

“Peace Pilgrimage” in 1953 and Oyama Ikuo’s Visit to China: Dan Tokusaburo’s Photo Album

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Abstract:

From May to December 1953, political scientist and House of Councilors member Oyama Ikuo traveled the world, attending international peace conferences and meeting with important figures from Eastern Bloc countries. Based on this series of visits, known as the “Peace Pilgrimage,” this study examines the destinations Oyama visited during his time in China, using photographs preserved in an album compiled by critic Dan Tokusaburo, who traveled these countries with Oyama. By combining photos of these destinations with reports on the visits, the study elucidates how the characteristics of the destinations and experiences of the visits were reflected in the reports.

Keywords: *Peace Pilgrimage, Oyama Ikuo, Dan Tokusaburo*

1. Introduction

On May 22, 1953, political scientist and House of Councilors member Oyama Ikuo left Japan and visited France, Denmark, Eastern European countries, the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea until December of the same year. During his visits, he met with leaders of countries with which Japan did not maintain diplomatic relations (e.g., Foreign Minister Molotov (Soviet Union), Premier Zhou Enlai (China), and Prime Minister Kim Il-sung (North Korea)) and attended various international conferences. Oyama was a symbol of the Japanese peace movement, serving as the head of the Japanese Peace Protection Committee at the time. This series of visits also featured activities that connected the peace movement in Japan with those of other countries worldwide. After Oyama’s return to Japan, these visits were termed “Peace Pilgrimage [平和巡礼],” and they were widely featured in the peace movement’s official journals—*Heiwa* (special edition, February 1954) and *Heiwa Shimbun*.

In the early 1950s, the Japanese peace movement was conducted as part of an international

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peace movement centered on Eastern Bloc countries. It was a continuation of pre-war proletarian internationalism. International conferences were frequently held, and the atmosphere and policies decided at these conferences were conveyed to Japan by intellectuals and through keynote reports (Nagashima 2017). The “Peace Pilgrimage” was a symbolic event representing the internationalism of the postwar Japanese peace movement; however, the places visited and the significance of this trip have not been sufficiently analyzed in existing research.

Oyama’s visit to the Soviet Union also coincided with the presentation of the Stalin Peace Prize, which he had received in 1951. While Oyama primarily visited the capitals of Eastern European countries to attend international conferences, he also visited several cities and regions in the Soviet Union and China. At that time, Japan did not have diplomatic relations with China, and exchanges between the two countries were just beginning at the private level. Oyama’s visit to China followed the attendance of Kora Tomi, Hoashi Kei, and Miyakoshi Kisuke at the 1952 Asia-Pacific Regional Peace Conference (Ikeda 2024) and played a crucial role in the early post-war Japan–China exchanges. However, studies on Oyama Ikuo (Kurokawa 2000; Hori 2011) and the history of Japan–China relations (Ikeda 2024) cite his visit but fail to reveal the specific places visited.

Oyama Ryuko (Oyama’s wife) and Dan Tokusaburo (critic) accompanied Oyama on the “Peace Pilgrimage.” This study examined a photo album compiled by Dan Tokusaburo with the permission of his family (Nagashima et al. 2026). Subsequently, in addition to Dan’s diary, letters, books, journals, and drafts, many photos were discovered, especially of Oyama’s visit to China. This study analyzes the schedule of Oyama’s visit to China as well as the characteristics of the places he visited based on Japanese documents and Dan’s photos. In this manner, the study intends to elucidate part of the trajectory of Oyama’s visit to China and examines the role played by participants’ keynote reports. Furthermore, this paper offers insights into the impact that Dan’s visit to China had on his subsequent activities.

2. Oyama Ikuo’s Visit to China

Oyama reports that during his meeting with Zhou Enlai, they mainly discussed the issue of adjusting diplomatic relations, and the Chinese side suggested that Japan’s adherence to American imperialist policies and its recognition of the Chiang Kai-shek regime were obstacles. Oyama also met a delegation of lawmakers who visited China around the same time (led by Ikeda Masanosuke) and engaged in a heated exchange with Liberal Party members regarding policy toward China (*Heiwa* [special edition]). Oyama’s report conveyed the Chinese government’s position to Japan.

Heiwa (special edition) states that the relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the people is a political arrangement agreed upon through dialogue. During his visit to China, Oyama not only held meetings with Zhou Enlai and the visiting parliamentary delegation but also visited many places and interacted with ordinary Chinese people. *Heiwa* (special edition) reported a relatively detailed account of the “Peace Pilgrimage.” Oyama entered China from the Soviet Union via Irkutsk on September 24, 1953, and visited various parts of China until early November with Oyama Ryuko, Dan Tokusaburo, and Yonekawa Masao (Translator of Russian literature). *Heiwa* described Oyama’s visits to China, highlighting (1) his attendance at a welcoming party (September 25) and National Day celebrations (October 1), (2) his meeting with Premier Zhou Enlai (September 28) and its details, and (3) his visits around China and meetings with various people. On October 9, 1953, Xinhua News Agency reported that, in a meeting with Zhou Enlai, the importance of mutual exchange and the future of Japan were discussed (China Division of the Asian Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs eds. 1970: 50–52).

After attending the National Day, Oyama and his party visited many other places. *Kokusai Shimbun* featured articles on Oyama’s visit to China, including reports by Dan Tokusaburo (No. 2874, 1953.11.1 and 2875, 1953.11.2). Dan reported that they left Beijing on October 11, inspected various places in China (e.g., Tianjin, Nanjing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, and Hankou), returned to Beijing by the end of the month, and planned to visit (North) Korea in early November. Yonekawa Masao left the party in Guangzhou and returned home via Hong Kong. They were treated as state guests during their visits to China and even provided with a VIP car.

Akahata, the organ of the Japanese Communist Party, reported that Oyama visited Renmin University of China and the Peking University Palace History Museum (No. 1233, 1953.10.15) and posted a photo taken on the Beijing Summer Palace Kunming Lakeside (No. 1237, 1953.10.27). *Japan and China*, the official newspaper of the Japan–China Friendship Association, mentioned that Oyama visited Peking University and Renmin University of China, and Liu Guanyi (Secretary-General of the Chinese World Peace Protection Committee) accompanied Oyama on his visits to Tianjin, Nanjing, and Shanghai (Issue 59, 1953.11.1). *Heiwa* featured photos of Oyama’s visit to Wuhan University and his interactions with farmers in Sanyuanli, Guangzhou. Based on these articles, the study infers that Oyama visited Beijing, Wuhan, and Guangzhou—cities always visited by private envoys to China at the time (Ichihara 2023). Thus, Oyama and his party seemingly visited various places following the *standard* route. However, with a few exceptions, the study found no account of other places visited apart from the above-mentioned ones.

3. Dan Tokusaburo’s Photo Album

This study examines the places Oyama visited in each city based on Dan Tokusaburo’s photo album. Dan Tokusaburo was involved in publishing the magazine *Nichi-Futsu Tsushin* in France prior to WWII. After his return to Japan in 1948, he participated in the Peace Protection Movement and accompanied Oyama for the entire duration of the “Peace Pilgrimage.”

Among the materials compiled by Dan, photos that recorded the “Peace Pilgrimage” were stored in albums, with several having text descriptions on the back. Dan visited various Asian countries in 1956 as a member of the Asian Solidarity Committee, and his albums contained many photos taken in Mongolia and North Korea. However, this study focuses on photos identified as those taken during Oyama’s visit to China. To identify the time and location, we examined the people and facilities shown in the photographs, as well as the text written on the backside. As Oyama Ikuo passed away in 1955, the photos in which he appeared were assumed to have been taken during his visit to China in 1953. The photos were compiled at random; therefore, the order of the places visited in this article may not correspond to the order in which they appeared in the album.

The photos show Oyama and his party visiting tourist destinations. Photo 1 was taken at the Kowloon Wall in Beihai Park, a royal garden. The two people on the right are Oyama Ikuo and Ryuko, while the person on the left is Dan Tokusaburo. Interestingly, this photo had come loose from the album and a descriptive text, “Viewing the Kowloon Wall in Beihai Park, Beijing, in China, 1953” was found on the back. *Akahata* suggested that they visit museums and gardens in Beijing. The photo of the Kowloon Wall was likely taken at the time. In Hangzhou, Photo 2 was taken at Santan Yinyue of the three stone stupas from the Qing Dynasty, built in 1699. Both locations are popular tourist spots, and the photos indicate that Oyama and his group enjoyed sightseeing in Beijing and Hangzhou.



Photo 1



Photo 2

In Nanjing and Shanghai, Oyama and his party visited the facilities of the Chinese Literary Revolution and the Chinese National Revolution. In Photo 3, Oyama and his party are standing in front of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum. Photos 4 and 5 depict Oyama and his party visiting Lu Xun's grave and, presumably, a memorial museum for Lu Xun, respectively. In Photo 4, the tombstone reads "Lu Xun's grave [鲁迅先生之墓]." In Photo 5, Oyama Ikuo and Yonekawa Masao are viewing photos of Lu Xun and other exhibits. The photos also depict several people who are assumed to be escorts but whose names are unknown (one of them may be Liu Guanyi). The exact location shown in Photo 5 is unknown; however, given that a facility that commemorates Lu Xun is in Shanghai, the study proposes that this photo may have been taken in Shanghai.

In addition, the study confirmed photos that were seemingly taken of a visit to facilities related to the Anti-Japanese War in Shanghai; Oyama Ikuo, Dan Tokusaburo, and others are looking at posters with words such as "Shanghai Labors" and "Anti-Japanese War" written on them, while listening to explanations from their escorts. The exact name of the facility is unknown, but the photo may have been taken when Oyama and his party visited the Anti-Japanese War Memorial Museum in Shanghai.



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6

In Guangzhou, Oyama and his party also visited facilities that feature Sun Yat-sen and the Chinese National Revolution. Specifically, they were at the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (Photo 6), Sun Yat-sen University (Photo 7), and the Monument to the 72 Huanghuagang Martyrs in Guangzhou (Photo 8). Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall and Sun Yat-sen University are places named after Sun Yat-sen, while the Monument to the 72 Huanghuagang Martyrs is a memorial to the martyrs who died in the Huanghuagang Uprising in 1911. In addition to Photo 8, several other photos were taken from different angles when Oyama and his party visited the Monument to the 72 Huanghuagang Martyrs.



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10

Other photos depict their tour of a museum of ancient China and a visit to a local factory. Photo 9 was taken when they inspected a local factory and featured a signboard with the text “Welcome to Professor Oyama Ikuo upon your visit to the Factory (Factory Tour; 歡迎大山郁夫教授來廠參觀 [工場見学])” behind Oyama Ikuo. The location is unknown; however, given that Yonekawa Masao was not in the photo, this photo may have been taken in Hankou or another place visited after Yonekawa Masao’s return to Japan. Another photo was found of Oyama Ikuo and Dan Tokusaburo looking at ancient Chinese exhibits (with “Shang Dynasty Oracle Bones [商代的甲骨]” written on a display stand) in a place that is assumed to be a museum. The location is also unknown.

We found several photos identical to those published in *Heiwa* (special edition, February 1954). In this issue, the photos of the “Peace Pilgrimage” were presented on the page after the cover, and each article about the places Oyama visited included corresponding photos. We found six photos in Dan Tokusaburo’s album: (1) a welcome scene upon entering China, (2) a visit to Wuhan University, (3) interactions with farmers in Sanyuanli, Guangzhou, (4) attendance at the National Day celebrations, (5) a moment at the Chinese Folklore Academy, and (6) a welcome scene after disembarking in Guangzhou. Photos (1) to (4) are listed next to the cover, (5) is listed on page 34, and (6) is found on page 39.

4. Future Research and Studies

This study followed the trajectory of Oyama Ikuo’s visit to China, focusing on a photo album compiled by Dan Tokusaburo. Based on Dan’s articles and photos, we find several motives underlying Oyama Ikuo’s visit to China. The first was sightseeing at premodern Chinese historical sites and famous places such as cultural relics from China’s ancient Shang Dynasty, Santan Yinyue, and Beihai Park. The second was visiting memorial facilities related to the Chinese Literary Revolution and the Chinese National Revolution, such as the graves and memorial halls of Sun Yat-sen and Lu Xun. The third was inspecting the development of Chinese agriculture and industry, as evident in factory tours and interactions with farmers.

The places that Oyama and his party visited were related to the modern Chinese revolution. By giving a tour of these places, the Chinese communist government may have been demonstrating its status as the *legitimate* successor to this revolution. Oyama’s keynote report represented the Chinese government’s policy toward Japan. In addition, Dan’s articles conveyed to Japan the status of economic development (agriculture and industry) and the construction of history museums—where various historical relics were systematically displayed—in various cities in China. Dan’s articles played a role in affirming that the Chinese communist government is the *legitimate* successor to this historical heritage. The Chinese government sought to have Oyama and Dan draw on their experience visiting China to assert their legitimacy to the Japanese side.

This study has its limitations. Although it analyzed Dan’s photos as well as Japanese media and photos, it was unable to analyze documents from the Chinese media, including *Xinhua News Agency* and *People’s Daily*, except for the article that featured Oyama’s meeting with Zhou Enlai. It is difficult to discern the Chinese government’s intentions from the Japanese sources. However, by analyzing Chinese media reports and documents, we can uncover the Chinese government’s intentions.

In addition to the photos of the factory and museum tours, the study found several photos with unknown locations. These photos were taken of meetings with Chinese officials, of Guo Moruo giving a speech at a certain (presumably international) conference, and commemorative photos. Some of the photos have writing on the back, copies of which are attached to the album. These texts would reveal

more details about the photos if the album were to undergo preservation procedures. Furthermore, Dan Tokusaburo sent several letters to his family from the places he visited. In addition to articles about China, he wrote articles for various newspapers about the countries he visited. These documents provide a detailed account of the visits to Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union.

Since Oyama’s death in 1955, it has become difficult to assess the influence of his experience of visiting China on the long-term formation of his thought. Meanwhile, Dan lived in Europe (mainly France) before and during the war and had minimal connection with Asia until his return to Japan in 1948. However, his later visit to China may have influenced his subsequent activities. Dan joined the Asian Solidarity Movement in the late 1950s, and in 1956, he toured China and other Asian countries as a member of the Asian Solidarity Cultural Delegation. It seems likely that Dan’s visit to China sparked his continued interest in Asia.

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