

Uchiyama's Bookstore

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Abstract:

Uchiyama Kanzô (1885-1959) is a figure whose importance in Sino-Japanese cultural relations has yet to be fully assessed. Among Western scholars, Uchiyama is a scarcely known figure; in Japan, he is little more than a footnote in Taishô bundan history; in China, where his impact on May Fourth literature has been better recognized, circumstances have at times prevented his contributions toward cultural understanding between China and Japan from being more fully appreciated. This paper will attempt to define Uchiyama's role in Sino-Japanese cultural relations, with special reference to the significance of activities centered in his bookstore in Shanghai, which served as a focal point of relations between the two literary communities from 1916 until the late 1930s. Among the cultural activities associated with Uchiyama's shop worthy of mention are the sale and distribution of Japanese books and magazines, including translations, education and scholarship, and his self appointed role as a "liaison" between the two literary

communities. Uchiyama painstakingly cataloged these activities in a diary of his life known as *Kakôroku* (A record at age sixty).

.01. Uchiyama's Bookstore: Book Sales and Publishing (Return to Index)

Uchiyama Kanzô was raised in a family which revered Chinese culture and encouraged his literary aspirations from an early age. It was in 1916, three years after his first visit to China, that Uchiyama returned to Shanghai with the intention of opening a bookstore featuring Japanese texts. It was with a sense of mission that this young Christian opened his store with the goal of serving both Japanese and Chinese clientele. Appreciating Uchiyama's contributions to Sino-Japanese cultural relations implies an understanding of the clientele he sought to reach. Although there were a number of audiences to which the works in his store appealed, strictly speaking we can identify two groups he sought to reach: Japanese residents of Shanghai and young Chinese intellectuals returned from extended periods of study in Japan who possessed a facility with Japanese language. As I describe Uchiyama's cultural activities I will also be addressing the question of his audiences.

Preeminent among Uchiyama's activities at his Shanghai bookstore was the sale and distribution of texts, including Japanese books and periodicals along with works translated from Western languages. Uchiyama also published a few journals, such as the journal he produced under the auspices of the Chinese Drama Research Society that served as the mouthpiece for that group which he formed and which met at his shop.

1927 marked the high point of Uchiyama's activities in Shanghai and by then his bookstore was well established. Part of the success of Uchiyama's shop in this period had to do with an increase in the number of periodicals he was able to sell to Japanese residents in China. These included such large circulation magazines as *Chûo Kôron* (Central Debate), *Kaizô* (Reform), and *Bungei Shunshû* (Literary Quarterly), along with poetry and haiku magazines.[1] Incidentally, Uchiyama expressed surprise in his memoirs at the fact that it was primarily families who were purchasing those weighty political and economic periodicals despite the fact that these periodicals were not the kind that would normally be purchased by families in Japan.

Uchiyama carried a variety of translations of works from Western languages in his shop that appealed to young Chinese intellectuals and at times served as the basis for their translations into Chinese. In the *Kakôroku*, Uchiyama refers to collections of poetry from Western literature that had been translated into Chinese based on works from his shop. Although it is impossible to test the veracity of Uchiyama's statement, his contention is supported by his close familiarity with such writers/translators as Lu Xun (1881-1936), Tian Han (1898-1979), Zhang Ziping (1893-1959), and Guo Moruo (1892-1978), among others. Uchiyama suggests, with no small amount of pride and perhaps a little hubris, that he was personally acquainted with many of the Chinese

writers who translated the over eight hundred poems which had, by that time, been translated into Chinese. These translators appeared at his shop from time to time during the twenty years that his shop was in Shanghai.[2] Furthermore, Uchiyama purports that of the two hundred and twenty Chinese writers, by his estimation, who translated foreign literature during the May Fourth era, at least forty three had studied in Japan.[3] What Uchiyama was suggesting of course was that the works contained in his shop, both original Japanese works and Western works in Japanese translation, contributed to the emergence of a body of foreign literature translated into Chinese during the 1920s.

.02. The Second Floor: Education and Scholarship (Return to Index)

With the increasing popularity of the low priced enpon (one yen) books in the late 1920s, the stock of Uchiyama's store changed as did the focus of his activities at the shop. The bookstore contained two floors, and for the most part, sales were confined to the first floor. The second floor was a flexible space that could be used for other purposes. This was the second way in which Uchiyama's shop contributed to Sino-Japanese cultural relations. The second floor of Uchiyama's shop was used at various times as a center for scholarship and cultural interchange and as a place for entertaining visiting writers from Japan.

Japanese writers who came to visit China in the modern era generally started their journey in the port of Shanghai. In some cases, writers used the second floor of Uchiyama's store as a starting point, where Uchiyama would introduce the Japanese visitors to his acquaintances in the Chinese literary community. Uchiyama envisioned himself as both a student of traditional Chinese culture and as an educator charged with the duty of delivering Japanese language materials to contribute to the new literature emerging in the 1920s.

It was this role of scholar/educator that led Uchiyama to form the Chinese Drama Research Society (Shina geki kenkyûkai). Originally, this group of aficionados of Chinese theater met at the Japanese Christian Church in Shanghai but later moved to the second floor of Uchiyama's shop. Formed in 1924, the purpose of the Society, as articulated in the articles of their charter, was to research the rich tradition of Chinese drama, to make presentations about Chinese theater, and to sponsor performances. The group boasted various levels of membership revolving around the central cohort consisting of seven members, four Chinese and three Japanese, who paid regular membership fees and contributed to the coterie magazine. Although membership in the society fluctuated, it included besides Uchiyama, the well-known Chinese dramatists Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian (1889-1962) and Xie Liuyi (1900-1945), the translator of *The Tale of Genji*. [4]

Another interesting activity undertaken by Uchiyama in his capacity as educator and scholar was the opening of a Japanese language school in Shanghai in 1935-36. According to Uchiyama's

account, such schools catering to Chinese students already existed in substantial numbers in Shanghai at that time, but were generally academically unsound. The idea behind such schools was that much from the West had already been translated into Japanese, so that a high level of proficiency in reading Japanese would provide a key to understanding the West. This would prepare young men to better contribute to China's modernization. The idea for the school came from Zheng Boqi, writer, member of the Creation Society, and a close friend of Uchiyama's. Uchiyama, whose impetus to open the Shanghai bookstore had included furnishing Japanese texts for an audience of young Chinese readers, heartily supported the plan. With the monetary and logistical support of the Japanese Study Association (Nihon benkyôkai) in Shanghai, they were able to procure five rooms on the second floor of the Buyer's Association (Kôbai kumiai). With Zheng as the principal and five other instructors on the staff, they opened the school and classes quickly filled.[5] This was accompanied by an attempt to create a strong library of Japanese language texts, and they were soon able to boast a collection of over seven thousand Japanese texts. Just as they were beginning to succeed, fighting in Manchuria and the anti-Japanese backlash that followed led to a mass exodus of students from the school, and so, reluctantly, they had to close the school in 1936 after less than a year's time.[6] During Uchiyama's twenty years in Shanghai, many of his attempts to foster good will and cultural interchange between Japan and China were cut short due to sudden shifts in the political climate between the two countries.

.03. Uchiyama as Cultural Liason (Return to Index)

One area in which Uchiyama made great strides during the 1920s, and perhaps his most lasting contribution to Sino-Japanese relations, was in his capacity as a liaison between the two literary communities and as a "tour guide" for visiting Japanese writers.

Japanese writers in the modern era had visited China from the late nineteenth century onward, including visits by such luminaries in the Meiji period bundan as Natsume Soseki (1867-1916) and Futabatei Shimei (1872-1912). However, it was during the 1920s that the pace of such visits dramatically increased, with the great majority of literary travelers beginning their journeys in Shanghai. Perhaps it was natural, under such circumstances, that someone in Uchiyama's position should play a vital role in bringing these visiting Japanese writers together with the Chinese writers with whom he was acquainted. The Japanese writers who passed through Shanghai during the 1920s and were the recipients of Uchiyama's efforts at cultural exchange included Akutagawa Ryûnosuke (1892-1927), Tanizaki Junichiro (1886-1965), Satô Haruo (1892-1964) and Hayashi Fumiko (1904-1951).

Of course, such attempts at bringing visiting Japanese writers into contact with Chinese writers would have been impossible had Uchiyama's connections with the May Fourth literary community (wentan) not been so extensive. In fact, to some degree or another, Uchiyama was

acquainted with virtually all of the leading Chinese writers of the day. Many of these writers had studied in Japan and were drawn to his store originally out of a desire to remain abreast of recent Japanese translations and intellectual currents. These included not only the aforementioned Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian but also Creation Society members Guo Moruo and Yu Dafu (1896-1945) as well as Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967) and his brother Lu Xun (1881-1936). They found in Uchiyama Kanzô a kindred spirit and passionate advocate for contemporary Chinese literature. It was about his relationship with Lu Xun, with whom Uchiyama exchanged poetry and spoke about literature during the last decade of Lu Xun's life that Uchiyama referred to as the greatest joy in his life.[7]

The degree to which writers themselves recognized Uchiyama as a liaison and came to depend on him as an intermediary can be inferred from several correspondences from writers to Uchiyama. In each of these letters, Uchiyama's capacity as a cultural liaison is alluded to either implicitly or explicitly. For example, in a letter from Yu Dafu to Satô Haruo from March of 1928, Yu refers to a manuscript about Chinese poetry by a colleague of his in the possession of Mushanokoji Saneatsu. Yu asks Satô to have Mushanokoji return the manuscript by sending it to Uchiyama's shop where he can go to retrieve it.[8] In other words, Uchiyama's shop seemed to Yu the safest, most accessible place to send this important document.

In a short note from Yu Dafu to another Japanese writer, ôda Takeo, from 1937, Yu who was living in Fuzhou at the time, is apparently advising the Japanese writer on a planned visit to China. He recommends that if ôda travels in April, Yu might be able to go and meet him in Shanghai. Shanghai, he suggests, would be the best place to stay because he could easily travel from there to Hangzhou. However, in a telling piece of final advice, Yu suggests that ôda consult carefully with Uchiyama before making any travel plans.[9]

In correspondences from Lu Xun to Uchiyama, we see a similar recognition of Uchiyama's role in intercultural relations. In a brief note from 1931, Lu Xun writes to ask Uchiyama to pass along some enclosed photographs to a mutual acquaintance in Shanghai.[10] A second letter from 1932 to Uchiyama, who has returned to Japan for an extended visit, is apparently written as a response to an invitation from Satô Haruo and other Japanese writers to Lu Xun to visit Japan. Lu Xun asks Uchiyama to inform Satô and the other writers that he must regretfully decline their invitation. He explains that he is afraid to inconvenience people while in Japan, and he is reluctant to put aside his writing regimen. He also urges Uchiyama to hurry back to Shanghai because although he has been visiting the book store everyday, he insists, he misses the lively discussions (manwa) that the two share when together.[11]

The content and tone of these correspondences confirm my belief that Japanese and Chinese writers respected and trusted Uchiyama in this capacity as liaison between the two communities. They naturally came to consider him the link to the other community and as the one person who

could be entrusted to convey information and materials across the political and cultural divide that separated the two literary communities.

May Fourth era Chinese writers were most eager to meet visiting Japanese writers. On the Japanese side also, for those who chose to visit China, there was a desire to meet and discuss literature with the leading figures of the new vernacular literary movement about which, admittedly, they knew little. In that sense, Uchiyama's role was an easy one -- he simply had to act as a conduit between the two literary communities, ensuring that writers on both sides of the cultural divide had the opportunity to meet and interact with their peers. Nevertheless, Uchiyama apparently had a genius for creating opportunities for writers to meet and converse, and for introducing visiting Japanese writers to precisely those Chinese writers with whom they would likely be compatible and with whom conceivably they could forge lasting friendships.

One of the most interesting visits by a Japanese writer to Shanghai during this era was Tanizaki Junichiro's 1926 visit in which Uchiyama Kanzô played a pivotal role arranging meetings with Guo Moruo, Tian Han, and others at his store at the beginning of Tanizaki's visit and then taking part in arrangements for a banquet on Tanizaki's behalf that brought together dozens of Chinese cultural and literary figures. The contents of this visit became the subject of an essay by Tanizaki titled "Shanghai kenbun ki" (A record of a visit to Shanghai). The visit is also discussed at some length in Joshua Fogel's article "Japanese Literary Travelers in Prewar China". [12] I would like to examine the visit of another Japanese writer, Satô Haruo, in the following year (1927) in order to assess Uchiyama's role as liaison during such visits.

Satô's visit was recorded by several people involved in the trip including Uchiyama and Satô himself. Much about the visit can also be gleaned from a letter to the literary scholar Itô Toramaru by Satô Haruo's niece, Chieko, who accompanied the writer and his wife to China. Chieko relates that soon after they arrived in Shanghai, they called on Uchiyama's shop and were introduced to several Chinese writers. They stayed at a hotel called the Wansuiguan where Akutagawa and other Japanese writers had stayed during their visits. Tian Han, Yu Dafu and others took them around to various places during their stay, dined at well-known restaurants, and visited Shanghai's foreign concessions. They also attended a play sponsored by the Chinese Drama Research Society and attended a banquet in their honor at the Japanese Club sponsored by the local Japanese community.[13] After returning to Shanghai from a sojourn with Yu Dafu to Hangzhou and the West Lake they again called on Uchiyama's shop. It was during this visit to Uchiyama's bookstore that Satô and his party learned of the suicide of Akutagawa Ryûnosuke.[14] Akutagawa, one of the most famous Japanese writers of his day, was both a friend and rival of Satô, and one can imagine that the shock that Satô received from the news was indeed great. It is interesting to note that Satô received this news from Uchiyama, who had become acquainted with both men in Shanghai.

Satô's 1927 journey appears to follow the same basic pattern as Tanizaki's visit of the previous year. Interestingly enough, by the time of Satô's visit, Japanese writers traveling to China immediately recognized Uchiyama's position as liaison between the two communities. Satô, who had been introduced to Uchiyama by Tanizaki, immediately checked in with Uchiyama on his arrival. During his visit, he was dependent on Uchiyama for arranging his schedule and for acting as an intermediary in meetings with Chinese writers who did much of the actual day-to-day organizing of activities. This "hands off" approach seemed to serve Uchiyama's ultimate objective particularly well. He created opportunities for Japanese and Chinese writers to meet without taking a conspicuous position in actual interactions between writers on both sides. He usually remained at his shop that served as a home base for these literary visitors.

.04. Uchiyama's Writing: Records and Miscellany (Return to Index)

Uchiyama wrote about this visit along with the visits of other writers and about interactions between Chinese and Japanese writers. Uchiyama's records of his own activities, his reminiscences about writers, and his observations on various facets of contemporary China were the last significant contributions by Uchiyama to Sino-Japanese relations.

Uchiyama's first writings about China were not published until after the other contributions described today had already been made. His first essay, published in the journal *Kaizô* in 1934, titled "Shanghai seikatsu nijû nen" (Twenty years living in Shanghai), was a glance back at cultural interchange in Shanghai during the two tumultuous decades that his store had been the hub of interaction between Chinese and Japanese writers. The success of this and subsequent articles and books can be interpreted as a manifestation of a continuing interest in contemporary China on the part of Japanese writers in the 1930s despite increasingly volatile political relations between the two nations. A number of similar articles, most of which were published in *Kaizô*, offered further observations about Chinese culture and reminiscences about Uchiyama's relationships with individual cultural figures under such names as "Shanghai manwa" (Lively discussions about Shanghai) and "Shanghai mango" (Random prattle about Shanghai). His observations about Chinese society were collected in a book called "Ikite iru Chûgoku no sugata" (Aspects of a living China).[15] After returning to Japan permanently in the late thirties, Uchiyama continued to write about his twenty years at the bookstore, including the journal *Kakôroku* published in the 1960s, from which much of the information from today's presentation was gleaned.

.05. Uchiyama Kanzô's Politics (Return to Index)

Finally, any discussion about the role of an individual as a liaison between Japan and China during the years in question must attempt to account for the politics of that individual. Cultural

and literary activities, claims of “pure literature” notwithstanding, were in a sense inseparable from politics. In the *Kakôroku*, Uchiyama eschews discussion of political issues, for the most part, but an examination of those occasions when his political views are revealed suggest some contradictions in his political positions. When Uchiyama arrived in Shanghai in 1913 he was a Christian Socialist and in some ways he always remained true to his initial political views and was sympathetic with the cause of the young Chinese Communists with whom he was acquainted. He found it ironic, for example, that Chen Duxiu, founder of the Chinese Communist party and former exchange student to Japan, read a number of Communist writings in translations from the shop of this Japanese Socialist and professed Christian.[16]

On the other hand, given these sympathies, Uchiyama was not as critical of Japan’s imperialist aggression in China as might be expected. When confronted with anti-Japanese reactions to Japanese imperialism in China in the twenties and thirties, Uchiyama all too often tends to regard the events as a nuisance that upsets the balance of life in Shanghai rather than condemning the Japanese aggression that gave rise to those circumstances. This apparent insensitivity on the part of Uchiyama toward the situation in China can be seen also in the timing of the attempt to open the Japanese school referred to earlier. Even before he and Zheng attempted to open the school, anti-Japanese sentiment was running high in Shanghai. The most charitable interpretation one might make was that he and Zheng were trying to alleviate some of the ill will toward Japan by suggesting that Japan was not simply an Imperial aggressor and that it still had much to offer in terms of providing a model for China’s modernization.

Ultimately, it is apparent that Uchiyama was not nearly as interested in politics as he was in larger cultural issues, and would have avoided thorny, divisive issues altogether were he able. Certainly his friends and acquaintances among Chinese intellectuals ran the full gamut on the political spectrum. In the final analysis, Uchiyama apparently felt that his vocation as cultural ambassador transcended such mundane concerns as political ideology. This can be inferred from the fact that the one association which he founded and in which he was actively engaged was not a political society but rather a literary coterie composed of both Chinese and Japanese members and dedicated to the understanding and appreciation of Chinese drama.

.06. Conclusions (Return to Index)

In conclusion, I would like to note that Uchiyama’s store, specializing in Japanese texts, including translations, was among the first stores of its kind in Shanghai. However, by the time the store was well established in the 1930s, there were ten such bookstores competing for customers.[17] By that point, Uchiyama’s store already had become, via word of mouth, something of an institution -- a “must-see” for visiting Japanese writers and one of the first stops for Chinese students repatriated from study abroad in Japan. An examination of Uchiyama’s voluminous writings about his life in China suggests that he envisioned himself as something of

a missionary for the cause of Sino-Japanese cultural relations and attacked the duties of fostering cultural interchange and good will with evangelical zeal.

In his various capacities as writer, educator, scholar and liaison between the two cultural communities, Uchiyama strove to bring Japanese and Chinese writers together. I have come across nothing in my reading to suggest that his motives were anything less than altruistic. For the sinophile Uchiyama, the simple opportunity to bring Chinese and Japanese writers together for positive dialogue and interaction seems to have been motivation enough. Unfortunately, there is little to suggest that Uchiyama's mission to bring the two literary communities had any lasting impact. Relations between the two countries in the 1930s and 1940s made it at first difficult and then impossible for the kind of interaction between Japanese and Chinese writers that had been achieved in Shanghai in the 1920s largely through the intercession of Uchiyama. The cultural exchange achieved in Uchiyama's shop during the twenties stands as both a watershed and, unfortunately, as something of an anomaly in terms of cultural relations between China and Japan. Uchiyama Kanzô deserves recognition for encouraging writers on both sides to rise above political and cultural differences in order to find points of commonality in the mutual desire to create and nurture a modern vernacular literature.

.07. Notes/References (Return to Index)

[1] Uchiyama Kanzô, *Kakôroku* (A record at age sixty), (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981), 175.

[2] *ibid*, 193.

[3] *ibid*, 194.

[4] *ibid*, 167.

[5] *ibid*, 172.

[6] *ibid*, 172.

[7] *ibid*, 156.

[8] Wang Zili, ed. *Yu Dafu Wenji* (Yu Dafu's writings), vol. 9 (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1984), 401.

[9] *ibid*, 467.

[10] Lu Xun, *Lu Xun shuxin ji* (Lu Xun's collected correspondences), vol. 2 (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1976), 1084.

[11] *ibid*, 1092.

[12] Fogel, Joshua, "Japanese Literary Travelers in Prewar China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 49, No. 2 (1989), 575-602.

[13] Itô Toramaru, ed. *Iku Tappu shiryô hoben* (A companion of Yu Dafu materials), vol. 2 (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Bunken Sentaa, 1975), 201.

[14] *ibid*, 202.

[15] "'Shanghai mono' no keifu risuto" (A chronological list of works about Shanghai) at <http://www.rcedu.kyushu-u.ac.jp/%7Epengin/shanghaimono1.html>.

[16] Uchiyama, 157.

[17] *ibid*, 249.