

M. BANNO AS A PIONEER IN  
JAPANESE-AMERICAN STUDY OF MODERN CHINA'S  
FOREIGN RELATIONS

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Since I found Masataka Banno in the 1950s to be a kindred spirit, I appreciate the opportunity to write about his early work as a pioneer in international history. Among his other activities, he published two influential books in English dealing with modern China. He also developed a special interest in the psychology of Chinese and Western diplomats as evidenced in their negotiations during the middle of the nineteenth century. He saw international history as concerned in the last analysis with the meeting of cultures. He realized this field was no easy task and prepared himself by acquiring an ability not only in Chinese and English but also in French and German and finally in Russian. His career is worth studying both for the innate attractiveness of an imaginative mind and vibrant personality and also as an example of an important historical trend, the growth of cultural relations between the United States and Japan.

Masataka's preparation for this career came naturally after the fact that he was born in an apartment at 551 West 157 St., New York, on June 26, 1916, and thus in fact could have claimed American citizenship. His father, Shinjirō Banno, was a successful and modern-minded Japanese businessman in the firm of Z. Horikoshi and Co. As an importer of silk piece goods Mr. Banno was in fact following in the footsteps of Haru Matsukata Reischauer's grandfather, whose career she has described in her *Samurai and Silk*.<sup>(1)</sup> Shinjirō had an excellent command of English and was thoroughly at home in American life. He conscientiously fostered and supported his son's ambition in the field of international

relations. (After Shinjirō's retirement he and his wife would live in a house next door to Masataka and his family.) Both he and his son fitted into the new mood of Japan after World War II when the mutual interests of Japanese and Americans were revived and developed in a new international climate.

Masataka lived mainly in New York City for his first six years from 1916 to October 1922 except for his first visit to Japan during several months in 1919. For the next three years his family lived on West 108th St. and its small son attended the Horace Mann Kindergarten nearby at Columbia University. Moving to Tokyo in 1922, Masataka soon entered the primary school attached to the Tokyo Higher Normal School. His American traits plunged him at once into problems of cultural adjustment.

His education in Japan during the 1920s and '30s took him through six years of primary school, five years of middle school, three of higher middle school and three of university, a total of 17 years in all. In Masataka's case lung trouble obliged him to drop out of Tokyo Imperial University from 1937 to 1941, but in 1942 he graduated in political science and law. In the course of this long training he studied especially classical Chinese and French in addition to maintaining progress in English.

Masataka introduced himself to me in a letter of January 8, 1951, inquiring about the volume *Modern China: A Bibliographical Guide to Chinese Works 1898-1937* which Professor K.-C. Liu and I had published through the Harvard-Yenching Institute in 1950.<sup>(2)</sup> He explained that from 1942 to 1948 he had been an assistant under Dr. Toshio Ueda at the Institute for Oriental Culture (Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo) of Tokyo University. Currently he was an assistant professor of political science and diplomatic history in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Tokyo Metropolitan University. His main interest he said "is now on the actual working of the diplomatic machinery of the Chinese government late in the Ch'ing dynasty and the pattern of behavior of mandarins in charge of foreign affairs." Further, he said, "I am devoting myself to preparatory work for a monograph concerning the Tsungli Yamen." As

evidence of the pertinacity required in scholarship, let us note here that Masataka's book *China and the West 1858-1861: The Origins of the Tsungli Yamen*<sup>(3)</sup> was published by the Harvard University Press thirteen years later, in 1964.

This opening contact led to our exchange of publications and also of bibliographical information that was so necessary in the pioneer stage of the field of Chinese diplomatic history. In March 1951 Masataka reported that he was very busy preparing two lecture courses and a seminar "which are rather heavy-duty for an inexperienced teacher like me." By September, when my wife and I were barred from entrance to Japan by the United States military authorities, Masataka had received clippings about this from the *New York Times* sent by his father who was then in New York.<sup>(4)</sup> I explained in October that our exclusion from Japan reflected the effort of American politicians to use the American policy failure in China to attack the Democratic administration in office. Professor Tatsuō Yamamoto who was then at Harvard commented that the McCarthy anti-communist witch hunt in the United States reminded him a bit of pre-war Japan, although I preferred to see it as less a manifestation of totalitarianism than of the traditional American dirty politics.

Meanwhile I had put Masataka in touch with Dr. Mary Clabaugh Wright at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, where she was revising her manuscript for *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration 1862-1874*,<sup>(5)</sup> to be published at Stanford in 1957. By May 1952, after she had sent Masataka a copy of her manuscript, he sent her in return a basic critique by Professor Chūzō Ichiko of Ochanomizu University, who was a principal figure in the Japanese development of bibliographical resources and key research topics in modern Chinese history. In this way the main characters in this academic drama were brought into contact: on the Japanese side Professors Yamamoto, Ichiko and Banno and on the American side Mary Wright and myself.

After a year's delay, until I got clearance from the United States Army in Japan, I met Masataka in the fall of 1952 in company with the handsome Shinkichi Etō and their senior professor and mentor Toshio Ueda, who was about my age and in some ways my opposite number in

Japan. While Ueda and I were well into our middle years and showed it, for example, in our loss of hair, Banno and Etō had the vitality of a younger generation. We immediately found a great deal in common. The American Occupation had ended and I had the good luck to find that we could all speak English together. Masataka I found to be of medium height, quick-witted and blessed with a most engaging sense of humor. We became friends immediately and very soon began to consider how we might collaborate on a joint project. We found we both had a strong sense of curiosity and this naturally led us into bibliography — what had been written by whom and also what had not been written. Since I think our collaboration was a model of its kind, I venture to recount it in some detail.

Our collaboration occurred in the first half of 1953 in Tokyo. With my wife and small daughter I had spent the autumn of 1952 in language study in Kyoto. The collaborative enterprise begun in January 1953 was designed to give me practice in reading Japanese as well as knowledge of bibliography. It was an equal collaboration in that I spent full time on it at my rather low level of skill while Masataka continued his teaching full time and used his spare time on two or three days a week at a very high level of proficiency. Our aim was to appraise in writing the corpus of Japanese historical and social science research published on the China of the 19th and 20th centuries. We had little faith in memory as a basis for scholarship and wanted to get the essential data down in written form, together with the best critical comments and appraisals we could muster. Masataka found working space for us in one of the large studies at Tokyo University's Institute of Oriental Culture. There he systematically combed the shelves of the China section and brought successive piles of books to our study. My time was taken up in recording the basic data for each bibliographical entry: the romanizations as well as characters for authors, titles, and publishers, together with translations of titles in parentheses, dates and places of publication, pagination, and similar data. For each entry I then began construction of a second paragraph that summarized the Table of Contents or otherwise described what was in the book or article under appraisal. In addition I could

usually indicate the source materials used and perhaps add biographic data about the author or authors.

The draft entries thus begun were then gone over by Masataka with the original at hand. He could correct my errors and add much more sophisticated and incisive comments to our appraisals, including references to published reviews of books. This work on his part brought our product up to a creditable level of scholarship. The final stage was to take our thousand entries and organize them, as it turned out, into nine different categories, each with subsections, each of which began with a guidance note for the reader that offered opinions or information on the materials in the section. As before, I usually drafted the notes while Masataka finished them.

By the time we wrote our introduction in July 1953 we felt we could truly say that as collaborators "our greatest debt is to each other, without whose assistance this work would not have been possible." Only later did we realize that the 30-page index and the seven-page list of authors' names in their proper romanizations constituted a product of collaboration almost equally important and certainly as time-consuming as any part of our work. This indexing task had been kindly taken on by Professor Sumiko Yamamoto who was then teaching and researching at International Christian University in Tokyo. Without our foreseeing it she thus became a principal collaborator and when a reprint was published in 1971 it had her name on the title page along with ours.<sup>(6)</sup>

Since scholarly advance is a group activity, I should indicate some features of the environment in which *Japanese Studies of Modern China* was produced. First of all, the director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Professor Sergei Elisseeff, ever since his arrival at Harvard in 1932 had stressed the importance for Chinese studies of the corpus of Japanese scholarship. Elisseeff had been one of the first foreigners to graduate from Tokyo University and he built up Japanese studies at Harvard as a necessary assistance to Chinese studies. He was therefore immediately responsive to our proposal that the Harvard-Yenching Institute produce our study. The Institute therefore helped finance the production of the manuscript and of the book. It was published in 1955 by the Charles

E. Tuttle Company of Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo. The publisher in charge was Meredith ("Tex") Weatherbee.

The early 1950s were a time of institutional gestation in China studies both in the United States and in Japan. Harvard moved by incremental steps toward the support of advanced (not merely Ph.D.) research, and its East Asian Research Center was started in 1955.<sup>(7)</sup> Right in the midst of these beginnings, Masataka's further work in international history centered upon his year and a half at Harvard in 1956-57 and his subsequent production of *China and the West 1858-1861* published by the Harvard University Press in 1964. This activity again occurred in a scholarly environment that fostered and supported it in Japan as well as America.

For one thing, the head of the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation in the late 1950s was my old colleague from wartime, Dr. Charles Burton Fahs, who had headed the Japan Section of the Research and Analysis Branch of the Office of Strategic Services in World War II and then become head of the Office of Intelligence Research in the State Department before moving to the Foundation. Throughout his career Fahs was an ardent promoter of Japanese studies. The Rockefeller Foundation in the 1920s and '30s had taken the lead on the American side in the financing and development of modern social science in China. Now in the 1950s it was prepared to help Japanese studies of China.

The lead on the Japanese side was taken by Prof. Tatsurō Yamamoto who with his wife, Sumiko, had been with us at Harvard in 1950-51, a man of outstanding ability with high qualities of leadership. For example, he was fluent in English and French, and several other languages. With unusual foresight he had taken as his special interest the early modern history of Vietnam, concentrating on the period of its relations with Ming China early in the fifteenth century. Suffice it to say that in 1953 Yamamoto became the successor at Tokyo University to the retiring leader in the field of Chinese studies, Professor Sei Wada. Out of our discussions in Tokyo in the spring of 1953 grew the Seminar on Modern China which would be located at the Tōyō Bunko (Oriental Library).

In keeping with the spirit of the times Yamamoto and I envisaged at first a "dual seminar" for the study of modern China, anchored at Tokyo and at Harvard. The idea was approved by the Harvard Committee on International and Regional Studies in May 1953 but it was of course obvious that such a relationship would best remain informal. Harvard, even when some thought otherwise, was only a small part of the USA. The proposal which Yamamoto and I sent to Burton Fahs in July 1953 was wholly concerned with the Japanese end. Yamamoto had set up a steering committee with himself as chairman plus his predecessor Professor Wada, Professor Tatsumi Makino, the leading Japanese sociologist on China, and Professor C. Ichiko. They had already enlisted a group of a dozen or more young colleagues working on China and were planning several sub-groups the members of which would deal with a variety of topics such as warlordism, capital accumulation and the abolition of the examination system combined with the influx of Western thought. Much of the success of this venture would depend upon the research personnel securing released time from their teaching duties, on the basis of fellowship support from the seminar.

The initial request to Rockefeller from the director of the Tōyō Bunko, Hirosato Iwai, in October 1953, was for \$900 to assist the planning and the inauguration of the seminar for three months. This preliminary letter stated that the intention of the seminar "is to develop international collaboration among the China specialists in the United States and in Japan on a continuing basis." The initial subject would be the origins of the Chinese revolution in the period from about 1895 to 1920. The aim was frankly to compete with the "one-sided Communist interpretation of Chinese history" in the interest of sound academic studies of China which were "not distorted by extreme political ideas." By early 1955 a Rockefeller grant of \$32,000 had brought the seminar fully into action. Its subsequent invaluable publications and subvention from the Ford Foundation together with the political complications of the 1960s are a further story.

One aspect of the Tōyō Bunko seminar's work was to be the sending abroad of scholars for research in other centers. Under this arrangement

Professor Ichiko came to Harvard in the summer of 1955. The next year Professor Makino went to Harvard on a Harvard-Yenching fellowship. Meanwhile the committee at Harvard wished to offer a research fellowship, and Professor Benjamin Schwartz was asked to make a comment on Banno, which he did on December 21, 1954.

"I met Mr. Banno during the course of a three months trip to Japan during the early part of this year. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity of seeing him rather frequently both in the company of others and in private sessions. I was very much impressed not only with his scholarly attainments but also with the quality of his mind and the liveliness of his personality. His knowledge of European thought (particularly German) seems quite profound and he has a keen interest in all sorts of general problems. To a lesser degree than anyone I met in Japan does his thinking seem to be imprisoned by certain well-established clichés. I found that cultural and linguistic barriers were less of a barrier to communication in his case than in the case of anyone I met in the academic world. I am sure that if he came here we might profit as much from his observations and reflections as he would from the experience of being here.

"Banno is still young as scholars go and has not yet produced a magnum opus. I was, however, deeply impressed by his knowledge of bibliography, and of both primary and secondary sources in the field of modern Chinese studies. Given his scholarly equipment and the quality of his mind, I would expect him to make a substantial contribution to the advancement of this field. The articles he has already written are most stimulating and challenging.

"I am sure that Mr. Banno would take full advantage of the facilities provided by Harvard and would derive the maximum benefit from his stay. For those of us in the field, the benefit would be mutual."

Masataka's scholarly advancement had continued as he approached the age of 40. His father wrote me in December 1954 that the Tokyo Metropolitan University had unanimously voted to promote him to a full professorship from January 1. Mr. Banno went on to say that "For some reason he declined a promotion earlier this year, but he could not reject the second recommendation and has accepted the decision of the faculty." In February 1955 Professor Yamamoto wrote me that "In my department of Tokyo University Banno is going to give a course on modern Chinese foreign relations in the coming academic year beginning in April." In March Masataka told me that he was reading a book on



Sino-Russian diplomatic relations in 1860 by Baron A. Buksgevdén. I replied that reading Russian "puts you in the coming generation of youth who will inherit the future. The only remaining question is whether the future will be worth inheriting."

By the time that Schwartz and I met Ichiko's plane in Boston at midnight on July 6, 1955, the prospect of Banno's coming later was assured. I therefore suggested to Masataka that he aim to write a book in English while at Harvard, making use of our editorial assistance.

Masataka replied on August 14, 1955, "What I would like to do is a study of the breaking down of the persisting 'stereotype' cherished by contemporary Western diplomats or politicians, especially by the British, as to the nature of the political structure or institutions of China in the nineteenth century." He explained that this could help us understand "the Ch'ing political institutions actually working in the midst of pressures domestic and foreign . . . I stumbled upon this idea when I was writing a few years ago about the determining factors in making the Tsungli Yamen, which itself was in a sense a creature of misconception on the part of the Western powers." He stated that he wanted to make a new approach and open up new ground in the study of diplomatic history of modern China, "which has come to a standstill or a saturation point."

When the time came in December 1955 for Masataka to embark for a year's work in America, the enthusiasm for scholarly development had to be tempered with the cold facts of personal and family life. Masataka's health had been a persistent problem. In December 1955 his baby daughter Nobuko was about seven months old. His departure required fortitude on all sides.

Not relishing the snow, ice, and slush of the Cambridge winter ourselves, we had arranged for Ichiko to take a winter break at Stanford under the wing of Mary and Arthur Wright. Masataka's report on January 16, 1956, of his safe arrival at Stanford contained some happy reassurance as to his health.

Dear John:

Late in the afternoon on January 12, I arrived at the port of San Francisco. The sea was rough almost throughout the voyage. However, I was quite well on board and never missed a meal in the dining room, and I got a reputation of being a good sailor. Mr. Wright and Ichiko-san kindly came to meet me at the port and took me to a restaurant of sea food in the Fishermen's Wharf in San Francisco.

Now I am staying with Ichiko-san and training myself for the every day life under his thoughtful orientation. Last evening we went to the Wright's home for dinner — salad of lettuce, artichoke, and avocado, and so on. I am now almost recovering from the fatigue of the trip and the impact of first impressions here and going to start my work in one or two days.

In March 1956 Banno accompanied Ichiko on a tour of major American centers of Chinese studies, beginning with the University of Washington at Seattle, followed by the University of Chicago, Michigan at Ann Arbor followed by New York, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Baltimore, Princeton, and New Haven. Later Ichiko on his way back to Tokyo in the summer of 1956 visited centers in Great Britain and on the Continent. In early September he attended the Ninth Conference of Junior Sinologists at Paris, meeting the leading China specialists from all parts of Western Europe and also delegates from Moscow and Peking.

Meanwhile once arrived in Cambridge Masataka found a room with a certain Mrs. DeMartin at No. 5 DeWolfe St. not far from Adams House and Leverett House and within three minutes' walking distance of my own house at 41 Winthrop St. Like so many Cambridge rooms it was a bit dingy but in July Masataka informed me that the landlady was having one of her sons do some carpenter work and repainting. He offered to contribute the paint to repaint the ceiling of his room, "so I am expecting that my room becomes somewhat brighter in the near future."

Unfortunately our daily life in Cambridge has left less record. Masataka participated incisively in seminar discussions, ransacked the Chinese holdings of the Harvard-Yenching Library, and made many friends. We enjoyed taking him to the New England countryside at Franklin, New Hampshire, where in the previous year Professor Ichiko

had proved remarkably adept at stringing electric wire around our horse pasture.

Since Masataka had reached Cambridge only in April and his one-year's grant from the Seminar in Tokyo would expire at the end of December, Harvard supported a request to the Ford Foundation through David Munford for a one-year extension of his fellowship to cover the year 1957. This extension would also be used to help Masataka spend some weeks in the Public Record Office in London, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and other centers on his way back home. This grant was made by the Ford Foundation in December 1956 and Masataka wrote me that although "it is a rather hard thing to wait for one more year" to rejoin his family, nevertheless his family expressed heartfelt appreciation of the further opportunity for his work. They also rejoiced to know that his health had held up well during his time in the United States.

Early in 1958 Masataka got safely back to his family in Tokyo and after several weeks of catching up with home life and with his work at the University, was soon back on the development of his English-language manuscript. Masataka's book as he outlined it in a prospectus of July 1956 began with the observation that "in power politics Communist China does not fit into the Western international order. . . . Being culturally different, China has been out of step — not only before 1842 and under treaties from 1842 to 1943, but also since 1949 . . . China has been revolting against the Western-originated state-system . . . China may still be expected in the future not to fit an Occidental-born world order." His proposed study would focus on the crucial years 1858-61 when the Manchu rulers felt it unavoidable to yield to Western pressure for the setting up of a Foreign Office. Approaching this era of change as a political scientist, Masataka began by noting that the Western observers of China recognized that it was a peculiar political animal, *sui generis*, differing both from Japanese feudalism and from absolute monarchy. "Still they believe the authority of the central power to be predominant over the provincial officials, probably because the foreign observers were quite impressed by the ruthless effectiveness

of imperial control throughout the empire in the field of personnel administration. The theoretical and real relationship between central power and regional forces were still barely perceived. The European stereotype, influenced by their own image of Western absolute monarchy, however erroneous it may have been, produced serious consequences." He therefore proposed to study the variety of Chinese political views on the issue, the efforts of the foreign powers to strengthen the unpopular Peace Party in Peking, and the domestic political forces which made possible the setting up of the Tsungli Yamen — amounting in effect to "a reappraisal of the Manchu-Chinese dyarchy."

The book in English consisted partly of materials already published as articles in Japanese. Masataka's English drafts had been carefully gone over by the able and sharp-eyed editor at Harvard's East Asian Research Center, Mrs. Elizabeth MacLeod Matheson. By the end of 1958 the manuscript was approaching 400 pages. Masataka hoped to complete it by the end of April. His eye-opening chapter on the Russian negotiations in Peking had already gone into a Japanese article as well as into his English-language manuscript.

By August 1959 I had received the complete manuscript in eight chapters. In November 1960 the Harvard Center financed Masataka's spending a fortnight in Taipei where he found valuable materials for his manuscript. This visit was much appreciated by the Chinese scholars at the Institute of Modern History in Academia Sinica. On the other hand Mrs. Matheson, who had edited the first chapter, now held up continuation until the new materials might be incorporated in the manuscript. Her general thrust was to reduce wordage and avoid repetition as well as establishing a "more explicit chronology" as a guide for the reader.

By April 1962 I could write Masataka that I had now "had a chance to catch up with the revised manuscript which you and Mrs. Matheson have been working over by a phenomenal trans-Pacific bi-cultural ambidextrous and international correspondence. I congratulate you both on producing what seems to me to be a brilliant study."

When the book was accepted by the Syndics of the Harvard University Press in December 1962, the director, Thomas J. Wilson, suggested that

for an American audience *The Origins of the Tsungli Yamen* was a rather opaque title and he hoped that possibly a broader main title could be combined with this as a subtitle. We suggested *China and the West*. Its acceptance was great good news and a subject for congratulation on all sides.

By September 1963 Masataka had moved to a new address, 851-92 Osawa, Mitaka-shi, Tokyo. In this suburban and developing area there was more sunlight and fresh air; they could see Mt. Fuji from the living room window. On the other hand it took an hour and a half to get to the University or the Tōyō Bunko and other places in the city. Masataka also reported that he had barely escaped being made director of his university library — “a shocking reminder to me of the fact that senior professors were retiring one after another and I was now the third oldest (believe me!) among the some twenty faculty members of my department of law and politics at Tokyo Metropolitan University.” His father had retired from business in the previous May and would be 77 on the 26th of September, still in fine shape though suffering from a slight case of hardening of the arteries. Unfortunately Ryoko was seriously ill. She had returned in March after her “eleven-month post-operational hospitalization and her recovery had been unexpectedly slow” with persisting liver dysfunction, anemia, and leukopenia. “She does not cook yet and needs much care and attention on my part.” This was seriously preoccupying and constantly worrisome and the “unpredictable uncertainty about her health” was keeping both the doctor and Masataka in great suspense.

After my wife and daughter and I reached Tokyo in April 1964, we eventually received bound copies of *China and the West* and had a very fine congratulatory reunion with Masataka, Ryoko, and Mr. S. Banno and his wife. We all felt the book was “a milestone in international collaboration and bi-cultural publication — an example which the new international world badly needs.” It is still the standard work on its subject and its author is warmly remembered. Collaboration with such a colleague is one of the great amenities of scholarship.

Masataka's later career was largely beyond my purview. For a time he

was ill and out of action, but then the flow of offprints of his articles resumed. They indicated that he had visited and presented papers in Canberra (1971), Harvard-Yale-Columbia-Princeton (1972, when I unfortunately was on leave abroad), Paris (1976), Hong Kong (1978), Wuhan (1981), if not elsewhere. Meanwhile his later research interest centered, inter alia, on the French-trained Chinese reformer Ma Chien-chung (1844-1900), whose experience under Li Hung-chang exemplified China's problems of modernization.

Altogether M. Banno's use of the several necessary languages to examine the issues of China's nineteenth century foreign relations, together with his travels abroad, carried into practice the broad ideal of international understanding through history that motivated his whole career.

#### NOTES

- (1) Haru Matsukata Reischauer, *Samurai and Silk; A Japanese and American Heritage*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- (2) Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies, vol. 1. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950. 608 pp.
- (3) Harvard University Press, 1964. x+367+xiv pp.
- (4) For details see John King Fairbank, *Chinabound: A Fifty-Year Memoir*. New York: Harper & Row, 1982, Chapter 25.
- (5) Stanford University Press, 1957. 426 pp.
- (6) John King Fairbank, Masataka Banno, and Sumiko Yamamoto, *Japanese Studies of Modern China: A Bibliographical Guide to Historical and Social Science Research on the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Harvard University Press, 1971 (1955), Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies XXVI.
- (7) See John K. Fairbank, Virginia E. Briggs, with updating by Ezra Vogel, *East Asian Research Center: Twenty-year Report 1955-1975*, Harvard University, June 1976.