save the library's collection. When it came to the rebuilding Tsinghua University Library after the war, the core collection came from what Qian had preserved.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, under Qian's protection, Beijing University Library's collection remained fully intact, with no volume missing from looting or damage during the war.<sup>72</sup> However, acknowledging Qian's contributions would mean having to admit that a *hanjian* may not have been as treacherous as has been made out and in fact may have played a role in saving national treasures. This jeopardizes the polarization that fuels and maintains Chinese nationalism.

In 1938, Qian became the Japanese-language instructor at Xinmin Academy, established by the People's Renovation Society (Xinminhui) under the Provisional Government. The Xinminhui promoted Sino-Japanese cooperation to build a new liberated Asia, and used its educational institutions such as the Xinmin Academy to educate future Chinese leaders in the spirit of rejuvenation.<sup>73</sup> During the postwar trials of *hanjian*, membership of the Society warranted a charge by default. By 1940, Qian had become Beijing University Library's chief librarian along with Zhou Zuoren. This was the same year in which the Muxi Xuan collection was handed over the Beijing University Library under Qian's care.

The Muxi Xuan is considered one of the most rare and valuable collections at Beijing University Library today. However, there is no official acknowledgement of Qian's role in saving the collection, and there is hardly any mention of the period 1937–1945 except as a time of disruption to the library's development.<sup>74</sup> What is celebrated instead is the role that Li Dazhao played between 1918 to 1922 as the chief librarian, detailing how Li established the first set of regulations for library operations, and reorganized the structure to adapt to the ways of a modern library.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Liu and Yang, 'Briefing on Qian Daosun's career in library', pp. 116–120.

<sup>69</sup>Wei, 'Tushuguan de linglei guanzhang Qian Daosun', pp. 92–99.

<sup>70</sup>'History', Tsinghua University Library, available at [https://lib.tsinghua.edu.cn/en/About\\_the\\_Library/History.htm](https://lib.tsinghua.edu.cn/en/About_the_Library/History.htm), [accessed 23 October 2023].

<sup>71</sup>Wei, 'Tushuguan de linglei guanzhang Qian Daosun', pp. 92–99.

<sup>72</sup>Sū, *Nitchū sensō ki no Pekin ni okeru nitchū bunka kōshō*, p. 200.

<sup>73</sup>Akira Iriye, 'Toward a new cultural order: The Hsin-Min Hui', in *The Chinese and Japanese: Essays in political and cultural interactions*, (ed.) Akira Iriye (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 254–274.

<sup>74</sup>'Introduction', Beijing University Library, available at <https://www.lib.pku.edu.cn/portal/en/bggk/bgjs/lishiyange>, [accessed 23 October 2023].

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*

### Qian Daosun as a translator

Immersed in Japanese language and culture from a young age, Qian Daosun became an exceptional translator, known particularly for his translations of Japanese classical literature. Qian began publishing translations in the fields of medicine, literature, and art. While he worked for the Education Department between 1912 and 1927, he translated Western works such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* into Chinese. In 1927, while teaching at Tsinghua University, he started to translate works related to his role as a language teacher, gradually leaning more towards History and Archaeology. From 1937, he shifted his focus to translating Japanese classical literature such as the *Tale of Genji* and *Manyō-shū* (classical poetry).

Translation services played a major role in diffusing new knowledge in Chinese, which became vital to strengthen the nation and save China from Western and Japanese imperialism. The majority of Marxist literature poured into Chinese society through Japanese translations. Chinese students studying in Japan during the Meiji period set up translation services within their residences, and made a living from their translation work. Many May Fourth writers who returned from Japan translated literary works by Japanese writers in the 1920s and 1930s. Between 1919 and 1945, Chinese periodicals carried translations of over 300 Japanese literary works, and between 1919 and 1937, more than 120 Japanese literature titles were translated. Among these works were modern Japanese drama, poetry, literary criticism, short stories, and translated novels.<sup>76</sup>

In contrast to May Fourth writers such as Yu Dafu, Lu Xun, and Tian Han, who are most highly regarded for translating Japanese works that led to the acquisition of Western knowledge, including socialist ideas, Qian Daosun's interests lay in the realm of classical Japanese literature, which he believed was valuable as an area of study in and of itself. Qian faced significantly more difficulty in promoting Japanese classical literature, as it was not considered worthy of serious examination in contrast to Japanese modern literature or Japanese works that introduced modern knowledge. During his years as a Japanese-language instructor (1927–1937), Qian treated the study of the Japanese language, not simply as learning a foreign language, but as an academic subject worthy of pursuit.<sup>77</sup> Qian gave a talk on the value of learning about Japan to Tsinghua University students who were going on a Japan tour. Qian noted how Chinese are usually dismissive of Japanese history, culture, and languages because they wrongly assume that Japan had only imitated China or the West. He asserted that Japan had developed a unique culture.<sup>78</sup>

With Tsinghua University effectively no longer functioning under the Japanese occupation of Beijing in 1937, Qian lost his teaching job and decided to stay in Beijing. He made a living out of translating Japanese essays, short stories, and poems for numerous magazines published through the Beijing Modern Science Library, established in 1936 under Japan's cultural policy in China and run by chief librarian

<sup>76</sup>Naoko Kato, *Kaleidoscope: The Uchiyama bookstore and its Sino-Japanese visionaries* (La Vergne: Earnshaw Books, 2022), p. 57.

<sup>77</sup>Sū, *Nitchū sensō ki no Pekin ni okeru nitchū bunka kōshō*, p. 83.

<sup>78</sup>Gu Liang, 'Zhou Zuoren he Qian Daosun—Wo suo zhidao de liang ge ren zhi reben de ren', *Yuzhoufeng*, vol. 27, 1935.

Yamamuro Saburō. In particular, the monthly magazine 書滲 *shoshin* was the first to publish Japanese poetry in China, and Qian translated all of the poems. As a matter of fact, Qian obtained funding for his translations primarily from organizations that were created under Japan's China policy.<sup>79</sup> The joint translation efforts of Qian and Yamamuro originated from a mutual passion for Japanese classical literature and an awareness that it had been neglected and underappreciated in China.

Born in 1905, Yamamuro Saburō graduated with a Law degree from Kyūshū Imperial University in 1933 and became a graduate exchange student at Tsinghua University, majoring in Chinese philosophy and classical literature. Yamamuro was initially reluctant to accept the position of chief librarian, and in fact had refused multiple times, but in the end he agreed to take it on as they were unable to find anybody to capably manage this role.<sup>80</sup> Yamamuro was given the task of creating the library a mere six months prior to its opening. As he had little time to spare in selecting each and every title to build up the collection, he asked publisher Iwanami Shigeo to take charge of selecting all the books. Iwanami then asked university professors to assist in this process. This is how Yamamuro managed to build the collection to 21,391 volumes within a year of the founding of the library.<sup>81</sup>

As the name of the library suggests, the initial aim of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Beijing Modern Science Library was to showcase the modernity of Japanese science. The collection was limited to the areas of natural sciences and engineering, but Yamamuro's vision for the library was one that promoted cultural activities with an emphasis on the humanities. Through negotiations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the library not only loaned books, but held exhibitions, offered Japanese-language classes, edited its own textbooks, and issued journals in which it published translations of Japanese literature.<sup>82</sup> This was because Yamamuro had been consistently aware of the severe lack of Chinese translations of Japanese classical literature, in comparison to the abundance of Japanese translations of Chinese classical literature.<sup>83</sup> Qian Daosun felt that Japanese classical literature was of such high cultural standard that it deserved to be studied and researched in its own right. China had imported knowledge from Japan in fields such as law and medicine, but had yet to grasp the true value of what Japanese culture could potentially offer.<sup>84</sup>

Qian's insistence and dedication to bringing Japanese classical literature to Chinese audiences persisted into the postwar years. He began giving lectures on Manyōshū in the early 1930s, and began translating it in 1937, with encouragement from Yamamuro Saburō.<sup>85</sup> Sasaki Nobutsuna, a scholar of Japanese literature and a poet, approached

<sup>79</sup>Sū, *Nitchū sensō ki no Pekin ni okeru nitchū bunka kōshō*, p. 110.

<sup>80</sup>Shuang Shuang Zhou, 'Sino-Japanese literary exchanges in Beijing during the Japanese occupation: Focusing on Beijing Modern Science Library', *The Journal of Next-Generation Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 8, 2012, p. 137.

<sup>81</sup>Sū, *Nitchū sensō ki no Pekin ni okeru nitchū bunka kōshō*, p. 68.

<sup>82</sup>Zhou, 'Sino-Japanese literary exchanges in Beijing during the Japanese occupation', p. 138.

<sup>83</sup>Sū, *Nitchū sensō ki no Pekin ni okeru nitchū bunka kōshō*, p. 89.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>85</sup>Inamori, *Kaisen zenya no Nitchū gakujujutsu kōryū*, p. 248.



Qian in 1940 to make this into a joint Sino-Japanese project.<sup>86</sup> Qian abandoned the project at the end of the war and lost contact with Sasaki until 1955 when they resumed translation. It is important to note that Qian translated *Manyōshū* not only because it is one of the most significant works in classical Japanese literature, but because he saw *Manyōshū* as essential to gaining an understanding of how Chinese philosophy and technologies took form in Japan, as well as to examine pre-Tang era phonology. *Manyōshū* is seen as the equivalent of Chinese classical poetry, *Shijing*.<sup>87</sup>

### Hanjian and May Fourth Sino-Japanese cultural exchange networks

What is the defining factor that differentiates May Fourth national heroes from cultural *hanjian*? Nearly half of those involved in the provisional state's administration during the war who were later labelled *hanjian* were also returned students of Japan who had excellent Japanese-language skills.<sup>88</sup> This included writers and translators such as Zhou Zuoren, Qian Daosun, and Zhang Wojun. It is too simplistic to take a top-down view of events that were dictated by Japanese government-sponsored programmes, and seeing those who worked under them as *hanjian*. This group of people in fact had much in common with May Fourth writers if one focuses on Sino-Japanese cultural exchange. Some May Fourth writers, such as Tao Jingsun (1897–1952), in fact crossed the fine line between a heroic May Fourth writer and *hanjian*. Tao was part of the Creation Society and a member of the League of Left-wing Writers, and was accused of being a *hanjian* because of his participation in the Third Greater East Asia Writers' Conference in 1944, among other organizations that were deemed problematic. Tao moved first to Taiwan and then to Japan after the war to escape condemnation.

The majority of May Fourth writers and those who came to be labelled 'cultural *hanjian*' were returned students of Japan who absorbed from Japan what they deemed necessary to strengthen China. They acquired Japanese-language skills that enabled them to read Japanese and translate the latest works coming out of Japan, including Western works translated into Japanese, Japanese literary works, and Marxist works. May Fourth writers used literature as a tool to awaken the Chinese and save the nation. Therefore, translating Japanese works into Chinese and obtaining knowledge about Japan and the West through Japanese-language books was an extremely important endeavour. For both May Fourth writers and cultural *hanjian*, Japanese-language books, Japanese-language libraries, translation services, and Japanese-language instruction were vital to their operation. They formed friendships and engaged in cultural exchanges with their Japanese counterparts, as they continued to keep abreast of the newest developments through revisiting Japan or connecting with visiting Japanese writers.<sup>89</sup> However, May Fourth writers' connections to Japan and the Japanese are

<sup>86</sup>Yomiuri Shinbun, 'Kanyaku "Manyōshū" e Nitchu yūjō no gassaku: Shin shina e okuru uruwashi bunka no hana', 21 August 1940, in *Kanyaku Manyōshū sen*, (trans.) Qian Daosun, (ed.) Sasaki Nobutsuna (Tokyo: Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, 1959).

<sup>87</sup>Sōsō Sū, 'Kanyaku Manyōshū-sen: Its formation, publication and translation', *Journal of East Asian Cultural Studies*, vol. 4, 2011, pp. 97–115.

<sup>88</sup>Shunchang Lu, 'Kindai chūgokujin nihon ryūgakusei no hannichi to shinnichi ni tsuite', *Shitenmōji University Bulletin*, vol. 51, March 2011, p. 192.

<sup>89</sup>Christopher Keaveney, *Beyond brushtalk: Sino-Japanese literary exchange in the interwar period* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), p. 11.

downplayed in order to portray them as patriotic heroes who were instrumental in resisting Japan. The opposite applies to *hanjian*, whose contributions to China are not acknowledged, while their connections to Japan are emphasized.

If we cast our net wider, we would see the two Sino-Japanese networks operated under one umbrella and are actually interconnected. None of these individuals was able to escape Japanese imperialism. Each one of them worked between the boundaries of the Chinese and Japanese nations, and risked their lives or their jobs doing so. The Shanghai bookstore owner Uchiyama Kanzo is a case in point. May Fourth writers who were returned students in Japan obtained Japanese books from Uchiyama Bookstore, and Uchiyama played the role of intermediary, connecting Sino-Japanese cultural literati. May Fourth writer Lu Xun was only able to sustain his literary activities under the protection of Shanghai's Uchiyama Bookstore. Although he is known as being China's friend, one can also argue that Uchiyama was an imperialist as he contributed to Japan's cultural policy in China. Uchiyama was accused of being a spy by both the Japanese and Chinese authorities. Because of Lu Xun's close ties with Uchiyama, Lu Xun himself was also accused of being a *hanjian* in the 1930s.<sup>90</sup> As Duara has pointed out, even the most stoutly anti-imperialist nationalists did not refrain from imperialistic practices to garner resources.<sup>91</sup> Uchiyama declined the invitation to participate in the Third Greater East Asia Writers' Conference, but he did play a role in organizing the Chinese participants.<sup>92</sup> Due to his prominent position as a Sino-Japanese intermediary, he also took part in the Cultural Affairs Committee on Japanese under the Nationalist government after Japan's defeat.<sup>93</sup> He then contributed to the Chinese Communist Party's Japan policy through his endorsement of the Sino-Japanese Friendship Association. Uchiyama was seen as a useful individual by both Japanese and Chinese from across the political spectrum as a result of his Sino-Japanese intermediary role, even though he collaborated with all sides in the name of Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges.<sup>94</sup>

Qian's Sino-Japanese networks comprised mainly Japanese Sinologists who were exchange students and researchers in Beijing throughout the 1920s and 1930s, such as the Chinese philosophy professor and librarian Yamamuro Saburō and classical Chinese literature professor Mekada Makoto. The latter, for example, stayed at Qian Daosun's house when he was an exchange student. Some of them would go on to be donors for Qian's Japanese library collection in the 1930s. Many of them would become mediators themselves in Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges, having forged personal ties while they were exchange students. Just as books served as the bond that brought together Sino-Japanese literary and cultural networks at Uchiyama Bookstore, parallels can be seen in the Beijing network. Japanese Sinologists who were exchange

<sup>90</sup>Si, 'Lu Xun is willing to be a hanjian', *Society News*, vol. 7, no. 12, 6 May 1934.

<sup>91</sup>Duara, *Sovereignty and authenticity*, p. 33.

<sup>92</sup>Midori Nakamura, 'The relations between Uchiyama Kanzo and the Greater East Asia Writers Conference (大東亜文学者大会: Focusing on his theory of political double standards)', *Bulletin of the Institute for Humanities Research*, vol. 67, 2022, p. 279.

<sup>93</sup>Shili Ding, 'On Yoshie Hotta's experience of employment in China: "Cultural Affairs Committee on Japanese" and Japanese people in Post-war China', *Border Crossings: The Journal of Japanese-Language Literature Studies*, vol. 8 no. 1, 2019, p. 181.

<sup>94</sup>Hirofumi Takatsuna, 'Sengo shanghai ni okeru Uchiyama Kanzo—shinshiryō ni yoru kentō o chūshin ni', *Kenkyū Kiyō*, vol. 35, March 2022, p. 44.

students and researchers flocked to Beijing to acquire Chinese books at second-hand bookstores such as Laixunge and Wenkuitang. The bookstore owners became close friends with the Japanese researchers, and their businesses were largely supported by them as they were keen to purchase academic work coming out of the Qing and that were not confined to ancient and rare Chinese books that the Chinese were mostly interested in.<sup>95</sup> Yoshikawa Kōjirō, for example, who was in Beijing from 1928 to 1931, sent back 300 small packages of Chinese books upon his return to Japan. The second-hand bookstores not only bought and sold books, but also assisted in finding particular editions of books for the researchers, utilizing their own networks. They also created space for cultural salons at the back of the bookstores, and invited the exchange students to the Beijing Opera and out for meals.<sup>96</sup>

Qian Daosun had also established a life-long friendship with the publisher Iwanami Shigeo, who would go on to become a family friend, through the purchasing of books (for teaching art, journals, literary works, etc.) from the 1920s. Qian's son and daughters went to Japan and stayed at Iwanami's house, and his son eventually married Iwanami's wife's niece. Iwanami was also a very close friend of Uchiyama's. According to Uchiyama's niece, Uchiyama Kanzō and Iwanami Shigeo were like brothers. Iwanami told Uchiyama, who was working towards Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges in Shanghai amid the war, that he would wholeheartedly support all of his efforts in China, and they vowed to do this together.<sup>97</sup> In March 1945, Uchiyama and Iwanami decided to jointly create a publishing house to publish Japanese and Chinese books in China.<sup>98</sup> The idea was to contribute to Sino-Japanese cultural exchange through a joint publishing venture, but the plan fell apart due to the Japanese government's persecution of Iwanami.<sup>99</sup>

In the late 1920s, Uchiyama hid Guo Moruo while he was persecuted by the Kuomintang, and made arrangements for his exile in Japan during the 1930s. After Guo fled Japan at the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Iwanami financially assisted Guo's children who had been left in Japan so that they could finish their university studies. Iwanami also financially assisted a Chinese student studying in Japan, Hu Chao Sheng, from First High School to his graduation from Kyōto University. This was why Iwanami helped Uchiyama's nephews, who were also keepers of the Uchiyama Bookstore in Shanghai, upon their return after Japan's defeat. As they struggled to make a living in a Japan that had been devastated by the war, Uchiyama's nephews relied on Iwanami to supply them with books to sell.<sup>100</sup> There were very few books available to sell at bookstores at this time, and Iwanami books were particularly sought after and scarcely available. Uchiyama's nephews travelled by train from Okayama prefecture where they were based all the way to Tokyo to obtain books. In the postwar era,

<sup>95</sup>Bing Sang, 'Jindai ribenliuhua xuesheng', *Jindai shi yanjiu*, vol. 3, 1999.

<sup>96</sup>Masako Inamori, '1930 nen zengo no Nitchū kōryū: Minkoku Pekin no daigakujin to Nihonjin ryūgakusei', *Gakujutsu no Dōkō*, August 2022, p. 16.

<sup>97</sup>Sū, *Nitchū sensō ki no Pekin ni okeru nitchū bunka kōshō*, p. 162.

<sup>98</sup>Uchiyama Kanzō kenkyūkai, 'Uchiyama Kanzō no zakki 1944 nen 8 gatsu 18 nichi kara 46 nen 10 gatsu 5 ka', *Jinbungaku kenkyūjōhō*, vol. 65, 2021, p. 30.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>100</sup>Uchiyama Masao, Uchiyama Yoshie, Kojima Noboru and Kojima Shizuko, *Rojin to Shanhai Uchiyama Shoten no omoide* (Kanazawa: Izumi Hyonosuke, 1996), p. 53.

Iwanami and Uchiyama both contributed to Japan's peace movement by promoting Sino-Japanese friendship and atoning for Japan's wartime past.

When we place these May Fourth writers and cultural *hanjian* against the backdrop of Japan's growing incursion and China's war against Japan, inherently conflicting elements emerge. On the one hand, for China's survival it was necessary to learn and absorb knowledge of Japan. This meant engaging in Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges in wartime China. However, Sino-Japanese cultural exchange was one of the main activities listed under Japan's cultural policy towards China, which also included promoting/funding Japanese exchange students to China and Chinese exchange students to Japan, and establishing cultural/educational institutions and libraries promoting Asian Studies in Japan/China. Where does one draw the line between traitors and patriots when there is a fine line between cultural exchange and cultural invasion? Is it as simple as labelling those who stayed in wartime occupied China under Japan-led cultural policies (cultural invasion) as *hanjian*? Is Sino-Japanese cultural exchange during wartime deemed permissible if these cultural literati ended up being founders of the Communist Party of China?

The case of Qian Daosun embodied this dilemma. Qian participated in the Greater East Asia Writers' Conference in 1942 (First Conference) and in 1944 (Third Conference). Beyond participation, however, Qian's attitudes and specific actions at the first Greater East Asia Writers' Conference require further examination. On the opening day, Qian wore traditional Chinese attire while everybody else wore either Japanese or Western clothing. In his speech, Qian first expressed how inadequate he felt to be part of this meeting, as he did not feel qualified as a literary person. He then cited a popular Chinese saying: 'within the four seas, all men are brothers' to express his view that in this world all were equal. Qian also published an article the day before in anticipation of the conference, to 'seek beauty in each other', referring to China and Japan.<sup>101</sup>

In a newspaper article published in 1943 in Manchuria, Qian reflected upon the Greater East Asia Writers' Conference:

Japan and China's history of cultural exchange is an extremely long and diverse one. Apart from the brief period in which the two countries were at war, we can say that our countries never ceased to engage in cultural exchanges, and our literary scholars talked about their collaborative ideals, just as they are doing today.<sup>102</sup>

Qian then goes on to talk about the 'Patriotic One Thousand Poems'. He first laments that the Meiji-era *shishi* (men of high purpose) are remote from him, but that he cannot help but admire their determination to stand up and fight against foreign intervention. He further states that *shishi* remind him of Lin Zexu's firm stance against British

<sup>101</sup>Shuang Shuang Zhou, 'The Beijing intellectuals during the Japanese occupation: Focusing on Qian Daosun and Zhou Zuoren', *Kindai sekai no gensetsu to ishō: Ekkyōteki bunka kōshōgaku no shiten kara*, 2012, p. 333.

<sup>102</sup>Manshū nichinichi shinbun, 'Chūgoku no eichi ni musubu: Aikoku hyakunin issu Manyōshū ni idomu Sen Sosen shi', 4 January 1943. Republished in *Nihon gakuhei shinbun*, special issue 'Daitōa Bungakusha Taikai' [Great Asian Literary Conference], 1986; originally published on 15 November 1942.

opium, an episode that brings tears to Chinese eyes. Qian then goes on to say that Lin Zexu would be satisfied to see the newly liberated China (Great Asia against the West). In a conversation recorded in Fujisawa Chikao's book in 1938, Qian stated that at that time Japan and China were like the two crickets that are fighting and being observed by the outsider (the West). He said that if Japan and China did not collectively fight against the one that was watching over them, there would be no way that Sino-Japanese cooperation would be possible. Qian further explained that when his father was in Japan 20 to 30 years previously, he did not speak Japanese but communicated with Japanese scholars using Chinese characters.<sup>103</sup> From Qian's writings, it is clear that he considered Western encroachment on China as separate from tensions with the Japanese. He appears to see Sino-Japanese cooperation as a necessary means to fight against the West. His point about his father emphasizes the fact that Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges were based on their common written language, and that these exchanges were ongoing.

For the Third Conference, Qian was in charge of drafting the conference's closing remarks. However, amendments were made because the proposed original was deemed inadequate based on the fact that there was no mention of the purpose of the war in Greater Asia.<sup>104</sup> According to Mekada Makoto, a Chinese literature professor who stayed with Qian Daosun for a year in 1933, Qian received daily threats from those who saw him as a traitor for working with the Japanese. Mekada, in sympathy with Qian, blurted out how anti-Japanese movements in China had gone too far. In response, Qian exclaimed with exasperation, 'even you, who I thought truly understood how we feel as Chinese, say these things!' and wept.<sup>105</sup>

These episodes show that Qian was in fact not simply attempting to reiterate or abide by what the Japanese organizers of the Greater East Asia Writers' Conference were seeking from Chinese contributors. Qian asserted that there was equality between Japanese and Chinese, speaking against the notion that Japan was the leading nation in East Asia, emphasized through his choice to wear traditional Chinese attire. He also showed great awareness and agonised about his inherently conflicting position as a Chinese Japanologist, working under Japanese occupation.

## Conclusion

Qian Daosun possessed unsurpassable skills in Japanese language and translation, and had in-depth appreciation and knowledge of Japanese literature and culture. Had he been born at a time when Japan and China were not at war, he might have been remembered as a leading figure for promoting Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges. However, Qian's life continues to be assessed according to the criteria used in the *hanjian* trials from the 1940s that has become the all-encompassing dominant narrative. This *hanjian* label is extremely limiting (yet so powerful) as it focuses merely on one aspect of his

<sup>103</sup>Fujisawa Chikao, *Tairiku keiron no shidō genri; tsuketari Sekai no dōkō to kōkoku Nihon* (Tokyo: Daiichi shuppansha, 1938).

<sup>104</sup>Zhou, 'The Beijing intellectuals during the Japanese occupation', p. 334.

<sup>105</sup>Shuang Shuang Zhou, 'The image of Qian Daosun in Beijing in 1930s: Through the eyes of Japanese overseas students', *Journal of East Asian Cultural Interaction Studies*, vol. 5, 2012, p. 96.

life, and fails to account for numerous other facets which I have explained in this article, such as Qian's commitment to creating a personal Japanese-language collection during the war. More importantly, the 'patriots versus traitors' dichotomy overshadowed some larger strands of East Asian history that foregrounded collaborationism during wartime.

Once we focus our attention on one person's life history that goes beyond the narrow window of the wartime period, we can better understand the motives and the decisions that they made when they 'collaborated' with the Japanese, and their complex legacies in history. This then allows room to explore the possibility that cultural *hanjian* might also have possessed a sense of patriotism and acted out of selflessness to save the nation under threat. In Qian's case for example, his life's work was in translation and librarianship, across prewar, wartime, and postwar divisions, and was key to understanding the motivation behind his 'collaboration'. This also leads us to the possibility of removing the imposed division between those who stayed in Beijing (*hanjian*) and those who moved south or May Fourth writers (patriots), and seeing their commonalities. Qian Daosun's Sino-Japanese networks illustrate that personal relationships often developed into life-long friendships that not only transcended national boundaries, but also connected patriotic Chinese and *hanjian*. Only when we begin to see the complexity of each individual's dilemmas and their intertwining networks can we begin to dismantle the divisions and labelling that have severely constrained our understanding of cultural *hanjian*. Furthermore, through unpacking the irreconcilable contradiction that exists between the act of betrayal through association with Japan versus acknowledgment of the contribution to saving Chinese books, can we come to realize that these two elements are in fact interconnected and cannot be separated based on arbitrary nation-centred labels.

**Acknowledgements.** I thank the two anonymous reviewers and the editors at *Modern Asian Studies* for providing me with extremely helpful comments, and to Yun Xia for organizing this Forum. I am particularly grateful to Jonathan Henshaw and Yun Xia who read my draft and gave me valuable feedback and suggestions. My special gratitude to Crystal Yin for helping me with translations of Qian Daosun's sources.

**Competing interests.** The author declares none.