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A China Watcher's Perspective

## **Senkaku Islands were nothing more than “navigation markers” in pre-modern China**

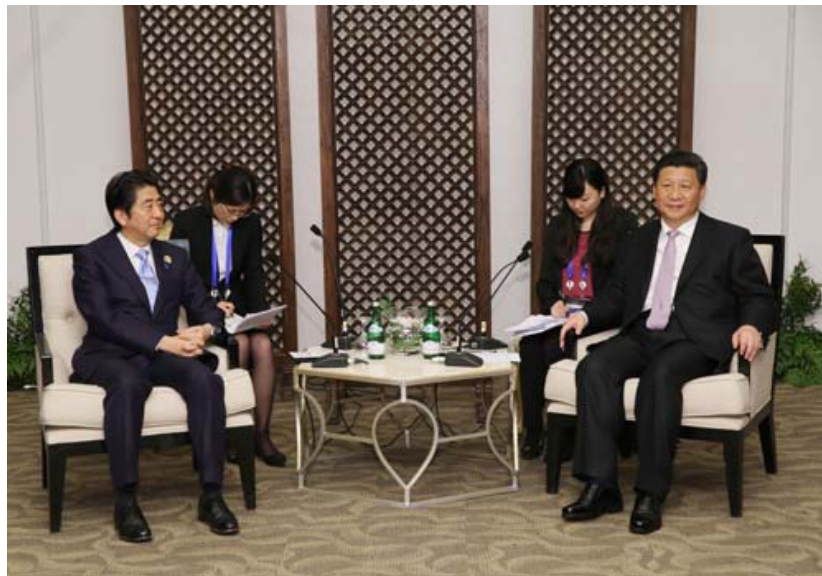
Contradiction in the Chinese stance revealed in historical documents and materials relating to the Senkaku Islands (Part 1) April 24, 2015<sup>1</sup>

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We often hear about “Japan distancing itself from China,” with various problems in doing business with China, such as friction in Japan-China relations, rise in wages, or contractual troubles, causing Japanese corporate investment in China to reduce significantly last year (2014), with money shifting from China to Southeast and South Asia instead.

However, Japan cannot expect everything to move in its favor. Indeed, China is focusing increasingly on dealing with Japan in a way that serves its own best interests. As a result, Japan-China relations are likely to continue to display complex interactions. This trend can be seen most obviously in the sharp rise in the number of Chinese tourists visiting Japan, symbolized by the so-called *bakugai*, or explosive shopping spree, and the much-reported problems surrounding membership of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) last year. The bilateral meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping on April 22, 2015 at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Asian-African Conference in Indonesia could be viewed as another aspect of this complex relationship.



Leaders of Japan and China meet for the first time in 5 months at the Asian-African Conference (Photo: Xinhua News Agency/Aflo)

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<sup>1</sup> This article was originally published as 平野聡（東京大学大学院法学政治学研究科教授）「尖閣は前近代中国にとって『航路標識』にすぎない：尖閣関連資料から見る中国の矛盾（前編）」

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## **China continues to insist “Chogyo Island (Uotsuri Island; China calls it Diaoyu Island) = Taiwan”**

While China ostensibly adopts a soft-track approach, it also continues to restrain Japan by persistently emphasizing its “victory in the war against fascism” 70 years after the end of the war.

China is expected to hold a military parade to coincide with the date of September 2 on which Japan signed the Instrument of Surrender of Japan on the USS Missouri (the actual parade might be scheduled for September 3). This is aimed at strengthening command of the Chinese Communist Party and nationalism, by “reconfirming the Chinese people’s history of suffering and honorable victory as it looks to the future.” While appealing for Japan to look at history straight on, China says this is not intended to show a hostile attitude towards Japan but to pioneer a future together.

However, whenever China talks about the “war on fascism,” there is no doubt that the Senkaku Islands are always behind it.

China insists that because Japan unconditionally returned Taiwan to China upon its surrender, it should also instantly and unconditionally return “Chogyo Island which is part of Taiwan.” China has insisted that the fact that Japan still hasn’t returned the island is a sign that Japan does not recognize the result of World War II, the war against fascism, and is a country that does not follow the world order. Every time the Senkaku Islands are featured in the news, it is always accompanied with the formula showing that “Chogyo Island =Taiwan.”

### **Disputing Japan’s announcement on a map**

On March 16 this year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan updated its PDF file “About the Senkaku Islands” on its official website. The map of the People’s Republic of China issued in 1969 by the National Administration of Surveying and Mapping of the People’s Republic of China displayed Fukken (Fujian) Province and Taiwan Province, and showed that China had continued to use the name Senkaku Islands until approximately 1970. China responded to this by repeating the same formula, “Chogyo Island =Taiwan.”

The next day on March 17, Hong Lei, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China said the following at the regular press conference (a full transcript of this is available on the Chinese Foreign Ministry website).

“The point that Chogyo Island and its surrounding islands are part of Chinese territory is an undisputable fact, and we have sufficient history and legal proof. It is impossible to overturn this historical fact even if some people waste a lot of time and effort to find a few maps. If necessary, we are quite prepared to find one hundred or one thousand maps which prove that Chogyo Island clearly belongs to China.”

I think we should not stop China from trying to find such maps, if there exist any. Perhaps it was because they couldn’t find one that the Chinese government repeated its usual formula the next day, stating that “Chogyo Island is part of Taiwan and so Japan should give that part of Taiwan back.” China insists that, regardless of the point that they wrote the name “Senkaku Islands” on the map, the fact that they wrote the island even though they were beyond the regular space of the map in itself is proof of “sovereignty.” Hong Lei went on to say:

“In order to show a complete picture of the jurisdiction of Fukken (Fujian) and Taiwan Provinces, we illustrated the northern part of Fujian Province, the southern part of Taiwan Province, and Chogyo Island and its surrounding seas as “extras” exceeding the width of a regular map. That in itself is ample and valid proof that Chogyo Island is part of China.”

Then on April 8, another spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Hua Chunying, referring to Japan’s policy of digitizing large volumes of documents and materials already collected by Japan to

create and publicize a database, made the following statement, while reinforcing what Hong Lei said above:

“Many maps at the time of the Ming and Qing Dynasties clearly have Chogyo Island on them, and the name Chogyo Island was widely used on Western maps prior to the Sino-Japanese War. However hard Japan tries to find a few documents, make fragmentary judgements and try to disrupt history, you cannot change the fact that Chogyo Island is part of China. Recently, Japan greatly manipulated a text concerning a 1969 Chinese map, but conversely this only served to firmly prove that Chogyo Island is part of China. I would ask Japan to wake up and take much greater care when it publishes documents. It should not do such superficial and clumsy thing.”

If you look at the 1969 map carefully, just as China says, the Senkaku Islands are shown well beyond the regular width of the map as the islands far offshore from Fukken (Fujian).

However, if “China did assert sovereignty over Chogyo Island from the Ming and Qing Dynasties,” if “the West did know the island name broadly as Chogyo Island” and if “Chogyo Island was part of Taiwan,” then why did they not write “Chogyo Island” on the map in the first place? The National Administration of Surveying and Mapping is after all the *National Administration*, so they would have been representing the will of the state of China when they wrote “Senkaku Islands” on the map.

Modern international law judges that China also consistently recognized Japan’s “Senkaku Islands.” As long as China and Japan operate as sovereign nations under modern international law, China should abide by the logic of that law.

### **China’s doubtful claims that the Senkaku Islands are “within China’s realm of coastal defense” and “is part of Taiwan”**

So just what is “the reasonable foundation based on International jurisprudence” on which China insists? Soon after the Yoshihiko Noda administration acquired ownership of the Senkaku Islands, China issued a “Chogyo Island White Paper” stating conditions prior to Japan’s occupation of Taiwan at the Sino-Japanese War (in short, the situation that Chogyo Island was used and managed as part of Taiwan). Those conditions are outlined below (The Foreign Ministry of Taiwan = Republic of China explains substantially the same way. If you are interested, you can watch the YouTube video in Japanese on its official website.)

\*There are many notations and written documents of “Chogyo Island” on Ming and Qing maps proving that China was the first to discover and use “Chogyo Island.”

\*In the written records of Chinese official envoys (Sakuho-shi) sent to acknowledge Ryukyu as its tributary state, the territorial border was “Kokusuiko (Heishuigou; black water ditch)” (Ryukyu Trough) on the west of Kume Island, and the “Kokusui (Heishui; black water)” to the east and “Sosui (Cangshui; deep blue water)” to the west were recognized as being different sea areas. Heishuigou is the border for China, and Chogyo Island which is inside it is part of China.

\*Map notations from the Ming and Qing Dynasties onwards show that Chogyo Island is within the scope of China’s coastal defense.

\*In particular, Chogyo Island was part of Taiwan. *Nihon Ikkan (Riben Yijian)* (1556), written by Zheng Shun’gong who visited Japan, described Chogyo-Sho (Chogyo Island) as part of “Shoutou (Xiaodong)” (Taiwan). In Shihei Hayashi’s *Sangoku tsuran zusetsu* (An Illustrated Description of Three Countries), Chogyo Island is colored the same color as China, not Ryukyu.

\*The island appears as “Chogyo-Sho” on some Western maps.

The following research explores in depth whether these claims are correct or not and whether they fit the historical context.

\*Vast amounts of full translation and analysis of the records of the Ming and Qing Dynasties' official envoys (Sakuho-shi) to Ryukyu by Nobuo Harada (A handy conclusion of which can be found in *Senkaku Shotou—Sakuhou-ryukyushi-roku wo yomu* (The Senkaku Islands: Read the Ryukyu envoy records) published by Yoju Shorin (2006)).

\*Detailed investigations by Nozomu Ishii based on a compilation of Chinese classical documents and various pre-modern and modern documents (see Nozomu Ishii's *Senkaku Hanbaku Manual: 100-dai* (Senkaku Refutation Manual: 100 Materials) published by Shukosha (2014)).

Having perused the works of Harada and Ishii, as well as some of the documents and materials cited by the Chinese side, I can highlight the following points as problems of the historical documents and materials referring to the Senkaku Islands and China's claims.

\*The place name "Chogyo-Sho" does appear in Chinese documentation. It is noted as being a small island far out at sea in Ming and Qing coastal defense papers. It is also mentioned, along with a map, in compass operation orientation between Fukushu (Fuzhou) and Naha.

\*However, these references only illustrate "knowledge" of the name. The Ming and Qing Dynasties didn't possess the skills to conduct distant voyages beyond the raging waves of the East China Sea, so they relied on proficient crews dispatched by Ryukyu to conduct ocean voyages. Therefore, even if the name of island was recorded, it was the Ryukyu people who utilized the island.

\*The feeling that the color of the sea is connected to one's homeland is commonplace. However, making a fluid junction between two sea currents a national border is a different matter. It is hard to assert a stable recognition of that border, and some historical documents and records assert that the "Black Water Ditch" doesn't even exist, such as Qing Dynasty records from official envoy (Sakuho-shi) Li Dingyuan. The maps used for compass orientation only show a row of islands in the sea, and do not draw a clear national border line.

\*In the Ming era, "Kelung (Keeling) Island", in other words Taiwan, depicted in the same row of islands as "Chogyo-Sho," was not under the control of the Ming Dynasty in the first place.

\*The recognition that "Chogyo-Sho = Shoutou (Xiaodong)" in Zheng Shun'gong's *Nihon Ikkan (Riben Yijian)* was not handed down to posterity.

\*Sometime after the start of the Qing Dynasty, the western part of Taiwan eventually came under the Qing control. However, up until the 1870s, Taiwan's northern boundary was officially labeled as Jilong = Keelung and its environs, in an official geography book. The eastern region heading south from present-day Yilan (Hualien (Hualian in pinyin) and Taitung (Taidong in pinyin) Counties) was run by "Seiban (*sheng ban*; indigenous people)" and was not under Qing control. (That is precisely why Japan dispatched troops to Taiwan in 1874 while the Qing Dynasty funded the operation.)

Based on these historical documents, the focus point is whether the Ming and Qing Dynasties really did operate Chogyo-Sho within its "scope of coastal defense" and as "part of Taiwan."

### **Recognition as "the island of navigation markers"**

It is hard to consider China's insistence on these points has been thoroughly investigated.

China cites the Ming period *Bubishi (Wubei Zhi)*, a comprehensive military book by Mao Yuanyi (1621) as prepotent evidence for its claim to Senkaku. However, if you peruse that book carefully, from the

whole gist of the argument, which is not limited to proper nouns, the contemporary territory of “Chogyo-Sho,” domain recognition and coastal defense methodology will come to the surface.

The *Wubei Zhi*'s first section on Coastal Defense tells us that Chenqian (the small islands of Sekkou (Zhejiang) just south of Shanghai) is the boundary between mountains and sea, in other words, the borderline. The seas beyond that were infested by Wako pirates (mainly groups of Japanese armed traders), so the Ming Dynasty made a resolute commitment to defend Chenqian (against the Wako pirates) as its strategic frontline. To defend further offshore did not only pose too great a risk of troops being sacrificed in sudden shallows, but also required too much effort, given the fact that the open waters were infested by Wako pirates, so the Ming Dynasty encouraged to concentrate instead on attacking Wako pirates in waters near the mainland coast to prevent them from trying to land, recognizing this as a better strategy.

Based on this understanding, the scope of coastal defense was limited to the mainland coastal areas and small nearby islands within a stone's throw. More distant islands such as the Senkaku Islands were resting grounds for Wako pirates and were dangerous because they were surrounded by shallows and ineffective to defend. In this kind of world, it was considered better not to get involved.

As a result, the following factors all become clear:

\*The forts and sentinel posts depicted on coastal defense maps are all concentrated on the mainland coast, and there are none on offshore islands.

\*There are only vague expressions, statuses and relationships with offshore islands, such as “Chogyo-Sho” and “Kelung (Keelung) Island.”

\*Originally, the Ming Dynasty was not powerful enough to extend its jurisdiction and uphold the claim: Taiwan = Kelung (Keelung) Island.

\*The Chinese official envoys (Sakuho-shi) did not have sufficient seafaring skills. As a result, Ryukyu people and Wako pirates freely roamed and dominated the East China Sea area, and they were the leading characters who enjoyed the most effective presence in the area.

Therefore, it is probably accurate to describe the Senkaku Islands, en route from Fukushu (Fuzhou) to Naha, as an ocean route marker that was used for compass orientation. As long as it was an uninhabited navigation marker, Ryukyu people probably felt they had come home when for the first time they saw Kume Island. Even with the geographical understanding of the Ming Dynasty, they would have known that their territory did not extend further than the islands just off the coast of Sekkoku (Zhejiang) and Fukken (Fujian). (If it had obviously extended further, they should have noted this earlier in *Ittoushi* (*Yitongzhi*; Records of the Unity), or other official records.)

It is clear that the Senkaku Islands were terra nullius in pre-modern times, and a grey zone without a clear borderline.  
(Go to Part 2)

## **China unable and unwilling to accept the Senkaku Islands are not part of Taiwan**

Contradictions in China's stance revealed in historical documents and materials relating to the Senkaku Islands (Part 2) April 27, 2015 <sup>2</sup>

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So how did “management and coastal defense of the Chogyo-Sho” change with the transition from the Ming to the Qing Dynasty? Qing continued to depend on Ryukyu people for navigation to the Ryukyus and while the Qing Dynasty overthrew surviving Ming retainer Zheng and brought western Taiwan under its control, eastern Taiwan was left for many years in the hands of Seiban (*sheng ban*; indigenous people) and was not directly managed. It is reasonable to think that the status of the Senkaku Islands as an ownerless navigation marker also remained in the Qing Dynasty.

### **Senkaku Islands located far to the northeast of “Taiwan's northernmost border”**

Despite this, in its “Chogyo Island White Paper,” China (and Taiwan on its official foreign ministry website) make the point that the Qing Dynasty was “controlling Chogyo-Sho,” focusing on “Chogyo-dai (Daioyutai)” mentioned in the dynasty's book of regional records, *Taikai-Shisaroku (Taihai shichalu*, Huang Shujing, 1736). There is plenty of room for doubt regarding this assertion.

The second volume, *Bubi* (Wubei; on military defense) notes the northernmost border of Taiwan to be at Kelung (Keelung), and Tanshui (Danshui). It is clear from the text of the records of then local officials that the Senkaku Islands, which are located so far northeast of the above-mentioned northernmost border, were not historically considered as “part of Taiwan.”

In addition, the book goes on to talk about coastal defense policy, saying that navy was not equipped to do battle on the open seas, so they would try to come into harbor areas to wage war, making the coastal areas the real battlefields. As with the Ming rulers before them, the Qing rulers recognized that the stage of coastal defense is along the coastline and in ports where people live. They were not considering crossing the raging waves to conquer distant uninhabited islands and bring them into the coastal defense area.

To make doubly sure, where the place name “Chogyo-dai” does appear in the book, it is in a text listing fishing and harbor ports and bays on a southern, anticlockwise route around the Taiwan Strait from Kaohsiung City and Fengshan. In this part, Bianliao and Jia-li-Tau (Jialu Village) appear after Fengshan. Anyone who is familiar with the geography of Taiwan would instantly recognize that this was describing a route around the southern part of Taiwan from today's Pingtung to Taitung (Taidong) County, and is unlikely to suddenly leap north of “the northernmost part of Taiwan,” “Kelung (Keelung).”

In the middle of this list of place names, the texts wrote about the east area of the Bashi Channel separating the Philippines and Taiwan as being an “area with no fortress anymore, where only small fishing boats come and go.” This would suggest that officials didn't have control over the area that is currently Taitung (Taidong) County and Hualien (Hualian) County. The listing ends by saying, “there is a vast ocean beyond the mountains and, to the north, a mountain called Chogyo-dai, which could berth 10 or more large ships, and you can go by cedarwood ship as far as Xuepolan in Tsongau.

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<sup>2</sup> This article was originally published as 平野聡（東京大学大学院法学政治学研究科教授）「尖閣は台湾の一部ではないことを読み取れない中国：尖閣関連資料から見る中国の矛盾（後編）」

『Wedge Infinity』2015年4月27日.

Among these places, “Xuepolan in Tsongau” corresponds to the mouth of the Xiuguluan River near Jingpu in Hualien (Hualian) County (Reference: Zheng Hailin’s “Study on Chogyo-dai and Xuepolan in Tsongau in Huang Shujing’s *Taihai shichalu*,” *Haixia Pinglun*, 269, May 2013). I happen to own a Taiwan road map entitled “Taiwan Gonglu Daren Ditu Daquan” (Taiwan Giant Public Road Map) published by Huwai zhenghuo Tushu (2007). Looking at that, you can see a small island called “Xibulan” near the mouth of the river. “Xuepolan” and “Xibulan” sound very similar. If you consider that these two places names could have derived from the Ami people and been given different Chinese characters when writing the name, then you understand that this record relates to a list of ports appearing in order as you head south, anticlockwise along the coast from Fengshan to Jingpu in Hualien (Hualian) County. Somewhere along the way they would probably have turned from the Bashi Channel into the Pacific and seen a natural small island port which they called “Chogyo-dai.” Considering Taiwan’s topography, you can probably tell that this is the current Chenggong in Taitung (Taidong) County. There is a scenic set of island reefs called “Sanxiantai,” which would correspond exactly with Chogyo-dai.

Incidentally, the text of “The Chogyo-dai Islands are part of the Republic of China” on the official website of Taiwan=Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan refers to the “large ocean beyond the mountain with Chogyo-dai to the north.” It interprets mountain to mean Taiwan, and understands the phrase to mean “in the ocean north of Taiwan.” However, when you talk about “beyond the mountains” in Taiwan, it usually refers to today’s Hualien (Hualian) and Taitung (Taidong) Counties, east of the tall mountain ranges that pierce central Taiwan. The reason for this is that, up until the 1870s, the Qing Dynasty was only able to control the Western half and the Northeast part of Taiwan. I wonder, is it only me who considers it natural to assume that the “vast ocean stretching out from here” would be the coast of Hualien (Hualian) and Taitung (Taidong) Counties?

If the book was really referring to the Senkaku Islands, then, provided that Chogyo-Sho appears on the left of Kelung (Keelung) Sho=Taiwan, when seen from the mainland, from as early as the Ming period, surely it would be more natural for it to appear after the place names in Northeast Taiwan (today’s Yilan County). However, that is not written in the book, and, as I mentioned earlier, the book states that Taiwan’s northernmost part is today’s Keelung.

### “Chogyo-dai” is a common place name

So, let’s look at some of the historical documents that refer to today’s Yilan County. Another document that China cites as “proof that Chinese officials in Taiwan controlled Chogyo Island” is *Jusan Fukken tuushi* (*Chongzuan Fujian Tongzhi*; Multiple Fujian Annales) (1871) which lists Chogyo-dai as a place name of the Kebalan (Kabalan) administrative office, the former Yilan County.

First, the northernmost tip of Kebalan was Sandiao, which is Sandiaojiao Cape near today’s Fulong town in Xinbei City. You can see that there is no mention at this moment of Chogyo-Sho far away from the northeast of Keelung. Moving south from Sandiaojiao, we see an order of place names starting with Wushigang, Guiyu (Guishan Island), Wuweicheng (Yilan), and Suao. Beyond that, we see the same reference as in *Taikai-Shisaroku* (*Taihai shichalu*), “There is a vast ocean beyond the mountains and to the north is Chogyo-dai, a port so deep that it could berth a thousand large ships. Then you can proceed by cedarwood ship to Xuepolan in Tsongao.” The Qing’s control at the time only extended as far south as Suao on the east coast of Taiwan. Hualien (Hualian) and Taitung (Taidong) Counties to the south were said to be the lands of the Seiban (*sheng ban*; indigenous people).

Accordingly, the “Chogyo-dai” referred to here would be a place name that appeared on the way south from Suao. It is hard to believe that, just after referring to the Senkaku Islands, which are far out to sea in a northeasterly direction, the records would jump back to the southbound journey towards Jingpu in Hualien (Hualian) County. Therefore, the “Chogyo-dai” mentioned here probably refers to Hualien (Hualian), because you would not say that the Senkaku Islands have deep ports. It is also possible that there is a misprint in the text, confusing 10 and 1,000, in which case it could mean today’s Chenggong township that can berth that many ships in the port. It is also possible that, for areas that were not under

effective Qing control in 1870, they could simply have taken the descriptions directly from *Taikai-Shisaroku (Taihai shichalu)*.

The place name “Chogyo-dai” is very common and could be seen anywhere, starting with the Chinese State Guesthouse. The Chinese (and the Taiwanese) governments are so keen to find some historical reference to their control of Chogyo-Sho that they pounce on any reference to Chogyo-dai without investigating the place name or geographical location in any great depth.

### **We should make judgements based on entire historical documents and materials**

In conclusion, the Senkaku Islands are not part of Taiwan. The reference in Zheng Shun’gong’s *Nihon Ikkon (Ribei Yijian)* in the Ming period was not handed down to posterity. While Shihei Hayashi’s map painted the Senkaku Islands and the Chinese mainland the same pink (pink is also used for many other places such as Ogasawara and Kamchatka), it did not paint Taiwan and Senkaku the same color. China should examine more carefully the contexts in which “Chogyo” appears in classical Chinese documents and materials, how ocean regions were used, how the nature of coastal defense awareness and geographical understanding were like at that time, how sustainable is the claim that Chogyo Island was part of Taiwan, and how China itself publishes maps and official documents in pre-modern and modern times.

Returning to the case of the map of Fukken (Fujian) of 1969, the Senkaku Islands were displayed beyond the usual frame for probably the same reason as they were on the Ming period coastal defense map. In other words, although the Ming Dynasty didn’t control them, it needed to take care of them as a place which should be noted where Wako pirates might start to put down roots. Also, the Senkaku Islands were under the U.S. administration in 1969. The islands were like a sword piercing China, which was in confrontation with the U.S. and the Soviet Union at the time. The islands were purposely singled out as a place to pay special attention to, and that is probably why China jotted the name of Senkaku outside the usual map frame.

If China has chosen the phrase “history is a great teacher” as its motto, now is the time to face up to that history. Instead of pouncing on proper nouns that appear in historical documents, I hope China will consider these matters based on the historical documents in their entirety.

China has not done this and, especially since 2012, has been making improper claims. Today, China continues to make implausible claims and statements. I am worried about a situation in which Japan is drawn into participating in a China-led international financial framework and is once again confronted with unilateral Chinese measures. I am sure that many other Japanese people would not want to see this situation either.

I believe the desire to welcome Chinese tourists who want to know the true Japan, and the growing sense of caution about China’s less-than-honest approach over the past few years (reflected in the worsening results of surveys of Japanese people’s views of China) have come from the same fundamental features of Japan, which has determinedly pursued pacifism and actively helped to promote China’s development. Before criticizing Japan as a “troublemaker that still ignores the outcome of the Second World War,” I think China should recognize the reality of Japan as it is today. That would serve as an important foundation to substantiate the significance of the very recent Japan-China bilateral summit meetings.