

Reports from Study Support Programme Recipients, Yew Meng Lai and Jessica Bush

Jessica Bush and Yew Meng Lai were recipients of the Study Support Programme 2006-7 from the Japan Foundation London.

From 2 October – 12 October 2006, Jessica Bush, University of Buckingham, went to Japan to carry out research for her Phd with a project entitled *Art in Retail. An Examination of the presence of Art in High-End Fashion Retail.*

From 25 January – 25 March 2007, Yew Meng Lai from the University of Warwick went to Japan to conduct fieldwork research for his Phd entitled *The Politics of Pride? Rising Nationalism in Contemporary Japan-China Relations.* To read an extract of Yew Meng's final report and an article written for *Perspectives* by Jessica Bush, please see below.

For more information about the study programme, please go to <http://www.jpf.org.uk/ourfunding.html#6>

Extract from Final Report – **Yew Meng Lai, University of Warwick**

The Politics of Pride?: Rising Nationalism in Contemporary Japan – China Relations

Research/Project Description (Summary)

The Japan Foundation project is a part of my research activities for the proposed doctoral study that comprises an analysis of the trends and developments, and the complex dynamics involved in shaping post-cold war Sino-Japanese relations. Although not discounting the significance of external factors, the research generally aims to explore the role of domestic determinants as intervening variables, and their interactions with the former affecting state behaviour and preferences in the bilateral ties. More specifically, by incorporating a neoclassical realist theoretical framework, this study seeks to analyse the so-called 'revival' of nationalism in post-cold war Japan, and its causal role in re-defining Japan's China policy orientations that underscore the deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations, notably during the Koizumi Administration (2001-2006) with hindsight to the mid-1990s. The central research problems/questions are to: i) assess the extent to which domestic nationalist pressure in Japan is responsible for their problematic bilateral relationship; ii) examine its salience via-a-vis other external/domestic factors (i.e. relative power distribution, economic interdependence, domestic politics) in constraining Japan's

behaviour and preferences, when dealing with China over sensitive bilateral issues; and iii) ascertain whether these other factors exacerbate, or mitigate nationalism, and its concomitant impact on Japan's policy options, under particular situations, and iv) generalise the findings and outline the implications on the future direction of Japan-China relations, and the region's security and economic environment, as a whole. Two nationalist-flavoured bilateral issues – Yasukuni Shrine and Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands disputes – are utilised as case studies. Documentary analysis of primary/secondary sources, supplemented by elite interviewing of 'target group' (i.e. government officials, academics, politicians, press members, and informed individuals) will be employed as the main research methods. In terms of contribution, this research seeks to:

- i) promote a balanced interpretation of the background, driving forces, characteristics, and international orientations of contemporary Japanese nationalism (especially the so-called neo-nationalism in post cold-war Japan), and its role in domestic politics/foreign policymaking processes;
- ii) generate a comprehensive and critical understanding of the impact of rising domestic nationalist pressure as well as other plausible external/domestic variables on the shifting trends in Japan's China policy, and the extent to which they are responsible in shaping the regressive pattern of Sino-Japanese bilateral relations in the post-cold war period
- iii) enrich the related body of literature by providing an in-depth/specific study of nationalism's role in recent Japan-China ties that incorporates an integrative IR theoretical framework (synthesis of realism and constructivism/area-studies) to systematically analyse the issues/case studies concerned;
- iv) cultivate communications between International Relations theory and area-studies (Japanese studies) approach. In terms of theory-building, the application of neoclassical realism, which is hospitable to domestic, cultural-ideational variables, can theoretically bridge mainstream IR and constructivist/area-studies reasoning that helps advance a more wholesome understanding of Japan's international relations.

How would you rate your success in achieving these objectives?

Overall, the doctoral research fieldwork in Tokyo was relatively successful in that it has fulfilled the stipulated objectives, namely in terms of achieving creditable results from the intended research activities mentioned above. Specifically, I would consider the result of the first research activity (elite interviews) most rewarding, and enlightening in terms of the number, and quality of the interviews conducted throughout the period. Approximately

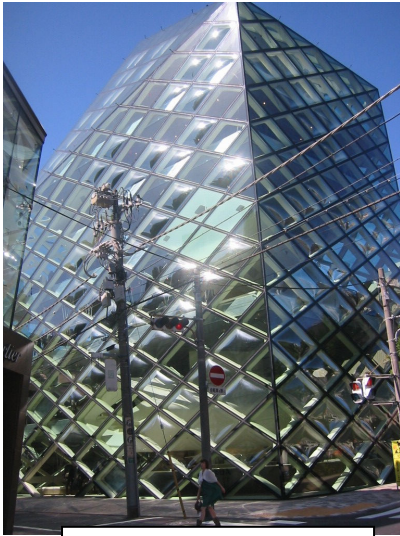
thirty-six elite interviews were conducted with the target group of interviewees, which included i) twenty two experts/renowned scholars and policy-oriented researchers (both Japanese and Chinese) on Sino-Japanese relations, Japanese/Chinese domestic politics, Japanese/Chinese foreign and security policies, nationalism, and international relations theory; ii) four current and former senior/middle-ranking bureaucrats from the China and Mongolia division, and the Asian and Oceanian Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and Ministry of Defence; iii) two former ambassador/Consul-Generals; iv) five members of the House of Representatives and policy research committees (namely from the Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party of Japan); v) two current/former members of the Japanese media; and vi) one senior researcher of a related non-profit organisation. In addition, another two prospective interviewees (a China expert from the US, and a journalist/staff writer from Japan Times) have agreed to answer my list of interview questions on the subject via e-mail correspondence. Most interviews were conducted in a formal setting, lasting on average, between 1 to 2 hours, with seventeen interviewees permitting their interviews to be recorded. From an overall standpoint, the quality of information/data gathered from these interviews was commendable, with several interviewees more eager/prepared to share novel insights and information pertaining to the subject matter. Apart from sharing their experience/knowledge and informed opinions, kind gestures from a number of the interviewees included the furnishing of materials specifically related to the research topic, and introductions to other prospective interviewees.

On the second research activity (data collection), information/data from a number of primary/secondary materials were gathered from the libraries/public record offices/resource centres mentioned. They included i) related governmental publications, annual reports, white papers from relevant ministries/agencies [i.e. MOFA, MoD, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), Japan Maritime Safety Agency (JMSA), etc.]; periodic official public opinion surveys (i.e. Cabinet Office Public Opinion Survey on External Relations, Cabinet Office Public Opinion Survey on Social Consciousness, Cabinet Office Public Opinion Survey on the SDF and Security Issues, etc; MOFA's Public Opinion Survey on Japan and the PRC; and public opinion polls conducted by Japanese media on related topics; and ii) other contemporary sources [i.e. materials from related non-profit organisations (Kazan-kai Foundation; Yushukan Museum), clippings from Japanese newspapers/magazines, and secondary sources-related journal articles and books]. Access to other relevant official documents [i.e. related Diet protocols (gijiroku)] was limited, mainly due to time constraint and the political sensitivity and recentness of the research scope/bilateral issues concerned. Indeed, elite interviewing was given emphasis to overcome possible problems concerning restricted access to, and the 'superficiality' of

official records/documents. Thus, a substantial amount of time was allocated for the arrangement and conduct of elite interviews, as well as the urgent transcription of unrecorded sessions (usually after every session, to reduce the potential loss of vital information due to time/memory lapse). Nonetheless, further efforts will be made to request the release of relevant official materials. Similarly, the kind assistance/goodwill from research acquaintances/colleagues in Tokyo has been secured to help request/gather/duplicate additional official documents pertaining to the case studies.

In addition, this research trip was rewarding in terms of the opportunity to participate in several relevant conferences/forums/seminars. Most notable was the exclusive conference on "The Need for Conflict Prevention and Conflict Management in Sino-Japanese Relations" jointly organised by the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Programme and Keio Institute of East Asian Studies, held on 8-9 March 2007. The conference saw the congregation and deliberation on the subject most relevant to my research, by invited, renowned Japan-China specialists, in the likes of Michael Yahuda, Mel Gurtov, Shi Yinhong, Zhaq Quansheng, Takahara Akio and Kokubun Ryosei, among others. As an invited observer, I was able to gather substantial information and astute perspectives concerning the question of nationalism in Sino-Japanese relations, as well as meet and discuss with these experts, and other notable participants comprising senior bureaucrats, policy-makers, diplomats etc, throughout the conference. I was also invited (via my previous affiliation with the JIIA) to attend a JIIA Forum entitled "Building a Comprehensive Security Environment in East Asia" given by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Malaysia, on 7 March 2007, and a JIIA Seminar on "Changing Dynamics of Regional Energy Cooperation: Japan's Perception and Strategy" by a Visiting Research Fellow from India (Mr Nandakumar Jayadharnan), on 15 March 2007.

In sum, the research activities conducted have been beneficial in facilitating the progress of my overall doctoral research project, where the data/information collected would, to a significant extent, help i) answer pertinent questions regarding Japanese nationalism, Japan's China policy, and Sino-Japanese diplomacy; ii) clarify/confirm/repudiate conventional/popular notions regarding the subject matter; and iii) ultimately contribute to the successful completion of the said project.



Prada Building, Tokyo

Retail Cultures: Art and High-end Fashion Retail in Tokyo

Japan represents a significant market for luxury apparel, in particular, the high-end fashion sector, leaving Tokyo to now be considered a strategic city for international fashion retail. In the context of my PhD on the use of the art in high-end fashion retail, I have come to research Japan's distinctive retail culture. In late 2006, I was awarded a grant by the Japan Foundation, which supported me with the travel costs involved in conducting a research trip to Japan.

Unable to speak Japanese, I encountered some initial difficulties but my research arose interest and I was able to organise visits, meetings and interviews. I met artists from different fields, at various stages of their careers and levels of notoriety. Interviewing these artists helped me understand the importance of in-store exhibitions, particularly in department stores, for Japanese artists' careers.

I also met representatives of art departments from key Japanese department stores and fashion retail groups' galleries and dedicated art centres. I visited galleries and cultural centres located within flagship stores of Japanese and international high-end fashion brands.

This research trip was very beneficial for my research. Visiting Tokyo allowed me to acquire an up-to-date, more accurate and improved understanding of the Japanese retail culture and art's presence in it. I could not have grasped certain elements, like the functioning of Japanese department stores or the importance of architecture for high-fashion retail design, without being there in person.

The information gathered will come to form a chapter of my dissertation in which I intend to discuss the position of art as a retail language. It will also serve to enrich my descriptions of the Japanese brands I am using as case studies such as Comme des Garçons, Takashimaya and Mitsukoshi.



Comme des Garçons, Tokyo

However, while organising this trip, I became aware of a lack of networks linking research students. I would therefore be keen to help build contacts between Japanese and British academics and research students in my field. In the near future, I hope to present papers and possibly organise seminars with students from my own university. I also hope to publish an article on my research subject, including a description of the Japanese retail culture.

Jessica Bush, University of Buckingham
