

# Japanese Media and China-Japan Relations: From the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations to the Second Abe Regime

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**Abstract:** *Recent surveys have shown that over 90% of Japanese have a negative view of China and the Chinese people. This tendency appears to have become more pronounced since the beginning of Abe Shinzō's second term as prime minister in December 2012. It also coincides with greater and greater numbers of Chinese visiting Japan as tourists and consumers. This paper investigates portrayals of the Chinese people in Japanese media to identify positive and negative representations and to see if these correlate with the results of surveys of attitudes among the general population.*

**Keywords:** *China-Japan relations, Abe Shinzō, media, public polls, Chinese tourists*

## Introduction

On December 26, 2012, Abe Shinzō, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), became the Prime Minister of Japan for a second time. With Abe's victory, the LDP returned to power after three years in opposition. In comparison with his first premiership in 2006, Abe outlined a more aggressive agenda, exemplified by his implementation of new economic policies called "Abenomics" and subsequent proposals such as "Constitution Revision" and the "Empowerment of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF)." Abe's ability to act more decisively during his second term

as prime minister was probably due to the fact that support for the opposition tanked so dramatically after the Fukushima earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power meltdown disasters, allowing him to push for a harder conservative agenda without fear of the opposition. A relaxation of visa requirements for Chinese tourists<sup>1</sup> adopted under his leadership may be seen as one significant policy for improving Japan's domestic economy. According to surveys conducted by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), the number of Chinese traveling to Japan in 2015 (5 million) surpassed the number of visitors from South Korea (4 million) for the first time, ranking them first among all foreigner visitors. The number of Chinese visitors in 2020 was 10.69 million, surpassing those from Taiwan (6.95 million) and South Korea (4.88 million), thus ranking China first among all countries and regions for six consecutive years.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, despite an increase in the number of Chinese tourists visiting Japan, Sino-Japanese relations have shown little sign of improvement, and in fact tended toward decline. As reported by the non-profit Japanese organization Genron NPO<sup>3</sup> in September 2016, more than 90% (91.6%) of Japanese had unfavorable impressions of China.<sup>4</sup> According to polls conducted by this organization between 2013 and 2016, only 1.3% to 2.4% of Japanese and 5.9% to 15% of Chinese considered current China-Japan relations to be good or relatively good.<sup>5</sup> Negative views of the Chinese by Japanese were reported to be predominant (over 80% between 2012 and 2017); and the

gap between the number of those having “positive” and “negative” views increasingly widened from 2012 onwards.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, alongside a steep rise in Chinese tourism in Japan, economic and trade ties increased rapidly, raising the question of why Japanese negative views of China increased sharply.

According to a 2013 opinion poll conducted by the Genron NPO, 95% of Japanese people relied for their source of information (*jōhōgen*) about China and the Chinese on the Japanese news media, and 79.7% relied on television news in particular. The poll stated that 14.7% of Japanese surveyed reported having visited China, while 20.7% of them reported having Chinese friends.<sup>7</sup> The 2017 opinion poll likewise indicated that the news media in Japan was still the top-ranked source of information in Japan (93.4%), followed by Japanese TV dramas, TV shows, and movies (31.9%). In addition, only 3.5% of Japanese responded that they had had actual conversations with Chinese people, and a mere 1.5% of them had visited China.<sup>8</sup> As these numbers show, impressions of China and Chinese among the Japanese people have been largely based on what they see in the media.

Much research has been conducted in recent years on the second Abe regime and China-Japan relations, on mutual views between the Japanese and Chinese, and on the image of China and the Chinese in the Japanese media, deepening in many ways our understanding of the current political, social, and cultural milieu in Japan and the role of the Japanese government and media in shaping public perceptions. For example, Rose and Sýkora (2016) provide a review of the transition of China-Japan relations from friendship to frostiness during the period from the 1950s to 2016, shedding light on the origins of declining trust between the two countries at both elite and popular levels.<sup>9</sup> In regard to political influences on the Japanese media, Hagström (2012) and Sunakawa (2015) critically evaluate the influence of Abe’s conservative domestic

policies on, respectively, Japan’s media and images of Japan and China in Japanese newspapers having political affiliations.<sup>10 11</sup>

Kirsch (2015) found that the image of China and the Chinese presented in Japanese television dramas was ambivalent yet on the whole positive.<sup>12</sup> I argue that Japanese media portrayal of China has turned generally negative since Abe regained power in 2012.<sup>13</sup> Despite its rising power on the international stage, China is no longer regarded as a role model, unlike the situation depicted by Kirsch in the 1990s; instead, a growing number of negative news reports and depictions of China in Japanese newspapers, movies, and TV programs strengthen the perception of China as a “threat” among the Japanese public.

Moreover, greater volatility can be observed in the portrayal by Japanese newspapers and broadcasters of China in recent years in contrast to earlier studies such as Pharr and Krauss (1996).<sup>14</sup> For instance, descriptions of China in recent news reports in the *Asahi* and *Mainichi*, generally viewed as leading liberal media, exhibit more strongly negative tendencies, particularly in regard to territorial issues such as the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands dispute.<sup>15</sup> As Suzuki (2015) argues, from the perspective of Japan, China has changed from being a “victimized Other” in the post-war period to being a “negative Other” or even a “bullying state” since its rise in recent years, and Japan is becoming excessively deferential to unreasonable demands from China, subject to increasing interference from China in its internal affairs. He further points out that both the left and right in Japan believe that Japan can construct a solid identity of its own only by dealing with China resolutely.<sup>16</sup> The stance of TBS, a Japanese TV network affiliated with *Mainichi*, has also become less clear, a trend that takes its origin in the airing of two TV dramas—*Public Affairs Office in the Sky* (2013) and *The Man with the God Tongue* (2016). The former made an appeal for the public to

support the Self-Defense Force, while the latter was boycotted by many Chinese Internet users for its offensive portrayal of Chinese tourists in Japan.<sup>17</sup>



TBS. *Public Affairs Office in the Sky* (2013).

TBS. *The Man with the God Tongue* (2016).

In this paper we examine reports on and representations of China in the Japanese media. We begin with a close examination of the past fifty years of China-Japan relations, and in particular the period following the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1972, exploring the background of China-Japan relations today with a focus on a comparison of such relations before and after the second Abe regime.

## The past fifty years of China-Japan relations

In September 1972, Japan's then Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei visited China and signed the Japan-China Joint Communique with Zhou Enlai, bringing about a normalization of diplomatic relations. The subsequent signing of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978 marked a further warming in ties between the two countries. In the period between these two events, the Japanese movie *Manhunt* (1976, Satō Junya) became the first foreign film released in China since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. It reportedly attracted a viewership of 800 million on the mainland. In October 1978 Deng Xiaoping made a one-week official visit to Japan, focusing special attention on visits to Japanese high-tech firms. Deng was greatly impressed by the advanced technology of Japan, such as the *shinkansen* (bullet trains), and the two countries subsequently signed an agreement by which Japan promised substantial economic aid (known as Official Development Assistance [ODA]) to China.







*Manhunt* (1976)

*The Go Masters* (1982)

In 1982, in commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the Normalization of Diplomatic Ties between Japan and China, the two countries coproduced *The Go Masters*, again directed by Satō Junya, the director of *Manhunt*. This film depicts a pair of *go* (an Asian board game with similarities to chess) masters from China and Japan who meet again after having lost contact with each other due to the Second Sino-Japanese War. Upon being reunited after many years, they express their regrets over the merciless war and the many innocent people who suffered in it.<sup>18</sup>

On August 15, 1985, the day marking the 40th Anniversary of the End of WWII, a Nanjing Massacre memorial hall was officially inaugurated by the Chinese government. Shortly thereafter, Nakasone Yasuhiro, the Prime Minister of Japan at the time, made an “official” visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, the first Japanese Prime Minister to do so since WWII.<sup>19</sup> As noted in Mullins (2010), the prime minister’s visit to Yasukuni had been a long-term goal of the LDP, which had introduced no less than five times between 1969 and 1974 the *Yasukuni jinja hōan*, a bill to renationalize Yasukuni and provide government support for it. Nakasone’s action was severely criticized by the Chinese government<sup>20</sup> and triggered an anti-Japanese demonstration in Beijing on September 18, 1985 (the 54th Anniversary of the Manchurian Incident) in which 1,000 students participated.

According to official Japanese statistics, however, during the period between the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978 and 1989, 60% to 70% of Japanese responded that they had favorable impressions of China (with the exception of 51.6% in 1989), while the number of those with negative impressions of China never exceeded 30% (with the exception of 43.1% in 1989). The year 1980 marked the highest level of positive impressions toward China in Japan during this period, with 78.6% of Japanese respondents reporting favorable feelings toward China, and only 14.7% unfavorable feelings.<sup>21 22</sup>

### ***1995: a turning point in China-Japan relations***

At the dawn of the 1990s, despite new strains, the political situation had not yet descended into a state of crisis. For example, following the Tiananmen Incident, Japan was the first country to lift international sanctions against China, announcing the restoration of economic

assistance to China in July 1990, this despite continuing territorial disputes and Chinese nuclear tests.

The 1990s may be considered another watershed period in the economic development of China and Japan. Following the bursting of the bubble economy, the political landscape in Japan began to face increasing instability. In August 1993, the LDP lost its legislative majority. As a result, seven opposition parties, including several formed by LDP dissidents, formed a government headed by Hosokawa Morihiro of the Japan New Party (JNP). Hosokawa declared that WWII had been a mistake and an act of aggression by Japan and in a statement issued on August 15, 1993, the 48th Anniversary of the End of the War, offered an apology to war survivors in other countries that had suffered from Japan's aggression. On the 4th of the same month, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Kōno Yōhei issued the Kono Statement, in which he acknowledged and apologized for the fact that during WWII the Japanese military had been "directly or indirectly involved in the establishment and management of comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women (mainly from Korea and China)," and that in many cases these comfort women had been "recruited against their will."<sup>23</sup> Despite the Japanese government taking a friendly approach to China by acknowledging Japan's war responsibility, together with positive concerns shown in the media on issues such as *Chūgoku zanryū koji* (Japanese war orphans left in China),<sup>24</sup> however, Japan was in reality becoming increasingly irritated and threatened by the military expansion of China. Such feelings were, furthermore, exacerbated by the crisis in confidence brought on Japan by the bursting of its economic "bubble" during the 1990s.

Around this time, China began to promote patriotism in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident. In August 1994, for example, the Beijing government launched its "Outline for

Implementing Patriotic Education." This presaged the onset of a new and openly hostile phase in China-Japan relations, coinciding with increasing pressure from right wing elements in Japan to adopt more revisionist history textbooks in Japanese schools.



*Bell of Purity Temple* (1992), a Chinese film



about a Japanese orphan left behind in China after WWII.

*A Son of the Good Earth* (1995), a NHK-CCTV coproduced TV drama commemorating the 70th anniversary of the founding of NHK.

1995 marked the 50th Anniversary of the End of the War and a watershed year in the deterioration of China-Japan relations. According to official statistics in Japan, the number of Japanese who had a positive impression of China was down in that year to 48.8%, dropping below 50% for the first time since the normalization of relations in the 1970s and equal in number to those who had negative feelings toward China.<sup>25</sup> In 1996, the number of Japanese respondents with a negative impression of China reached a record high of 51.3%. Around the same period of time, Japan's economy and public morale were dealt a severe blow by successive occurrences of natural disasters and human-engineered incidents such as the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake and the Tokyo Subway Sarin Attack. In June 1995, the Nikkei Index dropped below 15,000 (14,507.17), a level of only 38% of the high it had reached at the beginning of the Heisei period in 1989 (38,271.04).<sup>26</sup> Apart from these economic challenges and the social implications they had for the livelihood of its population, Japan also felt greatly concerned about China's nuclear testing.<sup>27</sup> On August 15, 1995, then Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi issued the controversial "Murayama Statement," expressing remorse over Japan's past aggression to Asian countries. In a section of the statement following the apology, however, Murayama went on to advocate for "the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons," "the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime," and "actively striving for further global disarmament."<sup>28</sup> In the same month as this statement was published, Japan

for the first time suspended its ODA to China in response to China's nuclear tests. As a result, Japan's grant aid to China dropped to 480 million yen in 1995 from a high of 7.79 billion yen in 1994.<sup>29</sup>

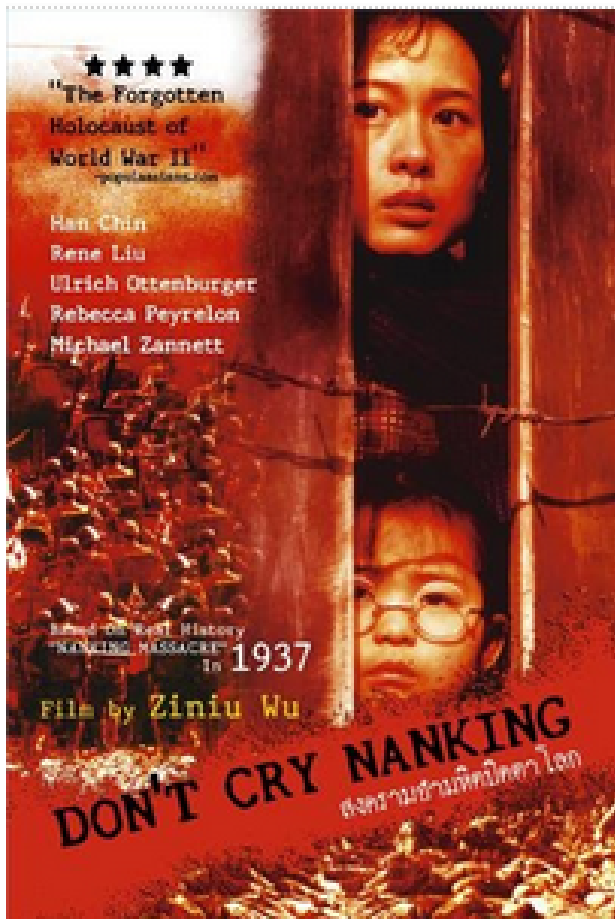
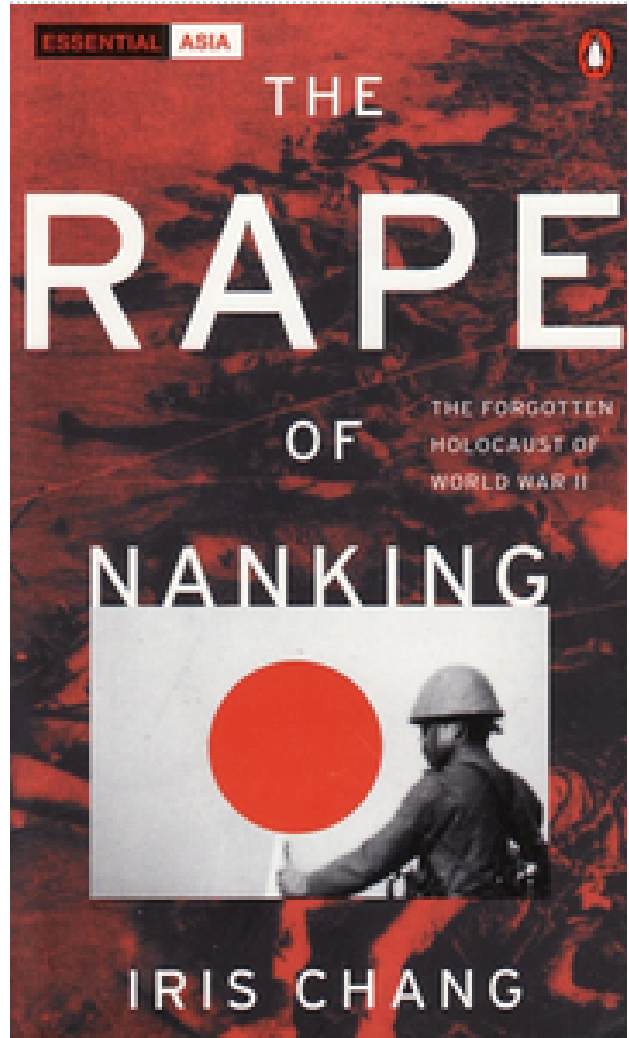
Around this time, Japan also came to figure more centrally as the "enemy" in films produced in China about WWII. In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the defeat of Japan, a series of films were released in China, including *The July Seventh Incident* (1995, Li Qiankuan and Xiao Guiyun), *Black Sun: The Nanking Massacre* (1995, Mou Tun-fei), and *Don't Cry, Nanking* (1995, Wu Ziniu). In the same year that these movies appeared, the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders underwent a large-scale expansion. Also in 1995, the Chinese American author Iris Chang began research on the Nanjing Massacre, which led to the publication of her celebrated book on this historical incident in 1997.





*The July Seventh Incident* (1995)

*Black Sun: The Nanking Massacre* (1995)







*Don't Cry, Nanking* (1995)

*The Rape of Nanking* (1997)

*Pride: The Fateful Moment* (1998)

In response, right-wing activists in Japan released *Pride: The Fateful Moment* (1998, Itō Shunya) as an expression of their discontent with the United States and their scorn for China through a depiction of the Tokyo Trials between 1946 and 1948. In contrast to Chang's book, which was seen by Japanese rightists as "deceptive and misleading,"<sup>30</sup> *Pride* represents the so-called "witnesses" of the Nanjing Massacre (including western missionaries and

medical doctors) as unreliable sources of information. Such a historical perspective is in line with that of Ishihara Shintarō, Governor of Tokyo for four consecutive terms, who claimed in a 1990 *Playboy* interview that the Nanjing Massacre was a fabrication.<sup>31</sup>

In May 1996, then Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō declared Japan to have sovereignty over the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands and Takeshima (Dokdo) Island (also known as the Liancourt Rocks) and subsequently visited the Yasukuni Shrine, becoming the second Japanese Prime Minister following Nakasone to make such a visit. Nevertheless, interest among Japanese in traveling to China had not at that point yet been affected by such controversies between the two countries.

### *China-Japan relations in the new millennium*

Starting in 2000, Chinese citizens were allowed to visit Japan in group tours arranged by Chinese travel agencies, increasing opportunities for direct interaction between the Chinese and Japanese people. Nonetheless, despite the huge economic benefits brought about to Japan by tourism,<sup>32</sup> this change did not positively impact China-Japan relations in any significant way. According to official Japanese statistics, in 2004 the percentage of Japanese survey respondents who had positive impressions of China slumped below 40% for the first time (to 37.6%), while those who had negative impressions reached a record high of 58.2%<sup>33</sup>. The percentage of Japanese respondents holding an unfavorable impression of Chinese in the Genron NPO survey of 2014 reached a historical high of 93%.<sup>34</sup> During the 13 years between the beginning of the 21st century and resumption of the Abe regime, China-Japan relations remained in a fragile state.

Prior to the beginning of Abe's first term as Prime Minister, China-Japan relations had already hit a low point over controversies surrounding Koizumi's Yasukuni visit, the Fusōsha history textbook issue, Japan's quest for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and disputes over the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands and oil and gas fields in the East China Sea (Donghai). Starting from March 4, 2005, anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out in more than 60 cities across China. In October 2006, shortly after his appointment to the prime ministership, Abe made an "ice-breaking journey" to China, followed in April 2007 by a visit to Japan by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao commemorating the 35th Anniversary of the Normalization of China-Japan Relations, a visit that was likewise regarded as heralding a "melting of ice." At the end of Wen's trip, he and Abe released a joint press statement affirming the "mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests" existing between the two countries. After Abe abruptly resigned his position as Prime Minister in September 2007, Fukuda Yasuo was elected President of the LDP and took over as Prime Minister. In May 2008, Chinese President Hu Jintao paid a visit to Japan that was, again, hailed as a "warm spring" visit. Although the issue of sovereign rights over the oil and gas fields in the East China Sea (Donghai) was still unresolved, Fukuda and Hu released a statement in which they agreed to joint development of the disputed area. In the meantime, figures on trade volume between the two countries exhibited a continuously rising pattern, unbroken ever since the signing of the "Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty" in 1978,<sup>35</sup> showing only a limited impact on the economy of the mounting political tensions. Reflecting the reality of a state of "cold politics and hot economics"<sup>36</sup> and a consequent instability in China-Japan relations, high-level officials in the two countries were caught in a pattern of vacillation between an attitude of "freezing" and "ice-breaking."



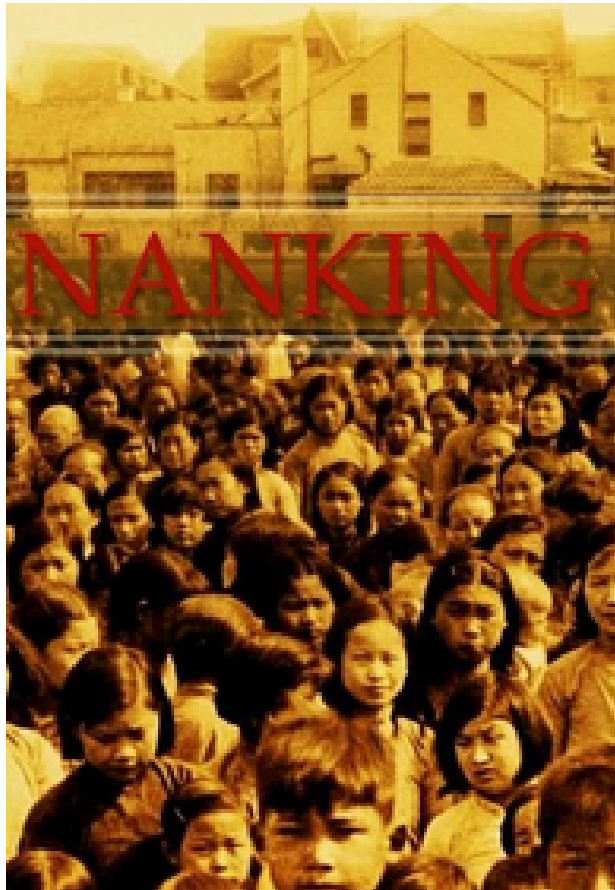
*Phoenix* (2007)

Around this time, as a gesture of "movie diplomacy," China and Japan released the coproduced film *Phoenix* (2007, Jin Chen), starring Nakai Kiichi and Miao Pu as a destitute and struggling couple in China in the 1920s, reaffirming the official discourse that both the Chinese and Japanese peoples had been victims of history. However, such "friendliness" on the surface was incapable of hiding a deep-seated uncertainty, as reflected in a series of films featuring the Nanjing Massacre receiving financial support or cooperation from China released between 2007 and 2011, including *Iris Chang: The Rape of Nanking* (2007, Anne Pick and William Spahic),

*Nanking* (2007, Bill Guttentag and Dan Sturman), *The Children of Huang Shi* (2008, Roger Spottiswoode), *John Rabe* (2009, Florian Gallenberger), *City of Life and Death* (2009, Lu Chuan), and *The Flowers of War* (2011, Zhang Yimou). These movies were motivated by a desire to appeal to international public opinion as a rebuttal to denials of the Nanjing Massacre made by some Japanese politicians.<sup>37</sup> In February 2007, Nakagawa Shōichi, policy chief of the LDP, said China could bring Japan under its control as “another Chinese province” in the future, given China’s increasing military capabilities.<sup>39</sup> Such a “China Threat Theory”<sup>40</sup> helped lay the foundation for Abe’s plan to amend the pacifist constitution, proposed in the year marking the 60th Anniversary of the Constitution of Japan during his first term. Yet, less than a year after Abe took office, he suffered major losses in the 2007 election and, in the wake of criticism for various controversial remarks made by him and his scandal-ridden cabinet, he eventually resigned as Prime Minister in September 2007, ostensibly for health reasons.



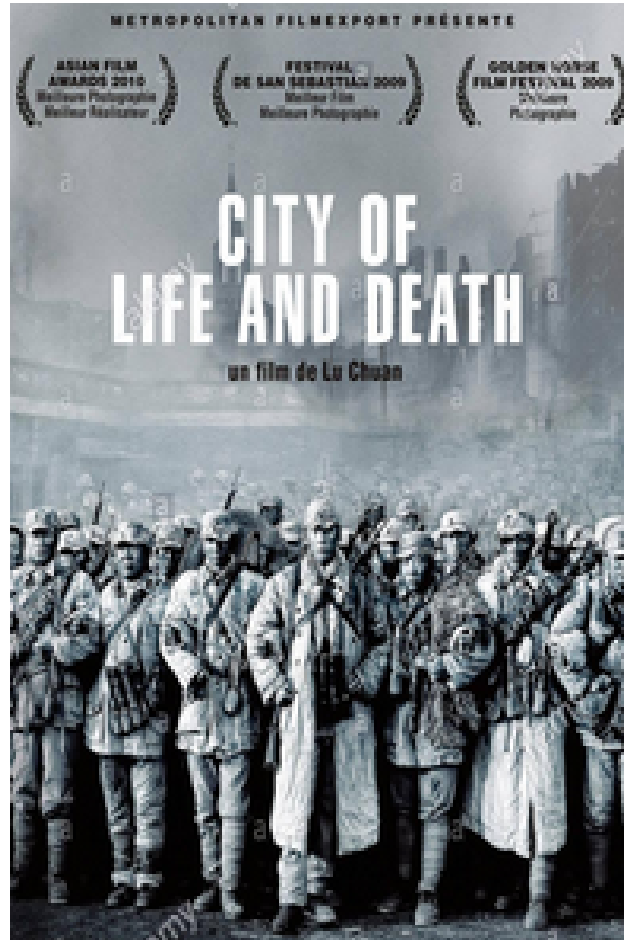




*Iris Chang: The Rape of Nanking* (2007), a Canadian documentary about Chang's journey in writing her best-selling book *The Rape of Nanking*.

*Nanking* (2007), an American documentary about the Nanjing Massacre.

*The Children of Huang Shi* (2008), a China-Australia-Germany coproduced fiction film about the Nanjing Massacre.





*John Rabe* (2009), a China-France-Germany fiction film about the Nanjing Massacre based on the diary of John Rabe.

*City of Life and Death* (2009), a controversial Chinese fiction film about the Nanjing Massacre, taking the perspective of a Japanese soldier.

*The Flowers of War* (2011), a China-Hong Kong coproduced film about the Nanjing Massacre, starring Christian Bale, was the costliest Chinese movie ever made up until then.

China-Japan relations continued to remain frozen prior to the second Abe regime. In

September 2010, the Japanese coastguard arrested Zhan Qixiong, a Chinese captain whose fishing boat had sailed close to the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands. In response, large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations again erupted in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Chengdu. A month later, the dispute over the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands sparked anti-Chinese demonstrations in Tokyo and six other major cities in Japan. In the same year, Japanese official statistics indicated that only 20% of Japanese had positive impressions of China, while 77.8% showed no positive feelings toward China.<sup>41</sup> The Genron NPO reported in that year that only 27.3% of Japanese had favorable feelings and 72% unfavorable feelings toward China.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, many in Japan felt threatened by the on-going military expansion of China, and in June 2011, Japan urged China to improve military transparency and warned that it would closely monitor the development of Chinese aircraft carriers.<sup>43</sup> Although China's military expansion was real, the perception of "threat" in Japan placed this military expansion in a vacuum, with little attention given by politicians and the mainstream media to Japan's own large military industry, which had only recently been eclipsed by China's, and its relationship with the United States, which increasingly trumpeted a "pivot" to Asia in its foreign policy, aimed at confronting China. Following a declaration made by then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asserting that "The 21st century would be America's Pacific century," President Barack Obama announced in January 2012 that the United States would strengthen its military influence in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>44</sup> In Autumn 2012, public opinion polls conducted by the Japanese Cabinet Office,<sup>45</sup> *Asahi shinbun*,<sup>46</sup> and the Genron NPO<sup>47</sup> showed that over 80% of the Japanese people held unfavorable impressions of, and felt no affinity with, China. On December 26th of the same year, while China and Japan were embroiled in disputes over historical and territorial issues, Abe once again became Prime



Minister when the LDP returned to power, becoming the first Japanese Prime Minister to serve twice since the beginning of the Heisei era.

### Japanese media and China-Japan relations since the second Abe regime

During his second premiership, Abe was confronted with even more severe internal and external issues than arose during his first term from 2006—in addition to perceived threats posed by China and North Korea externally, there were political, economic, and social crises triggered internally by the triple disasters in 2011 following the Tohoku earthquake. Inheriting the hawkish style of his grandfather Kishi Nobusuke, Abe asserted that the Murayama Statement and the Kono Statement should be revised and also expressed regret that no official visit to Yasukuni had taken place during his first premiership.<sup>48</sup> Ultimately, Abe visited Yasukuni on December 26, 2013, the day marking the anniversary of his reappointment as Prime Minister, a clear attempt to display an attitude of defiance in the face of foreign condemnation. In so doing Abe became the first sitting Japanese Prime Minister to make an official visit to Yasukuni since Koizumi had done so in 2006.

China figured prominently in both “Abenomics” and Abe’s national security policy. China had been Japan’s largest trading partner since 2010, more so even than the United States, and, in line with this, the relaxation of visa requirements for Chinese tourists was a central feature of “Abenomics.” However, at the same time, in order to win public support for its policies and reforms, it was imperative for the Abe regime to construct an “enemy” with sufficient scare potential to create a threat to

the Japanese.<sup>49</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Abe, on the one hand, welcomed media trends to portray a “threatening” China but continued, on the other hand, to seek dialogue with China and attempted to attract more Chinese visitors to Japan.<sup>50</sup>

### Coverage in the news media

During the second Abe regime, NHK, long considered a “trusted, neutral media outlet,”<sup>51</sup> came to be criticized as the “Abe Channel”<sup>52</sup> under the leadership of pro-Abe government members in managing positions at the network, who went on record with comments such as “When the government says, ‘[Move] right,’ we can’t say, ‘[Move] left.’”<sup>54</sup> Concurrent with this shift in leadership was an increase in the number of negative reports on China and the Chinese people broadcast on NHK channels. On November 12, 2014, an exclusive episode was aired of the NHK social affairs program *Close-up Gendai (Modern) Plus* titled *Tracking Illegal Fishing by China in Coral Reefs: The Sea of Japan as a Target*, portraying Chinese fishermen illegally poaching coral beds offshore the Ogasawara (Bonin) Islands, thereby causing environmental damage. On September 6 and October 20, 2016, two further features were aired on this program, the first titled *The Super Copying of Products by China* and the second *Undercover On-site Report: Lawless ‘Explosive Tours’ from China*, both highlighting Chinese business practices as being concerned only with making money and lacking in ethical values.

Japan is known for having the highest rates of newspaper circulation in the world.<sup>55</sup> The most widely read newspapers in Japan—the *Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, *Sankei*, and *Nikkei* newspapers—each partners with its affiliate broadcasting outlet to form a nationwide media network. For example, *Yomiuri* and Nippon TV

are together owned by NNN; *Asahi* and TV Asahi by ANN; *Mainichi* and TBS by JNN; *Sankei* and Fuji TV by FNN; and *Nikkei* and TV Tokyo by TXN. *Asahi* and *Mainichi* are liberal-leaning and *Yomiuri* and *Sankei* conservative-leaning, with *Nikkei* leaning right of center. However, articles on China and the Chinese appearing in Japanese newspapers in recent years suggest that the traditional political stances and attitudes of the Japanese media toward China-Japan relations that would be expected based on these characterizations have become more volatile and ambiguous. For instance, *Asahi* has begun to share similar perspectives with *Yomiuri* regarding issues of sovereignty between Japan and China. Both newspapers have exhibited sensitivity to disputes such as those stemming from air confrontations between China and Japan over the East China Sea (Donghai) and the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands dispute, describing China's actions as "illegal" and a "violation of Japan's sovereignty."<sup>56</sup>

In their study of narratives of the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands incident, both Hagström (2012) and Suzuki (2015) observe that the dominant narrative in Japan and around the globe has tended toward interpreting China-Japan relations in light of these incidents as "China's rise" and "Japan's decline."<sup>57</sup> Specifically, China's act was regarded as "aggressive" or "[an exertion of] pressure" while Japan was seen as "weak" or "defeated."<sup>58</sup> In the context of this emergence of a "power shift" narrative in Japan's media, scholarly and governmental discourses in recent years have also begun to exhibit a power posturing that vies for influence in policymaking on issues such as the strengthening of Japan's security policy.<sup>59</sup> Suzuki also points out a similar dynamic where "China is depicted as an 'irrational' or 'arrogant state' that frequently tries to intimidate the 'weak' Japanese state into making diplomatic concessions."<sup>60</sup> He notes that this shift in narrative involves construction

of a "common Other," a portrayal of China that is favorable to both the left and the right in Japan in forming and promoting a desirable Japanese "Self."<sup>61</sup> In other words, portraying "Otherness," whether as a role model or a threat, has become a means of constructing a Japanese identity through a foreign mirror.<sup>62 63</sup>



*China's Last Princess* (2003)

For right-wing political parties, national images of China and Japan have been constructed and used for the purpose of advocating a more independent security policy to protect a "weak" Japan from an "aggressive" China.<sup>64</sup> For left-liberal groups, China had once been depicted as "victimized," a mode of representation which seems to accord with Chinese historical memory but also creates Japan's "other" as "inferior" in order to strengthen the image of a

“pacifist” Japan.<sup>65</sup> For example, the left-leaning TV Asahi affiliated with *Asahi shinbun* had once aired *China’s Last Princess* (2003), a TV drama promoting friendship between Japan and China, in celebration of the 45th anniversary of its establishment in 2003, the year when China-Japan relations began to deteriorate. However, in recent years, international security issues such as the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands dispute and the nuclear issue in North Korea have cast the spotlight on China as wielding an increasingly influential role in the international arena. The dominant role played by China in the current world has made it unrealistic and politically unappealing for Japanese liberals to portray China as a weak victim, in response to which liberals have started to depict China as “irrational,” a country with increasing power that makes frequently unreasonable demands of Japan. While *Asahi* has traditionally tended to have a relatively less conservative and more liberal stance toward China-Japan relations, it has come to share a similar perspective with the conservative *Yomiuri* when it comes to sovereignty issues between the two countries.<sup>66</sup> Both newspapers agree that China has frequently violated Japan’s airspace and seawaters and view it as possible that China may militarize gas platforms in the East China Sea (Donghai). They ignore or present as illegitimate the Chinese position that it is Japan that made an improper appeal to international law to consolidate its imperial expansion in the 19thth and first half of the 20thth century. This shift toward a perspective resonant with the “China Threat Theory” has undoubtedly reinforced negative perceptions among the Japanese people and, correspondingly, influenced public opinion polls.

### **Coverage on wide shows**

As noted earlier, a survey conducted by the Genron NPO in 2014 showed 93% of Japanese

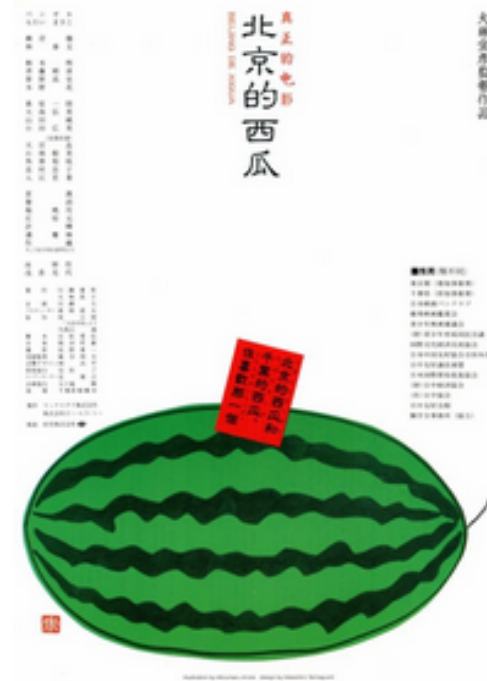
respondents and 86.8% of Chinese respondents to have unfavorable impressions of the other country, marking the highest level of animosity between the two countries ever recorded. “China’s behavior incompatible with international rules,” “China’s seemingly hegemonic actions to secure resources, energy and food,” “criticism of Japan over historical issues,” and “continuing confrontation over the Senkaku Islands,” were the four main reasons given by Japanese respondents for their poor impressions of China.<sup>67</sup> However, in the same year, the number of Chinese tourists to Japan showed an unprecedented increase, in distinct contrast to downward-tending fluctuations in China-Japan relations. According to surveys conducted by the JNTO, the number of Chinese tourists to Japan increased in 2014 to 2.40 million, a figure 83.2% higher than 1.32 million in 2013. In 2016, the number of Chinese travelers to Japan soared further to 6.37 million, 384.6% higher than in 2013.<sup>68</sup>

The resulting influx of foreigners has set in relief cultural differences between the Japanese and Chinese in the public consciousness, provoking negative reactions in many quarters. For example, the craze for shopping among Chinese consumers has been characterized as a unique phenomenon and given its own name—*bakugai* (explosive shopping sprees), a buzzword coined by the Japanese media in 2015.<sup>69</sup>

Topics such as these relating to Chinese tourists and their behavior in Japan have become commonly featured in a variety of TV show produced by commercial TV stations and aired daily called *waido shō* (wide shows), also known as *jōhō bangumi* (information programs), a talk show genre in which news is introduced in an entertaining way. A large number of “wide shows” have been fixated on portraying the huge purchasing power of the Chinese tourists and side-effects felt by the Japanese (e.g. shortages of baby formula and diapers due to Chinese buying sprees, streets



packed with Chinese tourists and tour buses, especially during certain Chinese holidays, etc.). Such programs have tended to characterize Chinese tourists using terms such as “[exhibiting] troubling behavior,” “[showing a] breach of manners,” “[creating] a nuisance,” “lacking in understanding,” “[creating] a rush,” “[creating] a bad reputation” and even “malicious in manner.”<sup>70</sup> In addition to matters of behavior, these have focused as well on the presumed poor quality of Chinese products, drawing an implicit contrast with the polite, well-behaved, reliable, and considerate character of the Japanese, whose products are innovative and high in quality.<sup>71</sup> For example, on June 8, 2018, Fuji TV’s infotainment program *Tokudane!* (Exclusive News!) took up the issue of Chinese students using hi-tech gadgets to cheat on college entrance examinations, emphasizing the dishonesty of Chinese exchange students in Japan and the potential threats their behavior could pose toward other students and academic integrity in general in Japan. In addition to the above, a wide range of other programs, mostly scandal-related, have aired that highlight the puzzling behavior of the Chinese from the perspective of Japanese common sense, good manners, and moral integrity.<sup>72</sup> In the end, however, the blame for product shortages must be shared by a consumerist capitalism in Japan that has not accurately judged demand against the backdrop of a traditional way of thinking that considers “sold out” a mark of success. What is more, the self-representation of Japan as unequalled in its *omotenashi* (hospitality to guests), common in self-aggrandizing media narratives during the tourism boom, does not easily gel with the demand that Chinese conform to standards that can be both strict and vague.



*Beijing Watermelon* (1989)

*Swallowtail Butterfly* (1996)

**Images of the Chinese as portrayed in movies and TV dramas**

*Beijing Watermelon* (1989, Ōbayashi Nobuhiko) was one of the first Japanese movies with Chinese characters released in the Heisei era. In this movie, Haruzō, a vegetable shop owner played by the Japanese actor Bengal, who at first dislikes the Chinese students who come to his shop, begins to treat them kindly by offering discounts to them after he witnesses one collapsing from malnutrition. His Good Samaritan behavior then escalates to the point of nearly bankrupting his business. In the end, the Chinese students return Haruzō's favor by working for him voluntarily. The story overall depicts a friendly relationship between the Japanese and Chinese, although it is impossible not to detect a certain sense of Japanese superiority exhibited in the portrayal of this relationship.

As pointed out by Iwabuchi (2000), "the Asia which Japan encounters in the 1990s...is no longer inhabited by images of traditional, underdeveloped, backward neighbors to be civilized by Japan."<sup>73</sup> Japanese filmmakers subsequently began to take a different approach in their portrayal of these Asian neighbors. The pureness of character of Asians (including Chinese) came to be depicted as contrasting with the materialism of Japanese, who had "lost sight of the values that made them human."<sup>74</sup> In *Swallowtail Butterfly* (1996, Iwai Shūnji), for example, Chinese are no longer pictured as inferior outsiders, but instead as a people full of hope and vitality.

As noted earlier, against the backdrop of a surge in Chinese labor and tourists to Japan and its impact on Japanese society, there was an increase in Japanese movies and TV dramas highlighting cultural differences experienced

by the Japanese public in their encounters with the Chinese. To take up here some selected examples of movies and TV dramas that have been particularly influential for the extensive public attention and popularity they have received in Japan, the award-winning film *Tokyo Sonata* (2008, Kurosawa Kiyoshi) clearly portrays the influx of Chinese cheap labor as the main reason for many Japanese men being fired or failing to find employment. One of the first reputable films addressing the influence of Chinese tourists on Japanese society under the second Abe regime is Yamada Yōji's *Tokyo Family* (2013). Depicting a family in Tokyo of three generations living under the same roof, the comedy is a remake of Ozu Yasujirō's celebrated work *Tokyo Story* (1953). However, the script was rewritten by Yamada in order to better present the livelihood of Japanese in the contemporary context of post-3/11 Japan. While the overall plot remains similar, significant changes were made in individual scenes to reflect the contemporary social context in Japan.





*Tokyo Sonata* (2008)

*Tokyo Family* (2013)

In the original version, Shūkichi and Tomi, the elderly parents of a family, travel from southwest Japan to Tokyo to visit their adult children. Busy with their own business, however, the children spend little time with their parents. Only the widowed daughter-in-law is able to find time to take the old couple out for sightseeing. One day, the children arrange a stay for their parents at a hot spring spa in Atami, but the old couple return early because their sleep is interrupted by other younger Japanese guests drinking and playing *mahjong*. In the remake, however, changes are made focusing on the presence of Chinese

tourists in today's Japan. For example, when Shūkichi and Tomi take a bullet train to Shinagawa and are waiting for their son, Shōji, to pick them up, an announcement in Chinese is made repeatedly in the background, reminding Chinese tourists that reserved tickets are required for boarding trains on that railway line. In a later scene where the couple end up in a hotel in Yokohama (instead of Atami), they are irritated by the loud voices of Chinese tourists complaining about the hotel.

In the year 2016 alone, a strikingly large number of TV dramas were broadcast portraying influences brought about by Chinese tourists and illegal immigrants<sup>75</sup> in Japan. Examples are Fuji TV's *Naomi and Kanako*, Nippon TV's *We're Millennials—Got a Problem?*, and TBS's *Please Love the Useless Me* and *The Man with the God Tongue*. The Japanese actress Takahata Atsuko, who plays the Shanghai businesswoman Li Akemi in *Naomi and Kanako*, received particular acclaim for her acting as a Chinese *dama*<sup>76</sup> (a Chinese term literally meaning elder woman),<sup>77</sup> ultimately winning the Best Supporting Actress award at the 88th Television Drama Academy Awards in 2016 for the role she played in this TV drama.







*Naomi and Kanako* (2016)

*We're Millennials—Got a Problem?* (2016)



*Please Love the Useless Me* (2016)

The Chinese character Li Akemi in *Naomi and Kanako* played by Takahata Atsuko.

### Conclusion

There is no doubt that in comparison to the frostiness that characterized China-Japan relations at the beginning of the Abe and Xi regimes, communication between the two countries has gradually improved. Since the public announcement by Abe in 2017, the year marking the 45th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, of his intent to cooperate with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the number of visits between Japanese and Chinese high-ranking officials has grown markedly. In May 2017, Nikai Toshihiro, Secretary-General of the LDP, met with Xi on the occasion of Nikai attending the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation hosted by China as a representative of the Japanese government. Subsequently in November of that year, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with a delegation of 250 Japanese business leaders in Beijing. On August 3, Abe enacted a cabinet reshuffle, appointing Kōno Tarō, a politician seen as friendly to China, as new Foreign Minister. Although Abe still sent a ritual offering to the Yasukuni on the 74th anniversary of the end of WWII, he made no personal visit to the shrine on that occasion. It is believed that with the escalation of the North Korean threat since 2016, Abe was intent to avoid a worsening of diplomatic ties with China and to facilitate trilateral cooperation with China and South Korea on the North Korea issue. In September of that year, Abe sent a strong signal of friendship to China by attending a ceremony in celebration of China's National Day and of the 45th anniversary of the normalization of Japan-China relations at the

Chinese embassy in Tokyo, accompanied by Kōno.

As 2018 dawned, Abe appeared to be even more active in building stronger ties with China, especially bilateral economic and trade ties. Kōno made his first official visit to China in January 2018 and met on that occasion with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. In return, Wang paid his first official visit to Japan in April of that year, agreeing to work toward high-level mutual visits between Abe and Xi, a goal that was finally realized on June 27, 2019, on the occasion of the G20 Summit in Osaka. On May 8, 2018, Li Keqiang embarked on an official visit to Japan, marking the first trip to Japan by a Chinese premier in eight years, coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the signing of the China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship. In addition to attending a trilateral summit with Abe and Korean President Moon Jae-in, Li also met on that trip with Emperor Akihito, all clear signs of efforts by China and Japan to improve diplomatic relations and to avoid compounding tensions in an already tense situation brought on by the U.S.-China trade war and instability in North Korea. On October 22, 2019, Emperor Naruhito ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, inaugurating his constitutional role as Japan's 126th Emperor following the 30-year reign of Emperor Akihito. On that occasion, China sent Vice President Wang Qishan to attend the enthronement ceremony in a show of friendship symbolic of a possible thawing in relations between the two countries.<sup>78</sup> Although a visit by Xi Jinping to Japan was scheduled in the spring of 2020, which would have been the first state visit to Japan by a Chinese leader in twelve years, it was postponed and ultimately never materialized during Abe's time in office, due to successive waves of the coronavirus pandemic striking Japan up through the last days of his tenure as prime minister.<sup>79</sup>

According to the Genron NPO, 45.2% of Chinese held a favorable impression of Japan in

2020. Although the figure saw a slight decrease when compared to that of the previous year (45.9%), it had been increasing greatly from 2017 through 2019. On the other hand, the percentage of Japanese with an unfavorable impression of China remained high at 89.7%.<sup>80</sup> In 2019, data collected by the Genron NPO showed 8.5% of Japanese and 34.3% of Chinese to consider current China-Japan relations to be good or relatively good, marking a high on the Japanese side since 2013 and a significant increase on the Chinese side compared to the 2013 figure of 5.9%. Also in 2019, 45.9% of Chinese held a favorable impression of Japan, an increase of 3.7% over the previous year's figure (42.2% in 2018), while the percentage of Japanese having an unfavorable impression of China was 84.7%, a slight drop from previous years (88.3% in 2017 and 86.3% in 2018).<sup>81</sup> These figures show that sentiment among the Chinese toward Japan has been improving dramatically, but, in sharp contrast, there has been no corresponding improvement in the impressions Japanese have of China. We have argued in this paper that the lack of any improvement in the portrayal of China and the Chinese people in media coverage in Japan since 2017 provides the most plausible account of this disparity between the Chinese and Japanese in those holding positive views of the other. One indication of this is the clear trend to present China to its audience as a "threat" seen in China-related TV shows in Japan, despite occasional efforts to air programs that are ostensibly designed to further mutual understanding between Japan and China on contentious historical issues, such as Fuji TV's *Japanese in Nanking*.<sup>82</sup> Another example in this vein is the way FNN's wide show *Mezamashi TV* coined the term *bakusuberi* (explosive skiing) to describe a new trend of Chinese tourists swarming to ski resorts in Japan, a blatant extension of the emotion-laden buzzword *bakugai*.<sup>83</sup> Yet another example is the prevalence of negative expressions such as "*akushitsu*" (malicious) and "*uso bakari*" (full of lies) in the title of a news special on Chinese

tours in Japan aired by Nippon TV's *News 24*.<sup>84</sup>

In comparison to the period from the normalization of diplomatic relations through the 1990s, China is no longer being held up in the Japanese media as a role model combining the positive features of both an old and cultured and a young and vital society, but on the contrary, is overwhelmingly portrayed as a “threat” to Japan. In the environment of fear surrounding the international spread of the coronavirus,<sup>85</sup> an episode of Beat Takeshi's *TV Tackle* that aired on February 2, 2020, criticized overtly the high level of incursion into Japan of Chinese tourists and their manners.<sup>86</sup> Despite the fact that the Japanese government

has provided material support to China to stem the coronavirus epidemic, palpable resentment among the Japanese public toward the Chinese remains, as evidenced in popular hashtags such as *Chūgokujin wa Nihon ni kuru na* (“Chinese, Don't Come to Japan”) and *Chūkogujin nyūkoku kinshi* (“[Implement] a Prohibition on Chinese Entering Japan”).<sup>87</sup> The lack of positive reporting on or positive depictions of China and the Chinese people in the media provides the only plausible explanation accounting for this lack of significant improvement in the impressions of China and the Chinese held by the Japanese, demonstrating the influential role played by the Japanese media in molding public perceptions of China-Japan relations.<sup>88</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, references in this paper to Chinese tourists, Chinese people, etc. refer to mainland Chinese.

<sup>2</sup> See Japan National Tourism Organization, “[Hō-Nichi gaikyakusū \(Number of Foreigners Visiting Japan\)](#),” (accessed June 24, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Since 2005, following a series of anti-Japanese demonstrations that took place in China, the Genron NPO has been conducting surveys of Japanese adults on mutual Sino-Japanese perceptions with the cooperation of the *China Daily*, an English-language daily newspaper published in the People's Republic of China (PRC) owned by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC). See Genron NPO, “[The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey](#)” (accessed February 15, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> “[Nihon no taichū kanjō futatabi akka, yoron chōsa \(Opinion Poll: Japanese Feelings toward China Turn Negative Again\)](#),” *Sankei News*, September 23, 2016, (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Genron NPO, “The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey.”

<sup>6</sup> The data available from surveys such as these allow us to gauge overall attitudes of Japanese respondents to China and the Chinese people (understood as referring primarily to citizens of

the PRC).

<sup>7</sup> Genron NPO, "The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey."

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Caroline Rose and Jan Sýkora, "The Trust Deficit in Sino-Japanese Relations," *Japan Forum*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2016), pp. 100-124.

<sup>10</sup> Linus Hagström, "'Power Shift' in East Asia? A Critical Reappraisal of Narratives on the Senkaku Islands Incident in 2010," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (September 2012), pp. 267-297.

<sup>11</sup> Sunakawa Hiroyoshi, "Nationalism, Japan's Media and the Abe Government," in Ross Mouer, ed., *Globalizing Japan: Striving to Engage the World* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2015), pp. 227-246.

<sup>12</sup> Griseldis Kirsch, "Relocating Japan? Japan, China and the West in Japanese Television Dramas," in Griseldis Kirsch, Dolores Martinez and Merry White, eds., *Assembling Japan: Modernity, Technology and Global Culture* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 113-133.

<sup>13</sup> Some may argue that Japan's perception of China as a "threat" started as early as when China ceased to be a "student" of Japan's growth or an "ODA recipient" from Japan. For example, in his last book *China and Japan: Facing History*, Vogel (2019) points out how both the Chinese and the Japanese reacted in an unprecedentedly strong way in 2010 toward the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands dispute, largely because China had in that year for the first time surpassed Japan as the second largest economy in the world. See Ezra F. Vogel, "The Deterioration of Sino-Japanese Relations, 1992-2018," in *China and Japan: Facing History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), pp. 386-390.

<sup>14</sup> Susan J. Pharr and Ellis S. Krauss, eds., *Media and Politics in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> See Niekawa Shun and Itō Yoshitaka, "[Chūgoku kōsen no Senkaku ryōkai shinnyū, futatabi kappatsuka sukeru Shu shi no omowaku \(Trespassing of Territorial Waters around the Senkaku Islands by Official Chinese Vessels Again Picks up in Activity; Xi's Intentions Transparent\)](#)," *Asahi shinbun*, June 24, 2019, (accessed July 3, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Suzuki Shogo, "The Rise of the Chinese 'Other' in Japan's Construction of Identity: Is China a Focal Point of Japanese Nationalism?," *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2015), pp. 95-116.

<sup>17</sup> "[Riju kuanghe Zhongguo youke nanzhu ceng canbai Jingguo Shenshe wangyou huyu dizhi \(Japanese Drama Ridicules Chinese Tourists, Internet Users Appeal to Boycott the Male Leading Actor Who Had Visited Yasukuni Shrine\)](#)," *Kknews*, July 15, 2016, (accessed June 20, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> According to Selden and Nozaki (2009), the reason that officially screened textbooks of the time typically said so little about Japanese expansionism and aggression was that the Ministry of Education was seeking to promote the "interests of international friendship and cooperation," especially between Japan and its Asian neighbours, as one of its screening criteria. See Mark Selden and Nozaki Yoshiko, "Japanese Textbook Controversies, Nationalism, and Historical Memory: Intra- and Inter-national Conflicts," *Japan Focus*, Vol. 7, Issue 24, No. 5, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Several other post-war prime ministers (including Yoshida Shigeru, Kishi Nobusuke, Ikeda Hayato, Satō Eisaku, Tanaka Kakuei, Miki Takeo, Fukuda Takeo, Ōhira Masayoshi, and Suzuki



Zenkō) had visited Yasukuni while in office before Nakasone, but these visits had all been cast as visits by a private individual.

<sup>20</sup> It is said that the real target for such criticism was Hu Yaobang, who had been close to Nakasone and valued China's relations with Japan. Nakasone avoided visiting Yasukuni in 1986 so as to help Hu maintain his position, but this was in vain as Hu stepped down in January 1987. See "[Chūgoku demo wadai ni natteinakatta 'Nankin' kenryoku tōsō no gu ni 'riyō'sare \('Nanking' Used as Fodder in a Power Struggle without Even Having Been an Issue in China\)](#)," *Sankei News*, April 2, 2015 (accessed June 20, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Cabinet Office, "[Gaikō ni kansuru yoron chōsa \(Public Opinion Poll on Foreign Policy and Diplomacy\)](#)," (accessed August 2, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> In an opinion poll about U.S.-Japan relations released in November 1989, the United States maintained its position as the "most trustworthy" country (54%) among Japanese respondents. On the other hand, in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident and the consequent deterioration in views of China among the Japanese public, China dropped from rank 3 (30%) in 1988 to rank 11 (9%) in 1989, failing to rank among the top 10 most trustworthy countries for the Japanese. See "Shinkokusa masu Nichibei masatsu kankei kaizen tagaini kitai *Yomiuri Gyarappu* kyōdō chōsa no naiyō (Progressive Worsening of U.S.-Japan Frictions: Joint Opinion Poll by *Yomiuri* and *Gallup* Shows Both United States and Japan Hope for Improved Relations)," *Yomiuri shinbun*, November 28, 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Anna Fifield, "[A \(Very\) Short History of Japan's War Apologies](#)," *The Washington Post*, August 13, 2015, (accessed June 20, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Public awareness of the issue increased in Japan after 1981, when China opened its doors to trade, prompting the mass media to focus on the problem. In 1992, NHK broadcasted a 25-episode drama *Back to the Steppes* to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Normalization of Japan-China Diplomacy. This co-production by NHK and CCTV (China Central Television, the most prominent state-sponsored TV station in mainland China) tells the story of a Japanese orphan left behind in Mongolia. In the same year, the Chinese movie *Bell of Purity Temple* (1992, Xie Jin) was released, starring Kurihara Komaki, an actress who became highly popular in China because of her performance in *Sandakan No. 8* (1974, Kumai Kei). It tells the story of a Japanese orphan left behind in China who was raised by a poor but generous Chinese family and went to Japan to meet with his mother after he became a monk. In 1995, NHK broadcast another NHK-CCTV co-production, a 7-episode drama revolving around orphans left behind in China, *A Son of the Good Earth*, starring Nakadai Tatsuya, Kamikawa Takaya, Zhu Xu, and Jiang Wenli, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of its founding. The story was an adaptation of a 1991 novel by Yamazaki Toyoko based on interviews she had with 300 orphans in China beginning in 1984, with help and encouragement from Hu Yaobang. See Nakajima Megumi, "[Mei dorama 'Daichi no ko' no yōfuyaku Zhu Xu san ni mita 'furuki yoki Chūgoku no chichioyazō' \('The Good Traditional Chinese Image of the Father' Seen in Zhu Xu, Actor Playing the Stepfather in the Famous Drama 'A Son of the Good Earth'\)](#)," *Newsweek*, September 20, 2018 (accessed June 20, 2019). NHK described the theme of the drama as showing the "equal efforts made by Japanese and Chinese to survive through unfortunate times." See NHK, "[Tokushū dorama shirizu 'Daichi no ko' \(Feature Drama Series 'A Son of the Good Earth'\)](#)," *NHK Drama*. (accessed June 20, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Cabinet Office, "Public Opinion Poll on Foreign Policy and Diplomacy."

- <sup>26</sup> Macrotrend, “[Nikkei 225 Index: 67 Year Historical Chart](#),” (accessed June 20, 2019).
- <sup>27</sup> Steven Mufson, “[China Holds Nuclear Test](#),” *The Washington Post*, May 16, 1995, (accessed June 24, 2021).
- <sup>28</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “[Statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama ‘On the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the War’s End’](#),” August 15, 1995 (accessed June 20, 2019).
- <sup>29</sup> Takamine Tsukasa, *Japan’s Development Aid to China: The Long-running Foreign Policy of Engagement* (New York: Routledge. 2006), p. 123.
- <sup>30</sup> Chang’s book has been subject to critiques from western sources as well (see the review by Joshua A. Fogel in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57:3, 818-820), but attacks from the Japanese right have gone beyond these to paint the book as simple fabrication designed to denigrate Japan. The Japanese rightist *manga* artist Kobayashi Yoshinori claims in his 1998 *manga On War* that Chang’s work was given attention just because of her pretty face. See Kobayashi Yoshinori, *On War* (Tokyo: Gentōsha, 1998), p. 164.
- <sup>31</sup> Joelherrick, “[Tokyo Governor Shintarō Ishihara: There Was No Nanking Massacre](#),” *Shanghaiist*, May 5, 2018 (accessed May 21, 2019).
- <sup>32</sup> The balance of tourist trade (revenue brought in by tourists to Japan versus amount spent by Japanese tourists abroad) dropped in 1999 compared with the previous year. Due to new arrangements on Chinese group tours set in place in 2000, however, the figures again increased significantly from less than 50 billion yen in 2000 to more than 150 billion yen in 2004. See Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, “[Keizai rebyū \(Economic Review\)](#),” June 18, 2010 (accessed July 3, 2019).
- <sup>33</sup> Cabinet Office, “Public Opinion Poll on Foreign Policy and Diplomacy.”
- <sup>34</sup> Genron NPO, “The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey.”
- <sup>35</sup> The amount of Japan-China trade volume in 1978 was US\$5.07 billion. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “[Nitchū bōekigaku no sūii \(Trends in Japan-China Trade Figures\)](#),” (accessed May 22, 2019). The amount of Japan-China trade volume in 2008 was US\$294.33 billion. See JETRO, “[2016 nen no Nitchū bōeki \(Japan-China Trade, 2016\)](#),” March 13, 2017 (accessed May 22, 2019).
- <sup>36</sup> Cai Hong, “[Hot Economics Doused by Cold Politics](#),” *China Daily*, October 4, 2013, (accessed May 21, 2019).
- <sup>37</sup> In February 2012, Kawamura Takashi, Mayor of Nagoya, on the occasion of a visit by a Chinese delegation, made a statement expressing his denial of the Nanjing Massacre. See “[Nanjing Delays ‘Japanese Culture Week’](#),” *China Daily*, March 2, 2012, (accessed May 23, 2019). In May 2014, the Chinese government announced that every year there would be two “anti-Japanese memorial days,” namely “Victory over Japan Day” on September 3 and “National Memorial Day for the Nanking Massacre” on December 13. See Darren Wee, “[Nanking Massacre Memorial Day Should Be International Event, Says NPC Delegate](#),” *South China Morning Post*, February 26, 2014, (accessed May 23, 2019). In October 2015, UNESCO accepted China’s application to add the Nanjing Massacre historical documents to its Memory of the World Register, sparking strong opposition from Japan. See “[‘Rape of Nanjing’ Listed on Memory of World Register](#),” *China.org.cn*, October 10, 2019, (accessed May 23, 2019).
- <sup>38</sup> A vacillation can be seen in portrayals of the Japanese in Chinese films about WWII between war memory with an appeal to universal values on one hand and particularistic expressions of

national pride having entertainment value on the other. For example, most of the Nanjing films produced in China include Japanese characters sympathetically portrayed, stressing the destructive impact of militarism on the Japanese as well as the Chinese, but at the same time Chinese TV has frequently aired dramas showing heroic Chinese characters mowing down faceless Japanese soldiers.

<sup>39</sup> [“China’s Defense Budget to Rise 17.8% in 2007,”](#) *China Daily*, March 14, 2007, (accessed June 24, 2021).

<sup>40</sup> This idea has taken shape in the West due to the rapid economic and military growth of China since the early 1990s. Together with a huge population, China was considered to pose a threat to other nations as a potential superpower. See Denny Roy, “The ‘China Threat’ Issue: Major Arguments,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 8 (1996), pp. 758-771; and Andrew D. Marble, “The PRC at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century: Why the ‘China Threat’ Debate?,” *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2000), pp. 1-18.

<sup>41</sup> Cabinet Office, “Public Opinion Poll on Foreign Policy and Diplomacy.”

<sup>42</sup> Genron NPO, “The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey.”

<sup>43</sup> In response to a request from Japan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Matsumoto Takeaki that China increase its military transparency, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi countered that the military transparency of China was high. See “Gaikō teitai hōchū ni kage Chūgoku kaiyō katsudō kensei kikazu heikōsen (Diplomacy Stagnates, Cloud over China Visit, Restraints on China’s Sea Moves Ineffective, No Agreement in Sight),” *Yomiuri shinbun*, July 5, 2011. Japan’s *Defense White Paper* of the same year expressed serious concern regarding China’s military development and in particular movements of Chinese naval forces. See Luo Yuan, [“China Entitled to Demand More Transparency in Japan’s Military,”](#) *People.cn*, August 8, 2011, (accessed May 22, 2019).

<sup>44</sup> On April 27, 2015, the United States and Japan released new guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation focusing mainly on how the United States and Japan would cooperate in addressing security concerns affecting Japan, such as China’s growing military assertiveness. Parallel to this has been an escalation in military activities of both Japanese and Chinese air and maritime forces over islands in the East China Sea (Donghai). According to Japan’s Defense Ministry, the Japan Air-Self Defense Force (JASDF) was scrambled to intercept Chinese aircraft approaching Japan’s airspace a record-high 571 times in 2015. See Franz-Stefan Gady, [“Japan’s Fighter Jets Intercepted Chinese Aircraft 571 Times in 2015,”](#) *The Diplomat*, April 26, 2016 (accessed May 23, 2019).

<sup>45</sup> This nationwide survey was conducted between September 27 and October 7, 2012, targeting 3,000 people aged 20 or above. See Cabinet Office, “Public Opinion Poll on Foreign Policy and Diplomacy.”

<sup>46</sup> [“‘Nitchū kankei warui’ Nihon 9 wari, Chūgoku 8 wari ryōkoku de yoron chōsa \(Opinion Poll in Both Countries: 90% of Japanese and 80% of Chinese Consider Sino-Japanese Relations Bad\),”](#) *Asahi shinbun*, September 23, 2012, (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>47</sup> Genron NPO, “The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey.”

<sup>48</sup> As early as in 2006, Abe had already spoken in defense of Class-A war criminals, claiming that charges directed against Japan by the victors in WWII for crimes such as those against peace and humanity, were for crimes that had not existed during the war. He further claimed that according to Japanese laws of that time, defendants of such crimes could therefore not be

held accountable as war criminals. See Yoshida Reiji, [“To Fathom Abe, Just Look at His Grandfather,”](#) *The Japan Times*, December 28, 2006, (accessed June 28, 2019). In 2007, Abe again asserted that there was no evidence to prove that women across Asia were forced into sex slavery by the Japanese Army. See [“No Government Coercion in War’s Sex Slavery: Abe”](#) *The Japan Times*, March 2, 2007 (accessed May 23, 2019).

<sup>49</sup> Giulio Pugliese, “The China Challenge, Abe Shinzo’s Realism, and the Limits of Japanese Nationalism,” *The SAIS Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2015), pp. 45-55.

<sup>50</sup> In March 2016, despite territorial disputes between Japan and other Asian countries, Abe set an ambitious target of attracting 40 million annual foreign visitors to Japan and of doubling spending by foreign visitors in Japan by 2020. See Stanley White, [“Japan’s PM Abe Aims to Double Tourist Visits by 2020 to Boost Economy,”](#) *Reuters*, March 30, 2016, (accessed July 19, 2018). In order to achieve a higher number of repeated visits, Japan has been easing visa requirements for foreign visitors, including Chinese tourists. For instance, multiple-entry visas can be easily obtained by businessmen, intellectuals, cultural figures, and those who have “sufficient financial capability” from China. See [“Japan to Relax Visa Rules for Chinese Visitors from October 17,”](#) *South China Morning Post*, September 27, 2016 (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>51</sup> Yoshida Reiji, Mie Ayako and Eric Johnston, [“Momii’s Rise Tests NHK’s Reputation: Staff, Experts Cite Ominous Changes at Broadcaster,”](#) *The Japan Times*, February 2, 2014 (accessed June 20, 2019).

<sup>52</sup> Ellis S. Krauss, *Broadcasting Politics in Japan: NHK and Television News* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 50-51.

<sup>53</sup> [“NHK Chief Defends Broadcaster Amid ‘Abe Channel’ Claims,”](#) *The Japan Times*, October 2, 2015, .XQxXr\_ZuKUL (accessed June 20, 2019).

<sup>54</sup> [“Is Japan’s Public Broadcaster under Threat?”](#) *BBC News*, March 20, 2014, (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>55</sup> Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association, [“Circulation and Households \(Set Paper Counted as One Copy\),”](#) *Facts and Figures about Japanese Newspapers*, (accessed May 23, 2019).

<sup>56</sup> [“Senkaku kokuyūka go Chūgoku kōsen, ryōkai shinnyū 62 nichi nobe 208 seki \(208 Chinese Vessels Trespass Territorial Waters since Nationalization of Senkaku Islands\),”](#) *Asahi shinbun*, September 11, 2013 (accessed July 3, 2019); and [“Senkaku fuhō jōriku, ōgoe age ‘Chūgoku ryōdo,’ kageki katsudō, kako ni shisha mo \(\[Activists\] Land Illegally on Senkaku Islands, Shouting ‘\[This is\] Chinese Territory’ Radical Activities, \[Resulting\] Even in Deaths in the Past\),”](#) *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 16, 2012 (accessed July 3, 2019).

<sup>57</sup> See Hagström, “‘Power Shift’ in East Asia?,” pp. 267-297; and Suzuki, “Japan’s Construction of Identity,” pp. 95-116.

<sup>58</sup> Hagström, “‘Power Shift’ in East Asia?,” p. 268.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Suzuki, “Japan’s Construction of Identity,” p. 96.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>62</sup> Kirsch, “Relocating Japan,” pp. 116-120.

<sup>63</sup> The construction of a Japanese identity in this way not only portrays China as “Other” but normalizes a particular historical vision wherein the Cold War status quo (when Japan was an



economic dynamo and China economically backward) was in some sense natural and that shifts in both the Chinese economy and its geopolitical orientation after 1990 are in some sense “unnatural,” a violation of norms. Japan was easily able to fit China as a supplicant in a paternalistic imaginary during the 1970s and 1980s, but China’s new economic and military power has thrown this “comfortable” othering into disarray and catalyzed a crisis of self-identity.

<sup>64</sup> Suzuki, “Japan’s Construction of Identity,” p. 96.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>66</sup> See “[Chūgoku, fukuramu daikoku ishiki zenjindai kaimaku, kokubō yosan 12.2% zō \(China’s Growing Consciousness as a Great Power; Opening of the National People’s Congress; National Defense Budget up 12.2%\)](#),” *Asahi shinbun*, March 6, 2014, (accessed July 3, 2019); “[Chūgoku, gasuden kaihatu chakuchaku Nihon wa chūshi motomeru \(China’s Continuing Development of Gas Fields; Japan Requests a Stop\)](#),” *Nikkei*, September 17, 2015 (accessed July 3, 2019); “[Chūgoku kōsen, aitsugu ryōkai shinryū gunmin dōin, atsuryoku kyōka Senkaku oki \(Repeated Trespassing of Territorial Waters off the Senkaku Islands by Official Chinese Vessels; Military Personnel Mobilized and Pressure Increasingly Exerted \[on Japan\]\)](#),” *Asahi shinbun*, August 8, 2016, (accessed July 3, 2019); “[Chūgoku chūsai hanketsu hitei ni yakki gunji kainan enshū ‘jikoku no umi’ kyōchō \(China Desperate to Deny Mediated Judicial Decision; Sea Disaster Exercises by Military; Claims that ‘This Sea is Ours’\)](#),” *Yomiuri shinbun*, July 20, 2016; “[Jinkōtō migattena kaihatu Chūgoku Minami Shinakai ‘shihai’ kyōka \(Development of Man-made Islands in Selfish Disregard \[of Claims by Others\]: China’s Strengthening of Control over South China Sea\)](#),” *Yomiuri shinbun*, July 28, 2016; and “[Senkaku oki, Chūgoku no kaiyō kanshizen 8 seki ga ryōkai shinnyū \(8 Chinese Ocean Surveillance Vessels Invade Territorial Waters off Senkaku Islands\)](#),” *Yomiuri shinbun*, April 23, 2013, (accessed July 3, 2019).

<sup>67</sup> Genron NPO, “The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey.”

<sup>68</sup> See Japan National Tourism Organization, “[Number of Foreigners Visiting Japan](#)” (accessed June 24, 2021).

<sup>69</sup> “Explosive shopping” is normally what Japanese business leaders and the general public alike associate with “national revival.” When engaged in by the Chinese, however, it triggers a form of moral panic.

<sup>70</sup> See Nippon TV, “[Meiwaku kōi aitsugu: Hokkaido no mujin’eki ni Chūgokujin kankōkyaku \(Nuisances Continue: Chinese Tourists at Unmanned Rail Station in Hokkaido\)](#),” February 3, 2017; Fuji TV, “[Sekai de no akuhyō...Chūgokujin no gyōten manā jittai \(In Ill Repute across the World... Actual Examples of the Astonishing Behavior of the Chinese\)](#),” February 14, 2016, (accessed July 3, 2019); TV Asahi, “[Beat Takeshi no TV takkuru Chūgokujin no koko ga wakaranai! \(Beat Takeshi’s TV Tackle: This Is What I Don’t Understand about the Chinese!\)](#),” May 12, 2014, (accessed July 3, 2019); and “[Shinkokuka: akushitsu manā no jittai \(A Worsening \[Situation\]: The Reality of the Malicious Manners \[of the Chinese\]\)](#),” September 24, 2015.

<sup>71</sup> According to a recent opinion poll conducted by Genron NPO regarding the reasons why Chinese hold a favorable impression of Japan, 49.2% of Chinese respondents mentioned the politeness and good manners of the Japanese. 44.0% of them mentioned the high quality of Japanese products. See “[Nihon no inshō ‘yoi’ Chūgokujin, hatsu no 4 wari nose \(Favorable Impression of Japanese among the Chinese Exceeds 40% for the First Time\)](#),” *nippon.com*,

October 26, 2018, (accessed May 23, 2019).

<sup>72</sup> See TV Asahi, "[Beat Takeshi's TV Tackle](#)"; Nippon TV, "[Chūgokujin wa naze Nihon de bakugai wo suru no ka? Nihon sei tai Chūgoku sei \(Why Do the Chinese Engage in Explosive Shopping in Japan?; Made in Japan vs. Made in China\)](#)," July 7, 2015, (accessed July 3, 2019); and Fuji TV, "[Ikegami Akira kinkyū SP! yoku wakaranai Chūgoku no nazo \(Ikegami Akira's "Emergency Special!: Puzzles about the Chinese that I Don't Understand\)](#)," November 29, 2014, (accessed July 3, 2019); and "[Chūgokujin kōkyū kanyō shokubutsu dorobō ga kyūzō \(A Surge in Chinese Thieves Targeting Expensive Decorative Plants!\)](#)," May 11, 2016, (accessed July 3, 2019).

<sup>73</sup> Iwabuchi Kōichi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Mark Schilling, *Contemporary Japanese Film* (Trumbull: Weatherhill, 1999), p. 50.

<sup>75</sup> One manifestation of this perceived illegal behavior is seen in data from the Japan Immigration Bureau of the Justice Ministry, according to which 5,803 foreign trainees in Japan went missing in 2015, half of them Chinese. See Ōtake Tomoko, "[Record 5,803 Foreign Trainees Went Missing in Japan Last Year](#)," *The Japan Times*, October 31, 2016, (accessed July 2, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> According to Teng (2018), "'Dama' is a loaded word these days. Although originally nothing more than a benign descriptor for a kindly, hardworking, middle-aged woman, the term has somehow morphed into a globally recognized byword for a grasping, domineering, nouveau riche matron. In popular media, for example, *damas* are typically portrayed as uncultured, easily swayed by gossip, and utterly unwilling to listen to reason." See Teng Wei, "["Dama': A History of China's Ageist, Sexist Slur](#)," *Sixth Tone*, October 26, 2018, (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>77</sup> Lily, "[Takahada Atsuko wa Chūgokujin? Naomi to Kanako no engi ga daizessan de musuko mo musume mo haiyū \(Is Takahada Atsuko Chinese? Acting in Naomi and Kanako Receives Rave Accolades, Son and Daughter Are Also Actors\)](#)," *Lily-news*, (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>78</sup> Lo Kin-ling, "[China to Send Wang Qishan to Japanese Emperor Naruhito's Enthronement](#)," *South China Morning Post*, October 15, 2019, (accessed October 23, 2019).

<sup>79</sup> "[China's Xi Jinping Postpones State Visit to Japan Due to Coronavirus](#)," *The Japan Times*, March 5, 2020, (accessed February 15, 2021).

<sup>80</sup> Genron NPO, "The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey."

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> This was a 1-hour documentary program broadcasted on October 7, 2018 about a Japanese man married to a Chinese woman in Nanjing. In order to understand the historical and territorial disputes between Japan and China, the couple tries to talk about them and even visits the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders together. The program was nominated for the Best FNS (Fuji Network System) Documentary Award in 2018. See Fuji TV, "[Nankin no Nihonjin \(Japanese in Nanking\)](#)" *FNS Documentary Award*, October 4, 2018 (accessed May 28, 2019).

<sup>83</sup> FNN, "["Bakugai' kara 'bakusuberi' e Chūgokujin kankōkyaku ga sukijō ni sattō \(From 'Explosive Shopping' to 'Explosive Skiing,' Chinese Tourists Flood the Ski Resorts\)](#)," February 11, 2019 (accessed May 28, 2019).

<sup>84</sup> A crew from Nippon TV conducted an undercover investigation so as to reveal the "dirty"

business of Chinese travel agencies in Japan. See Nippon TV, “*Uso bakari no akushitsu jittai gyōten no Chūgokujin tsuā* (A Malicious Reality Full of Lies: The Unbelievable Truth of the Chinese Tours)” (accessed May 28, 2019).

<sup>85</sup> As of late June 2021, more than 795,000 people in Japan had been diagnosed with COVID-19. See Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, “[Situation Report \(as of 00:00 26 June 2021\)](#),” June 26, 2021 (accessed June 28, 2021). Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Tokyo Olympic Games scheduled for 2020 had to be postponed for a year. Amid calls for its cancellation, officials had decided to go ahead with the Games, but overseas spectators were banned and up to 10,000 domestic fans were allowed in the venues. See “[Tokyo 2020: Olympics ‘100%’ Going Ahead - Games President Seiko Hashimoto](#),” *BBC Sport*, June 3, 2021 (accessed June 28, 2021); and “[Tokyo 2020: Up to 10,000 Japanese Fans Will Be Permitted at Olympic Venues](#)” *BBC Sport*, June 21, 2021, (accessed June 28, 2021).

<sup>86</sup> TV Asahi, “*Beat Takeshi no TV takkuru shunsetsu de meiwaku kankōkyaku ga gekizō!?* (Beat Takeshi’s TV Tackle: An Explosion of Annoying Tourists during Lunar New Year!?),” February 2, 2020, (accessed February 18, 2020).

<sup>87</sup> Palash Ghosh, “[Coronavirus Update: Fear of Spreading Virus Stoking Worldwide Anti-Chinese Xenophobia](#),” *International Business Times*, January 31, 2020, (accessed February 18, 2020).

<sup>88</sup> From 2017 to 2019, there was an increase in both Japanese and Chinese who considered China-Japan relations to be good or relatively good. The situation witnessed a turning point in 2020, as Japanese people who considered the relations as bad or relatively bad rose by 9.3% to over 50%. Among the Chinese interviewed, in contrast, more than half considered the situation as neither good nor bad, with the percentage of those judging the situation as either good or bad both declining. See Genron NPO, “[The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey](#)” (accessed February 15, 2021).