

CHINA IN JAPANESE MANGA: A NOT SO FUNNY CONTROVERSY?

Kinko Ito, St. Mary's College of Maryland
Charles Musgrove, University of Arkansas – Little Rock

Introduction

Manga Chūgoku nyūmon [Manga Introduction to China]¹ is a comic book drawn by George Akiyama and Bunyu Ko. It became a runaway bestseller in Japan in 2005, a time when government statistics indicated that more than seventy percent of Japanese people considered the Japan-China relationship as unfavorable. The percentage of Japanese who felt closeness to the Chinese dropped to 32.4 percent, which may reflect tensions in recent relations. For example, the Chinese government has angrily objected to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines many Japanese war criminals; and Chinese authorities allowed, if not encouraged, general anti-Japanese sentiment in China that led to demonstrations and violence against Japanese in China in the spring of 2005.²

The subtitle of *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon* – “Research on the Troublesome Neighbor” – reveals much about the comic book's orientation. The book has 317 pages, consisting of six chapters and sixty-three episodes. On the surface, it depicts China – its history, culture, society, and people – in a matter-of-fact fashion; but the graphic portrayal of the nation is rather unattractive and xenophobic. The Chinese people, especially members of the government, are depicted as cunning, manipulative, and abhorrent. Some of the pictures are rather grotesque and sexist as well. The images linger extensively on gross activities such as cannibalism, widespread prostitution, AIDS, environmental destruction (that affects other neighboring nations), and military aggressiveness; and the authors claim these represent China's “culture” and general lack of morality. This paper describes how China and its people are depicted in *Manga Chūgoku*

¹ George Akiyama and Ko Bunyu, *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon* [Manga Introduction to China] (Tokyo: Asuka Shinsha, 2005).

² “Chugoku, Kankoku heno Shinkinkan Kyukako: Naikakufu Yoron Chosa [The (Japanese) Sense of Intimacy with China and Korea Suddenly Drops: Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Public Opinion Poll],” *Asahi Shinbun*, December 25, 2005.

nyūmon and discusses the social and intellectual implications of this manga in the new millennium.

The Background of the Authors of *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon*

George Akiyama was born in Tochigi prefecture in Japan in 1943. He debuted as a manga artist in 1966, and in 1970 he started *Zenigeba* and *Ashura*. He has attracted much attention thanks to his depiction of human nature in a stark-naked manner. In 1973 Akiyama started *Haguregumo*, and he is still drawing the long-lived manga. Hanazono University in Kyoto adopted *Haguregumo* as part of an entrance examination question in 1977. The manga also won the 24th Shogakukan Manga Award. Akiyama's manga have been quite popular, and they have often been made into TV dramas and movies.³

Bunyu Ko was born in Taiwan in 1938. He graduated from Waseda University in Tokyo and he also went to graduate school at Meiji University. He is a critic in such fields as East Asian politics, economy, history, and society. His books include *Minikui Chūgokujin* [The Ugly Chinese] (1994) and *Chūgokukoso Nihonni shazaisubeki kokonotsuno riyū* [Nine Reasons Why China Should Apologize to Japan] (2004).

***Manga Chūgoku nyūmon* – the Book**

Manga Chūgoku nyūmon belongs to a genre of manga called *kyōyō manga*, or “academic” or “educational” manga. *Kyōyō* literally means “culture,” “education,” and “refinement.” Many find the term *kyōyō manga* contradictory, because it is commonly assumed that manga is for entertainment and for children only, and that refined adults should not read such material. It was in the 1970s when this new category of manga emerged in Japan. The genre is also referred to as “information manga,” “expository manga,” or “textbook manga.” *Kyōyō manga* are comparable to the “Beginners” series published in the United States and include many witty and comical drawings as well as technical explanations.⁴ *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon* is entertaining, and it contains information and statistics on China that makes it read almost like a textbook. There are many pages where little or no manga art appears, replaced instead by photographs and

³ See <http://www.george-akiyama.com/profile.html> for George Akiyama's official website.

⁴ Kinko Ito, “The Manga Culture in Japan,” *Japan Studies Review* 4 (2000): 1-16.

straight text offered in the form of erudite verbal explanations by the characters in the story.

Jintaro Dokugusuri, whose surname literally means “poison medicine,” is the book’s protagonist. He is Japanese, tall, well-built, ugly, rough, clever, and outspoken. Dokugusuri is quite knowledgeable about Chinese culture, history, and politics; and he is a representative of an association called *Nicchū yūkō shinzen jingikai*, or the Japan-China Friendship, Goodwill, Humanity, and Justice Association. His business is located in the Kabuki-chō district of Tokyo where some Chinese mafias have recently advanced. These gangs are invading his territories and intimidating the Japanese businesses. Dokugusuri definitely feels a sense of urgent threat by the Chinese not only to his business and well-being, but also to Japan as a nation.

Throughout the book he meets and talks with various politicians who have different ideas about China, its military potential, and its aggressive foreign agenda. The politicians include Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, American President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, and North Korean President Kim Jong Il, among other international leaders. Dokugusuri engages in debate with these politicians, and he often ends up lecturing them about the threat of China using facts, data, and statistics found in Chinese mass media and other sources. Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi is often depicted as indifferent, powerless, or clueless in regard to the very urgent Chinese threat. Dokugusuri points out that the Japanese politicians try to ignore the nature of this “Chinese problem.” Many famous and powerful Chinese politicians who are the historical figures in international politics also appear in the episodes: Chairman Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-Shek, Sun Yat-sen, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, etc. Dokugusuri introduces their strategies as politicians, their defeats, victories, social policies, how they affected the masses, and their significance in Chinese history.

Dokugusuri is perturbed by many aspects of Chinese history, society, culture, and people, and he is especially concerned with the military advancement and threats that China is already making in many areas of East Asia today. The book begins with an episode of the appearances of the Chinese vessels that performed research illegally in the territorial waters of Japan in July 2004. Dokugusuri’s diary also records that China carried out investigations in the same areas in February 2002 and October 2003. George W. Bush explains that China needs to conduct this

kind of investigation in order to prepare for the American military intervention, if China ever invaded Taiwan.

The first chapter covers many territorial issues surrounding China. The Chinese traditionally assume that all lands belong to China. The name of the country itself is rather ethnocentric. China is written with two Chinese characters that are “center” and “country,” meaning that it is a nation in “the center of the universe.” Bush explains that China needs to secure food and energy for the future and to prepare for its invasion of Taiwan. China also wants to challenge the American hegemony.

According to Dokugusuri, China has been trying to change history by redefining or “inventing” it, even as the Chinese continuously accuse Japan of causing all their problems. The episodes in the book portray the Chinese people as despising and looking down upon the Japanese. One even gets the impression that the Chinese hate the Japanese so much that they are ready to destroy the entire island nation. Dokugusuri ominously mentions a Chinese newspaper report, which notes that with the concentration of Japanese industries in urban areas, it would be possible for China to dispatch Japan entirely with the use of only twenty atomic bombs.⁵

Most of the book, then, is devoted to revealing disturbing recent trends and historical precedents that belie Chinese claims to moral superiority. Most salaciously, Dokugusuri begins with a notorious prostitution scandal involving Japanese tourists in September 2003. At the time, the Chinese press in Hong Kong reported that a large-scale orgy involving 380 Japanese tourists and more than 500 Chinese “hostesses” had occurred at a Canton hotel. Reportedly, organizers paid approximately ¥17,000 for each prostitute.⁶ Such seemingly outrageous behavior elicited an immediate angry protest from the Chinese government and general anti-Japanese sentiment grew until it even became a diplomatic problem.

In the manga, Dokugusuri helpfully explains that there was more to the story than the Chinese press kept under wraps. First of all, he notes, there was the nature of the location. Jukai is like the Kabuki-cho district of Tokyo, and it has been a place very well known for prostitution worldwide. In addition, Dokugusuri cites a World Health Organization estimate that there are six million Chinese prostitutes, as well as other nameless Chinese specialists who say that actual number of prostitutes exceeds fifteen

⁵ George Akiyama and Ko Bunyu, *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon*, p. 203.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44. With an exchange rate of about ¥117 per dollar, that would be just over \$145 each.

million.⁷ Furthermore, it is estimated that prostitution constitutes ten percent of the Chinese GDP. In light of the prevalent nature of seemingly acceptable prostitution in China, Dokugusuri goes on to argue that the real cause of the controversy was an effort to deflect attention away from and retaliate for recent reports in the Japanese media that Chinese criminals accounted for more than half of all crimes committed by foreigners in Japan.⁸ Meanwhile, there is the matter of possible Chinese complicity or even duplicity in the event. After all, Dokugusuri reminds readers, the effort to supply the hundreds of prostitutes in this successful “business transaction” reveals much planning and organization ahead of time on the Chinese part. In fact, it was so well-organized that Dokugusuri suggests in his conversation to the otherwise unknowing Prime Minister Koizumi that in all likelihood there was a concerted effort on the part of rival “service companies” – who had been left out of the action – to break the story to the media to embarrass those involved. The news report could have been a conspiracy after all.

It is hard to evaluate statistics on illegal activity in China, as elsewhere, and prostitution is illegal in China. In fact, the Communist Party in the 1950s took great pride in ridding the country of this social ill that was officially condemned as bourgeois and exploitative.⁹ But, in the reform era since 1979, open prostitution has indeed returned to China in dramatic fashion. From time to time the government will crack down on prostitution, arresting hundreds of thousands of prostitutes each year, but many escape the nets, and practitioners can still be found operating karaoke bars and dance clubs in every major city.¹⁰ The point of the manga portrayal, however, seems to be that the Chinese people, as a whole, are hypocrites for protesting angrily about the incident of 2003. After all, the manga implies, what harm did Japanese tourists do if prostitution is so openly practiced in

⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

⁸ Ibid., p. 46.

⁹ Recent studies have shown that forms of prostitution continued to exist in China during the height of the Maoist era, as some women traded sexual services for scarce resources. For example, see Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 331-333.

¹⁰ For recent information on official policies, crackdowns, and public perceptions of prostitution in contemporary China see Elaine Jeffreys, *China, Sex and Prostitution* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

China today? The subtext is that the Chinese themselves were complicit in the activities and, therefore, public outrage should be directed at the Chinese government that continues to be quite lax in eliminating what it claims is a major social problem.

Moving from recent sexual controversies, the manga's next two chapters depict a history of anti-Japanese sentiment in China; and in particular the authors single out Chinese coverage of the Nanjing Massacre in 1937 as an example of blatant Japan bashing. The book poses several questions about what it calls an "incident." For example, how could the Japanese military kill one million people in Nanjing, as claimed by some nationalist scholars in China, when the total population of the city at the time was only 200,000? Furthermore, what is one to make of the Communist Chinese government's official claims that "more than 300,000" people were killed?¹¹ Chinese scholars conventionally argue that the population swelled as people from the surrounding countryside fled to the walled city as the Japanese advanced. But, indicate the manga writers, what evidence is there? There seems to be a problem with the statistics. Meanwhile, the manga mentions a Japanese bestseller, *Nankin jiken "shōko shashin" o kenshōsuru* [Investigating the Evidence: Photographs of the Nanking Incident], which was written by Shudo Higashinakano, et al., and published by Soshisha in 2005. Higashinakano is the head of the Association of Nanjing Studies, and according to him, researchers analyzed more than 30,000 photographs over a period of three years and found that 143 photographs were either fabricated or were composite photographs.¹² Again, according to the manga's narrators there seems to be doubt about the evidence.

But, with whom are the manga's authors really sparring? No credible scholar claims that one million people died in the city of Nanjing, and most admit that the statistics used to establish various estimates are far from exact.¹³ It is true that the flows of people in and out of the city during

¹¹ George Akiyama and Ko Bunyu, *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon*, p. 74.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹³ Estimates are also complicated by differing definitions of what constitutes a "civilian death," differing time frames, and different geographical areas defined as being within the scope of Nanjing. Most scholars outside China and Japan have settled on a range from between 100,000 to 200,000 dead, based on burial figures of charity organizations around Nanjing. Even Iris Chang's emotional treatise on the subject does

the war were tremendous and no one can offer clear numbers. Essentially, the manga plays a “numbers game” that is designed to deflect attention away from what scholars, both in Japan and China, generally agree on. Members of the Japanese army committed atrocities in the city, including large numbers of civilian deaths and numerous rapes and other abuses. To most, the numbers, whether in the thousands or tens of thousands, qualify as a “massacre,” not simply an “incident.” But the manga writers seem to want the reader to believe that the people of China are prone to exaggeration. The clear implication is that if the government (or “Chinese society”) can grossly inflate these figures and use a few falsified pictures to make their case, then why should we be expected to believe any of it? Of course, this would be a very appealing argument for people who have grown tired of being defensive about a war that they would like to believe was truly intended to combat Western imperialism in Asia. A conspiracy of communism and “victor’s justice,” it seems to the authors, clouds the judgment of world opinion, and the real audience for their argument, comic buyers in Japan who made this work a bestseller, seemed not to object.

Chapter Four shifts the focus away from atrocities committed between nations at war to inhuman behavior that took place in China alone. Cannibalism is the focus, and the narrator reveals that China’s own histories record at least 220 incidents of man-eating that took place during military sieges in China.¹⁴ Even more condemning to the authors, however, are the numerous cases of cannibalism that did not involve the desperate measures of a people trapped in a walled city. Chinese cannibalism, the reader learns, usually took place in the centers of politics, economy, and culture – in the great cities such as Xian, Kaifeng, Luoyang, Nanjing, Beijing, etc. In these urban areas cannibalism took place when the population exploded, and food, especially meat, became very scarce. At other times, usually during wars, expendable masses were apparently caught by the military, and they were made into “food,” a source of animal protein used to bolster the soldiers’ rations. For example, during the disorders that plagued the end of the Tang dynasty many were made into human “jerky” and “pickles” in

not reach one million. She seems to agree with the “more than 300,000” estimate. See Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking* (New York: Basic Books, 1997). For an excellent, balanced view of scholarship from China, Japan, and elsewhere, see Joshua Fogel, ed., *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

¹⁴ George Akiyama and Ko Bunyu, *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon*, p. 147.

order to be preserved for a long time and shipped to the fronts. Apparently, there were also “human cattle” that were bred for solely for consumption, or so claim the manga’s authors!¹⁵

Indeed, cannibalism occurred in China, just as it has appeared in virtually every part of the world, especially during times of duress. And Chinese annals do attest to cannibalism during times of war and famine. They also reveal symbolic forms of cannibalism, whereby one’s enemies would be consumed to eliminate them and to absorb their strength. More disturbingly, there are recorded accounts of people (usually filial women) cutting off body parts to serve to sick parents and in-laws in a curative stew.¹⁶ But these practices were never condoned by the authorities, and the isolated (and in the case of “human cattle,” uncorroborated) examples presented in the manga do not illustrate that Chinese people found cannibalism acceptable. In fact, most of the accounts in the Chinese histories (such as the *Han shu* or *Tang shu*) are presented to illustrate the immorality of those practicing the cannibalism. Rulers who ate their enemies, for example, are usually depicted as tyrants. In fact, the very definition of a tyrant would be one who treated his subjects like “birds, beasts, and fish.” Meanwhile, medicinal and filial cannibalism were greatly reviled by mainstream scholars in China as well as by the state.¹⁷

Naturally, the writers of the manga overlook the complexity of the issue of cannibalism, which is hardly surprising. The authors focus on examples that seem to prove their point and ignore evidence that contravenes it. What is the point? Once again, there seems to be a subtext that offers a counterattack to Chinese accusations of brutality during Japanese occupation. In the eyes of Chinese accusers, the great sin of the war was the abuse of innocent people, who were raped and killed. The manga authors imply that the accusers should look to their own past, where signs indicate that not only did Chinese kill their own, they ate them too –

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 149-158.

¹⁶ Donald Sutton describes these various forms of historical cannibalism in “Consuming Counterrevolution: The Ritual and Culture of Cannibalism in Wuxuan, Guangxi, China, May to July 1968,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37/1 (1995): 136-172. See also Key Ray Chong, *Cannibalism in China* (Wakefield, NH: Longwood Academic Press, 1990) and Zheng Yi, *Hongse jinian bei* [Scarlet Memorial] (Taipei: Huashi chubanshe, 1993).

¹⁷ Sutton, “Consuming Counterrevolution,” p. 151.

even during peacetime! So, the writers essentially ask their readers, which is really the immoral nation here?

The book then goes on to relate China's recent and historical aggressiveness in military and diplomatic matters. For example, the manga writers remind readers, Japan has not been the only nation that has had to handle China's expansionist claims regarding territorial waters. For example, South Korea must deal with China in regard to the continental shelf, the Philippines about the economic territorial waters, and several nations such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines all claim the South China Sea as their territorial waters as well. According to Dokugusuri, China is impudent and audacious. It is ready to use military force in order to expand its territorial waters. The population explosion, environmental destruction in the inland, drying up of resources and so on has led China to look for sea resources, especially for oil fields in the ocean.¹⁸ Meanwhile, China has historically exercised its muscle, and continues to do so, in maintaining an empire that includes Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and a good portion of Central Asia; and now it threatens to destabilize the region with its ambitions to attack democratic Taiwan. What is the Japanese government doing about this aggressive behavior? Dokugusuri actually says that the Japanese government is so weak that no one person or political party can make a difference when it comes to "the Chinese problem," and he calls the powers that be "chicken."

Discussion

Manga Chūgoku nyūmon is a comic book that belongs to a genre called *kyōyō manga*, or "academic" or "educational" manga. It can be used as a textbook, and one can certainly learn much about China because it presents much data and statistics from some reliable sources and explains important technical terms in history and politics. By referring to "experts" and statistics, the book effectively convinces the casual reader that it presents the reality of China. Readers, especially the young, may not be discrete enough to be able to judge the truth or falsity of selective historical facts and statistics, which often can, in fact, be used to depict two or more totally different versions of the same history. Nevertheless, one learns something about China. The reader may be perturbed by certain claims and start to think critically about the situation, or the book may never make any impact at all.

¹⁸ George Akiyama and Ko Bunyu, *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon*, pp. 196-199.

During the seventh and eighth centuries, China was the most technologically advanced nation in the world. Japan sent embassies to the Tang emperors (618-907) and adopted the Chinese calendar, Chinese characters, their provincial system and bureaucratic patterns, and established permanent capitals imitating Chinese ones. Japan also imported technology from China: textiles, metal working, bridge building, architecture, etc. The Japanese also adopted Chinese literature, myths, and superstitions. In modern Japan the people still use “year periods” to count years according to the emperor’s rule. During the Kamakura period Buddhist monks (Rinzai in 1191 and Dōgen in 1227) brought Zen to Japan, and the samurai class adopted it. Many aspects of modern Japanese culture, art, architecture, garden, martial arts, etc. derive from or are related to Zen, which originally came from China.²³ China and the Chinese culture have been so much a part of Japanese history, culture, and society that it is self-defeating to agitate for negating or criticizing China and its culture, philosophy, etc. in its totality. Interestingly enough, the book itself is written with Chinese characters and Japanese characters!

Conclusion

Manga Chūgoku nyūmon is a bestseller that has sold more than 180,000 copies since its publication in August 2005.²⁴ With this audience, however, the manga has missed an opportunity to explore the complex layers of Sino-Japanese relations. For example, instead of simply accusing the Chinese public and media of hypocrisy in their outrage over the prostitution incident of 2003, it would have been more constructive to describe the reign of censorship that prevents a frustrated Chinese public from, in fact, criticizing its own government overly much for the laxity of enforcement regarding prostitution laws. In an environment where it is taboo to criticize one’s own government in print (though this is not true of the Hong Kong press, which fired the first salvo), it arguably makes public frustration run even higher, and perhaps encourages more exaggerated responses against “permissible” objects of moralistic anger – the Japanese foreigner.

But, of course, subtle analysis of the pressures and contradictions within Chinese public opinion do not seem to have been the original intent

²³ Edwin O. Reischauer, *Japan: The Story of a Nation*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw, 1990).

²⁴ Tabuchi, “Racist Comics Gain Popularity in Japan.”

of the authors and publishers of *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon*. Overall, the work represents a more banal attempt to point the finger back at the incessant accusers from China and the rest of East Asia (another volume assassinates the character of Korean culture and history as well, with the protagonist in that one proclaiming, “There is nothing at all in Korean culture to be proud of”).²⁵ In doing so, and particularly in using such a simplistic manner that hides the real complexities of the issues raised, the manga writers ironically reveal as much about themselves as they do about their “poisonous medicine” concerning China. The manga effectively appeals to those who are tired of being labeled the “immoral aggressor” in events that happened more than sixty years ago. In other words, it represents a far more defensive reaction than the attacking style of its historical rhetoric would seem to indicate. The important issues raised in this work are the killing of innocents, exploitation of women, and military/diplomatic aggressiveness. These are the very same activities that the Japanese military has been condemned for perpetrating during the war. But this work does take the counterattack a step further, if only in adding the charge that the Chinese are worse, because supposedly they commit these atrocities upon themselves, and in peacetime no less.

One must certainly be careful not to inflate the revelations that a comic book might make about the people who buy it, especially when that work is a bestseller. People buy popular items for different reasons, of course. Many in Japan, with a society that values conformity, may have bought the book simply to find out what everyone else seems to be reading. Manga – even one that presents itself as educational as well – is mainly for entertainment. So are we in fact taking this work too seriously? One interesting aspect of this genre of informational manga is that it is the perfect media for conveying an overly simplistic message. Comics are not expected to portray “reality” like a photograph is assumed to do. They are, by nature, caricatures, which are expected to exaggerate to some degree. The genre, in fact, disarms the reader, who tends to suspend full rational judgment, even as the work presents the oversimplifications as “facts” supported by “research” and “experts.” Thus, without the rigors of anything approaching academic review, the writers are free to offer what the “gut” tells one is true about the subject.

²⁵ The manga in question – Sharin Yamano, *Ken Kanryū* [Hating the Korean Wave] (Tokyo: Fuyūsha, 2005) – can also be seen as a reaction to a recent Korean vogue in popular Japanese culture.

To those who agree with the gut “analysis” – perhaps because they are the targeted audience of social “insiders” – such a portrayal might be recognizable as an oversimplification. In many cases, even to the intelligent reader, the gross manipulations are not necessarily bothersome, because the work can more easily be dismissed by an insider as “simply a comic book.” But to those on the outside, the oversimplification is usually not amusing and the charges cannot simply be dismissed as representing the views of a simple comic book. Instead, to the outsider the comic book tends to be construed as representative of the “genuine feelings” of the writers and even the readers. Certainly, that is part of the story of why the now infamous cartoons of Muhammad (published in 2005) were not considered funny or excusable to many in the Muslim world despite protestations by Europeans that they were but an experiment in freedom of speech.

Comparing this comic to the Muhammad cartoons brings to mind one last interesting interpretation that might be drawn from this bestselling manga. Just as many Europeans seem bewildered by the response of Muslims in some parts of the world to the cartoons, Japanese people are often surprised by the “overreaction” in China and elsewhere to similar seemingly innocuous activities on the part of Japanese civilians. As far as we know, there have been no violent protests in China as a result of the publication of *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon*; but to many in Japan, the Chinese are all too prone to rock throwing and violent protests with little provocation. This is made all the more mysterious to many average Japanese by the fact that even when confronted with perturbing information and data (for example on China’s recent military aggressiveness), the Japanese usually do not act upon their disturbed emotions. Japanese people are unlikely to start stoning the Chinese embassy or consulates in Japan. They are not even likely to attack or verbally abuse Chinese residents in Japan. The Japanese people will continue to read and write Chinese characters and, they will continue to eat tremendous amounts of Chinese *ramen* noodles and pot stickers. Many will still observe traditional festivals according to the Chinese lunar calendar.

Is this difference in collective responses due to an inherent Japanese character that makes them more averse to confrontation, as the manga writers imply? More likely, the violent Chinese responses are an outgrowth of the repression of free dialogue over the issues that continue to strain Sino-Japanese relations. It has been widely commented that the places where Muslim reactions have been most violent against the Muhammad cartoons represent largely repressive regimes where rulers have

used these protests to bolster their claims to legitimacy when very little else endears them to their populace. The same can be said of contemporary China, where rampant corruption threatens to undermine popular support for the government whose most important virtue these days is the fact that it seems to have won international respect for the nation. The only hope for moving beyond these tit-for-tat accusations between nationalists on either side of this divide is if a genuine dialogue about the past is encouraged.

Regardless of the content, the reader will learn much about China from *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon*. As the History Channel always says, “We need to study history in order to better plan for the future.” Knowing about another country, society, and culture makes one more sensitive to one’s own situation, and it often gives one an opportunity to do some critical thinking. In this sense *Manga Chūgoku nyūmon* has much to offer the readers.