

Chapter Twelve
NAITO Konan's Asian Studies and China Studies

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I. The Great Man Born in Northern Akita

NAITO Konan (内藤湖南), who was born in present day Akita Prefecture, is known as the greatest pioneer and scholar of “Sinology”¹ which is currently referred to as “China Studies.” His existence is like a dazzling and brilliant iconic image for the scholars who have studied Contemporary China Studies² in terms of the Area Studies³, especially for me. Nevertheless, his recognizability among people who live in Akita is not so high, for instance, high school students rarely knew Naito Konan when I asked them at the occasion of open lectures or similar occasions.

There might be a variety of reasons for the low recognizability, I assume that one of them is traced back to the fact that he is from *Kemanai* (毛馬内), a tiny town in *Kazuno* (鹿角) District located in the northeast part of Akita, which was not a part of the Akita Domain (秋田藩) before the Meiji Restoration, but the Nanbu Domain (南部藩). Wainai Sadayuki (和井内貞行) is also from the same area and is famous for the success of princess trout “*himemasu*” farming. Many of us have learned of it in Japanese textbooks.

A well-known writer, Shiba Ryotaro (司馬遼太郎) described Naito Konan as below⁴:

At the end of the Meiji Era, Konan was the only one leader who had changed the *Kangaku* (China Learning) drastically, and established Humanistic Sinology. He is well versed in the wide base of scholarship. He always owns his fresh assumptions and verified them firmly. It can be said that no one can go beyond his historical recognition.

It would remind us how brilliant Konan was as not only a scholar but

also a calligrapher, and an author of Chinese poems when we look back on his personal history.

Konan's real name is Naito Torajiro (内藤虎次郎). He was born in August, 1866 (the 2nd year of the Keio Era), as the second son of the Naito samurai Family in Kemanai. He got his penname "Konan," which means "the south of Lake Towada." At the age of 17, Torajiro and 3 other students went to Akita city on foot from Kemanai in order to take the entrance exam for *Akita Shihan Gakkou* (Akita Normal School) in early February, accompanied by the local elementary school teacher. It took three days to walk all the way to Akita city along the Yoneshiro (米代) River in the heavy snow⁵.

Konan entered Akita Normal School with the best grade among the students. He transferred to *Koto Shihan-ka* (Higher Normal School) during his study. After having graduated as the first student at the age of 20 in 1885 (the 18th year of the Meiji Era), he accepted a position as *Shuseki Kundo* (the highest ranking teacher) of Tsuzureko (綴子) Elementary School in the area of northern Akita Prefecture.

Although there is a framed calligraphy of "學貴日新(Learning brings new worth to each day)" in Akita University Library, the fact is that Konan was disappointed at the curriculum and lectures of Akita Normal School in spite of his expectations. The letter delivered to his father, Juwan (十灣 his real name is Naito Choichi, 内藤調一), indicated the details and the reasons of Konan's disappointments. One of the biggest reasons was the standard of lectures and curriculum seemed lower than those which Konan had already learned in Kemanai, his hometown. *Ijin Kensho Kan* (the Museum for the Great Man Award) which is located in Kazuno, Akita Prefecture, you will surprisingly find that Kemanai is a small village for *samurai* who owned "*Kazunology* (Kazuno Studies)," flourishing academic tradition based on Confucianism, even though that is a remote area located in the northernmost area of the Sakuraba Family Domain and consisting of a mere 2,200 fief (*koku* of rice)⁶. Konan's father Juwan, in particular, was quite familiar not only to "*Shisho Gokyo* (the Four Books and Five Classics)" but also "*Chronicle of Zuo* (左傳)," "*Records of the Grand* (史記)." After having studied in Edo, he devoted himself to Rai Sanyo (頼山陽) who was famous for his book "*Japanese Unofficial History* (日本外史)." The Izumisawa Family on his maternal side (Konan's mother, Yoko) also played an important role in the "Kazunology" as well as the Naito Family did.

Konan started learning Chinese classics and calligraphy from his father at a young age. He had already studied “*Rongo (Analects)*” and “*Moshi (Mencius)*” before he entered Osarizawa (尾去沢) Elementary School when he was 9.

This is how Konan learned *Kangaku* (China Learning). There are two additional remarkable matters in his school days. One is that Konan had started learning English, realizing the trend of the time, and the other is that he was inspired enormously by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *De Contrat Social (Of the Social Contract)*. Both could be said to be the consequences which led him to his future during adolescence.

II. The Road to a Journalist

After two year compulsory period for all graduating students to teach in their hometown, Konan’s eagerness to cultivate his English skills drove him to move to Tokyo without his parents’ permission in the summer of 1887. He was lucky enough to gain a job engaged in editing Buddhism magazines such as “*Meikyo Shinshi* (『明教新誌』)” and “*Daido Shimpo* (『大同新報』)”. As to English, he started learning from some Americans native speakers directly at a school of *the Kokumin Eigakkai* (Public English School) in Kanda. Konan was 22 years old then.

This way, Konan enjoyed Ouchi Seiran's (大内青巒) favor, who contributed to the regeneration of Buddhism Society in an era of “*Haibutsu Kishaku* (廃仏毀釈, Abolish Buddhism Campaign)” at the beginning of the Meiji Era and later he brought his editing skills into full play on some Buddhism magazines. Involved in the editing the publicist magazine “*Banpo Ichiran* (『萬報一覽』)” presided over by Seiran became an opportunity for him to start his speech and also led him to become a journalist. It goes without saying that the knowledge of *Kangaku* (China Learning) and *Jugaku* (Confucian Learning) that Konan learned from his father in Kemanai provided him a big engine. Gradually, his literary talents came to the forefront, first as an avid correspondent. He became acquainted with some eminent persons such as Miyake Setsurei (三宅雪嶺) who was editor in chief of “*The Japanese People* (『日本人』),” Kuga Katsunan (陸羯南) who worked for “*Tokyo Denpo (Tokyo Telegraph)*,” and Shiga Shigetaka (志賀重昂), Sugiura Jugou (杉浦重剛), Takahashi Kenzo (高橋健三), those who are the distinguished fourth estate holding up the “nationalism” or “Japanism” against the Japan’s Westernization movement during the Meiji Era⁷. In

addition, Konan grabbed the spotlight as a ghost-writer for Miyake, Shiga and Sugiura. At the 23rd year of Meiji, he was appointed as the chief in “*Mikawa Shimbun* (『三河新聞』)” thanks to the recommendation of Shiga, who was from Okazaki-city, Aichi Prefecture. *Takahashi Kenzo* joined “*Osaka Asahi Shimbun* (『大阪朝日新聞』)” as a chief editor right after leaving the position of the chief in the governmental Kanpo (官報), and Konan followed as an assistant to him later. After the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1894 (the 27th year of Meiji), Konan was supposed to write serial articles from a pro-war stance, based on the necessities of taking drastic measure against Russia.

It was one of his turning points to stay in Taiwan as main chief of *Taiwan Daily* (『台灣日報』) in 1897 (the 30th year of Meiji) when he was 32 years old. “*Modern Literature Historical Treatise* (『近世文學史論』),” “*Shokatsu Buko* (『諸葛武侯』),” and “*Ruishudashu* (『淚珠唾珠』)” were published at once in this year and that helped for Konan to flower into his true academic potential which has been stored up. Especially “*Modern Literature Historical Treatise*” was the article which was changed the title of “*Kansai Bununron* (關西文運論)” on the “*Osaka Asahi Shimbun*”, which was highly evaluated as an academic history of thought, describing development of Confucian Learning and *Kokugaku* (the Study of Japanese Thought) in the Edo Period. In spite of only one year’s stay in Taiwan, Konan extended his knowledge there. After returning home, he was given a seat as a lead writer of “*Yorozu Choho* (『萬朝報』)” and wielded his pen on Taiwan Issues and Ch’ing (清) Issues (China Issues) in these papers. He came to know progressive editorial writers such as Uchimura Kanzo (内村鑑三) and Kotoku Shusui (幸徳秋水) in that company.

It seemed that Konan was inspired greatly by the famous enlightenment intellectual Yen Fu (嚴復), Wen T’ingshi (文廷式) who was a bureaucrat of the Kang Youwei (康有為) faction, Luo Zhenyu (羅振玉) who was an authority of epigraphy during his stay in Mainland China for three months in 1866 (the 32nd year of Meiji). His travelogues posted in “*Yorozu Choho*” were published as “*Enzansosui* (『燕山楚水』)” and it helped him to gain a reputation as a specialist of Chinese issues. Again, Konan resumed writing at the “*Osaka Asahi Shimbun*” and wrote a number of articles from the jingoistic point of view regarding the Japanese-Russo War.

Konan was ordered to investigate the administrations of Taiwan,

Manchuria, and Mainland China by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1905 to 1906 (from the 38th to 39th year of Meiji). Resource Research about in Wen Su Ko (文溯閣, the library of the Ch'ing Dynasty) which was located in Hoten (奉天) City (currently Shenyang) firmly established Konan's place of China Studies.⁸

Thus, Konan built his career from journalist to Sinologist, to Educator. The most impressive thing for me is that he came to know Nishimura Shigeki (西村茂樹) and became his student shortly after moving to Tokyo from Akita. Nishimura used to be a member of the House of Lords, originally from the Ministry of Education, as well as a moralist who had preached how important ethics are in education⁹. This fact seemed to be Konan's springboard to becoming an educator later.

III. Konan as a scholar and educator

In his second time as a newspaper reporter at Osaka Asahi Shimbun thanks to strength of his ability, Konan was asked to be a professor of the *Daiichi Koto Gakkou* (the First Higher School), which was the predecessor institution of the College of Arts and Sciences, the University of Tokyo, on the request of Kano Kokichi (狩野亨吉) who was the principal of this school. Konan accepted Kano's offer on the occasion of his second request when Kano was appointed as the President of Kyoto Imperial University. Although the academic atmosphere of the Kyoto Imperial University was very attractive and Konan seemed to be satisfied with it, it took 2 years after the position as lecturer to become a faculty member in October of 1907 (the 40th year of Meiji), opposed by the Cabinet Legislation Bureau and the Ministry of Education due to Konan's academic background without a Ph.D. or any degrees from universities. Konan was 42 years old then. As he was promoted to Professor two years later, he was put in charge of a class entitled "the First Oriental History" as was Kuwabara Jitsuzo (桑原隲藏)¹⁰ for "the Second Oriental History," who finished his study abroad in China. Konan took a major academic role, competing with the Oriental History Faction of Tokyo Imperial University headed by Shiratori Kokichi (白鳥庫吉)¹¹.

Konan's lectures seemed unique owing to his style of bringing his textbooks and original materials such as Manchu Language and Chinese Language wrapped with Japanese *furoshiki* and his way to speak in a low voice repeatedly. His lectures were dictated and published as "*The*

General History of Ch'ing Dynasty (清朝史通論), "On China (支那論)," "Chinese Ancient History (支那古代史)," "History of Chinese Historiography (支那史學史)" which were his great works. The Doctor Degree in Literature was conferred by the president's recommendation as was customary in the aftermath of his assumption as a professor. "Studies on the History of Oriental Culture (東洋文化史研究)" (Kobunsha, 1936) edited and issued after Konan's death as well as "Chinese History of Pictures (支那繪畫史)" (Kobunsha, 1938) were his characteristic great works to which he applied his whole store of knowledge regarding modern Chinese lifestyle and history of paintings. Nevertheless his stance at Kyoto Imperial University was not so high while he was in the position there for nearly twenty years, nor were any of his academic books were published. Konan had a profound knowledge of not only Chinese paintings but also Japanese paintings. In 1920 (the 9th year of the Taisho Era), he indicated that the portrait of Minamoto no Yoritomo (源賴朝) painted by Fujiwara Takanobu (藤原隆信) is the best works among any portraits, which is currently preserved in the Jingoji Temple (神護寺). Later so did André Malraux with similar perspective¹². It can be said that Konan had foresight.

When the Xinhai Revolution occurred in 1911 (the 44th year of Meiji), Luo Zhenyu who was mentioned previously and Wang Kuo-wei (王国維) who contributed to the renovation of Sinology came to Kyoto to exile themselves. That contributed to the development of the Studies of Oriental History, Asian Studies and Sinology which Konan had worked on. Thus, Konan systematized Oriental History in addition to discovering the accomplishment of Tominaga Nakamoto (富永仲基) and Yamagata Banto (山片躰桃) who were the Merchant Scholars in Osaka during Edo period. Konan became a member of the Imperial Academy. Prior to his retirement from Kyoto Imperial University as a professor at the age of 61, he conducted a long-term trip to Europe. Yet his high conviction on Chinese Culture has never been changed. In his opinion, the Palace of Versailles was far less noble than the Forbidden City (currently the Ku Kung Museum).¹³

Ultimately though he tried to lead a secluded life at *KUNISANSO* (恭仁山莊) Sagara gun (相樂郡), in Kyoto, on the contrary, he was kept busy at the time of the establishment of Manchukuo in China, dealing with critiques, visiting there in order to establish the Japan-Manchuria Cultural Association (日滿文化協會) until he died of illness at the age of 69 in 1939 (the 9th year of the Showa Era). At the age of 31, he got

married to Ikuko from the same native *Kemanai* (her maiden name is Taguchi Iku <田口イク> and she was 18 years old then) and had good life with 5 sons and 4 daughters. His life seemed happily and warm as a quiet and nice father.

IV. Konan's Opinions and Theories

Konan left a profound mark. His opinions and theories covered an extremely broad range of topics including his activities in Journalism and his lectures at Kyoto Imperial University and arguments in academic circles. "*Naito Konan Zenshu (the Whole Works of Naito Konan)*" contains all of them. One of the representative discourses will be cited as follows for reference. Konan mentioned Japanese Culture in the serial articles in *the Osaka Asahi Shimbun* on 1922 (the 11th year of Taisho) titled "What is Japanese Culture?"

The Japanese Culture is, in today's words, extended culture from Oriental Culture or Chinese Culture whose origins began as the ancient culture of China. Therefore understanding of Japanese culture inevitably goes back to understanding of Chinese culture in the first place. Nowadays the history is likely to be cut off only from the Japanese part, however, ignoring the Chinese culture which occurred prior to the Japanese is equal to ignoring the origin of the Japanese culture. ... I do believe that it will never be the best step to be infatuated with their own culture, completely eliminated other cultures.¹⁴

Here is Konan's frank perspective on Japanese and Chinese Culture, and that might be an indication of a form of his cultural relativism despite that in his young days he was strongly influenced with nationalistic Japonism by Miyake Setsurei and Shiga Shigetaka. Nowadays in China, there is some criticism about Konan's theories and activities such as "he regarded Japan as the center of Oriental Culture" "Naito is imperialistic," nevertheless those are opinions based on poor understanding of Naito's books and criticism.¹⁵

The following is an important passage from a well-known book, "*Studies on the History of Oriental Culture.*"

Sometimes intellect or virtue could be worked out without being well-educated. Another factor exists to make people

well-educated; more specifically to build one's personal character. The ethnic cultures have something common with it; Hence, the ethnic group might have something special which is equivalent with being well-educated in addition to its country's wealth, strengths, economic organization, industrial progress, and development of people's living. That is, it is the ethnic culture, narrowly-defined culture, pure culture.

It can be said that it is far-sighted of him that he mentioned how important being well-educated is in the process of personality formation, besides that being well-educated as a member of one's ethnic group is the true meaning of ethnic culture.

The following is a passage from "*History of Chinese Historiography*" (Kobundo, 1949) which was published 15 years after his death.

Followed by the publication of *Shiki* (Records of the Grand Historian), *Kanjo* (Book of Han) was issued afterward. One of the differences between the two is that an Overview of history was described in *Shiki* and the history segmented by each dynasty was traced in *Kanjo*. In the aftermath, people in charge of compiling history, especially people who were ordered to compile an official history in China, have followed this precedent in terms of ease of editing. For some time, an overview history was never produced. It was in the period of South Sung (南宋) that this aroused concern over the fact the history should be traced as overview rather than separated. Until then, even historical specialists tended to be positive of compiling fragmented history.

It would appear to be an ordinary description, however, it is really an important description regarding Chinese history by an authority like Konan.

According to Kuwabara Takeo's (桑原武夫) interpretation of Konan's essay "Regarding Onin (応仁) War" in Konan's "*Study on Japanese Cultural History* (『日本文化史研究』)" is the work worth being praised.¹⁶ In Kuwabara's own words:

This is the best essay describing the Onin War precisely among any descriptions written by Japanese history specialists. Moreover, there will be no one which is

superior to this.

Over a hundred year after the Onin War, it is a period of turnover in the whole of Japan.

... The word 'Reconstruction' is around lately, however, there is no big reconstruction compared to the Onin War ... The history before the Onin War is likely to be almost the same as those of foreign countries. It can be said that, regarding Japanese history, it is sufficient to know the fact after the Onin War because this is the important and essential parts of our history.

This is exactly typical of his words as an expert who was well-versed in Chinese history. Also, as shown in the above citation, at moments some jokes and sarcasm are put into Konan's criticisms or comments.

V. Kano Kokichi and Naito Konan, from Akita

Owing to Kano Kokichi, who was from Odate, as a predecessor, Konan was invited to be a professor of Kyoto. At the time of the *Boshin* (戊辰) War in 1868, Konan's father used to be a member of the Nanbu Domain and Kano's father used to be a member of the Akita Domain respectively. Eventually the result of the war ended up with the defeat of the Nanbu Domain after attack of a town in Odate (十二所, *Junisho*) though the humiliation of defeat against the Emperor was not so unbearable. Kano Kokichi, who brought out Ando Shoeki (安藤昌益), who is known for progressive peasantry during the middle of Edo Period, became an authority of the Educational Administration as the principal of School of Literature at Kyoto Imperial University and the principal of the former First Higher School (in Tokyo), who founded the academic base of Liberal Arts in Japan after he studied mathematics and philosophy at *Tokyo Daigaku Yobimon* (東京大學予備門) and the Imperial University and he taught at the former Fourth Higher School (in Kanazawa) and Fifth Higher School (in Kumamoto). He used to be a latitudinarian thinker without any literary works by himself. After his retirement, it is said that he was buried in books and extremely poor late in his life. Ryokichi left Odate at the age of 12 due to his father's transfer as an officer of the Ministry of Home Affairs, there seemed not to be something to remember him in Odate. Today in Odate city, at the late Ishida Hirohide's (石田博英) old residence, there was a copper plate saying "the former home of the Kano Family, father and son, Kano

Ryochi (狩野良知) and Kokichi” on the gatepost. It seems that the number of people who know Kano Ryokichi in Akita is fewer than the number who know Konan.

¹ China is generally known as “中国 (*chugoku*).” I also follow this word, however, it is academically incorrect as well as in terms of diplomatic words. China should be called “支那 (*sina*).” Regarding the details of this issue, refer to my article: Nakajima Mineo, “Serious mistake that China is called “chugoku,”” in *WiLL*, June 2006.

² Since the revised edition of my book “*On Contemporary China : Ideology and Politics* (『現代中国論—イデオロギーと政治の内的考察—』), Aoki Shoten, 1964) was issued in August of 1971, I have used this term with my expectation that the field of academic study “Contemporary China Studies” should be established in Japan. Later Dr. Kaji Nobuyuki mentioned that this term was used for the first time in his book, “*Contemporary China Studies* (『現代中国学』),” Chuko Shinsho, 1997, on the contrary, this is totally mistaken.

³ Mineo Nakajima and Chalmers Johnson, ed. “*Area Studies and the Social Sciences* (『地域研究の現在』),” Taishukan Shoten, 1989, and Mineo Nakajima, “*International Relations* (『国際関係論』),” Chapter 3: “Area Studies and International Relations”.

⁴ Shiba Ryotaro, “Strolling around Akita, Trip to Hida, Travelogue 29 (『秋田県散歩, 飛騨紀行<街道をゆく 29>』),” (Strolling around Akita, Trip to Hida, Travelogue 29),” *Asahi Shimbun sha* 2005, pp.13-14.

⁵ Mitamura Taisuke, “Naito Konan (『内藤湖南』),” *Chukoshinsho*, 1972, pp.63-64. *Noshiro-gawa* (The Noshiro River) in this book is presumed to be *Yoneshiro-gawa* (the Yoneshiro River) instead. It can be said that this book is the most reliable book on Konan’s biography.

⁶ As to the academic environment of Kazuno, Ms. Inoue Fusako (井上房子) who was the Director of Akita City Museum mentioned as follows: there are two types of environments to produce good human resources ‘Urban-Type’ and ‘Shinshu-Type.’ She described the Shinshu-Type as “Valley Culture,” with a comment “Shinshu (信州 presently Nagano Prefecture) is the most famous place as a local area which holds high standards in terms of education and culture. In that context, I cannot help but put the same image of the climate of Shinshu and Kazuno region.” (Lecture Text at the gathering of Naito Konan award, “Encounters through the exhibition of Konan and its expansion” and “Konan” edited by Naito Konan Institution, Vol.5, 1985 January. This is very preferable observation for me, for I was born in Matsumoto (松本), Shinshu surrounded by mountains.

⁷ Terata Takanobu, “Meiji no Seinen; Naito Konan,” from “Konan,” Naito Konan Institute, Vol. 24, 2004 March.

⁸ Refer to the brochure of Kazuno City, *Senjin Kensho Kan*.

⁹ Mitamura, pp.108-109. Nihon Kodokai, corp., (President, Suzuki Isao) is still staying active on purpose to develop ethics with some members who are from the Ministry of Education. This corporation is an educational group whose Founder is Nishimura Shigeki. Publish bulletins "*Kodo*" bimonthly and published "the Complete Works of Nishimura Shigeki" in twelve volumes (Shibunkan).

¹⁰ Kuwabara Takeo's father who was a professor of Kyoto University. He was also a Scholar of French Literature, famous for his book "Dai Ni Geijutsuron (Second Artistic Theory)."

¹¹ Shiratori, Professor of Oriental History at the School of Literature, Tokyo Imperial University, was Konan's rival on Oriental History. He was conversant in several Asian languages. In the 31st year of Meiji, he entered the Russian Department of Gaikokugo Gakko (School of Foreign Languages) as a special student holding his professorship at Gakushuin.

¹² Edited by the *Kazuno Senjin Kenshokan* "Great Man from Kazuno; Wainai Sadayuki and Naito Konan," (Kazuno City, the Board of Education, 1993) p. 131. As to the Evaluation and comment by André Malraux on the portrait of Minamoto no Yoritomo, refer to the proceeding "André Malraux, His Philosophy and Art – Temptation of the Orient and Japan (Akita International University: Akita, 2010), including Hidemichi Tanaka's "André Malraux and Shigemori Zo."

¹³ See Terata Takanobu, op. cit.

¹⁴ Cited from Tonami Mamoru, ed. "Naito Konan: Oriental Cultural History," (Chuo Koronsha, 2004).

¹⁵ Zhuge Weidon (諸葛蔚東), "Naito Kona's View on China," in pp.16-18, "Public Opinions in Japan after the War," (China's Social Science Publisher, 2003). His opinion is based mainly on Takeuchi Yoshimi's (竹内好) criticism on Naito Konan.

¹⁶ Naito Konan, "Research on Japanese Cultural History, the last volume," (Kodansha, 1976), p. 176.

*Akita - Beyond
the Narrow Roads End*

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