Special Series:

Humane Education, A Bridge to Peace (5)
Final Installment

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Japan: Its Educational Traditions and Modernization

Gu: I would like to express my deepest condolences concerning the major earthquake and tsunami that struck Eastern Japan (on March 11, 2011). I am stunned by the reports of the extent of the devastation, and hope that the region has a quick and complete recovery.

Ikeda: Thank you for your kind words. Every effort is being made in the rescue, relief, and rebuilding activities, and we of the Soka Gakkai are also doing everything in our power to support and assist them.

Traditionally, spring is a time of joy when Japanese universities and schools hold their graduation and entrance ceremonies. Despite the tragic circumstances we face at this time, I believe that is why we should rededicate ourselves to the fostering of young people—in other words, the task of education—for they represent the very hope of society.

The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), who shared strong bonds of friendship with the youth of both China and Japan, wrote: "Youth alone knows how to surmount barriers / Infinite is his hope, unlimited his powers!"[1]

To draw forth the limitless potential residing within young people, to develop it to the fullest, and to bring their infinitude of diverse possibilities into full flower—this is the mission and challenge of every educator. I also contend that whether future generations shall flourish or not is contingent on this single task, be it for any organization, institution, community, or country.

Gu: I agree completely, and that is precisely why I am so committed to our dialogue.

Unlike the Japanese educational system, in China the school year

begins in autumn. As a rule, graduation ceremonies are held in early July, and entrance ceremonies in early September. Both months are times of hot weather, but graduates and new, incoming students alike are filled with a burning enthusiasm hotter than fire. One sees graduates who received their bachelor or doctoral degrees wearing long robes and posing for pictures everywhere at that time of year.

Newly entering students wearing brand-new uniforms await their entrance ceremonies under the hot late summer sun. At our university, the entering class numbers as many as five thousand students—too many to accommodate in any building or auditorium, so the entrance ceremony is conducted outdoors every year. I deliver the welcoming remarks to the incoming students, as the representative of the faculty. Last year I urged them to make the best possible use of the four precious years of their university study, as it is the happiest time of their lives.

Unique System Based on Confucian and Buddhist Thought

Gu: We have spoken previously of traditional Chinese education and the changes and modernization it has undergone. I'd like to ask you now to offer a brief review of the history of the development of education in Japan.

Has Confucianism played a role in Japanese history? How has Japan handled the relationship between tradition and modernization in the process of its modernization?

Ikeda: As I am not a scholar of the history of Japanese education, my explanation will surely be found wanting in various respects, but I will offer a brief overview of the development of Japanese education in a way that hopefully answers your query.

The first "university" (*daigaku*) is believed to have been created in Japan around 670, with the establishment of the *Daigaku-ryō* ("Bureau of Education"). In 701, the *Taihō* Code, a system of laws and edicts modeled after the Chinese rituals and legal codes of the Tang dynasty—known in Japan as the *ritsuryō* system—was enacted. It established a central *daigaku* and a system of regional provincial schools (*kokugaku*).

Under that system, education was made available to the aristocracy and powerful regional clans. At the beginning, the study of the Confucian classics accounted for the core of the curriculum, and such works as the *Classic of Filial Piety* and the *Analects* were required texts. Eventually this expanded into the study of Chinese history and literary classics, including poetry, and such texts as the *Records of the Grand*

Historian of China, the *History of the Han,* and the *History of the Later Han* were adopted. In addition, there were studies in the Way of Yin and Yang,[2] astronomy, medicine, music, and so forth. Subsequently, the more powerful clans established their own academic facility for nobles (*daigaku bessō*), where the youth of that particular clan were educated.

From the late sixth to the eighth centuries, numerous Buddhist scriptures, including the Lotus Sutra and the Flower Garland Sutra, were brought to Japan from China by the Japanese missions to Sui-dynasty and Tang-dynasty China. From about this time, the six schools of Buddhism[3] flourished in Nara, the capital of Japan from 710 to 794, followed by the establishment of two new schools, Tendai Buddhism ("Lotus Sutra school") and Shingon Buddhism ("True Word school"). The education of the Buddhist clergy served to raise the prestige of literacy not only among the aristocracy and powerful regional clans, but larger segments of the population, sparking a broader interest in learning and cultural pursuits.

From the early eighth to the early ninth centuries, Japan's unique systems of phonetic writing—*hiragana* and *katakana*—based on Chinese characters were created. This led to an epoch starting in the late tenth century when Japanese literature, much of it written by women, flourished, making an important contribution to Japan's indigenous culture. The aristocracy eagerly applied themselves to composing poetry in Chinese and Japanese, as well as to the art of music, and the ideal of Japan's aristocratic culture, "idealistic characters who excel in intelligence and appearance," was born. Among the other social classes, education in the handicrafts and technical skills was widely promoted.

The birth of Japanese education, then, can be said to have coincided with the introduction of Buddhism and Confucianism to Japan. We of the Soka Gakkai and the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) observe the essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra, which was brought to Japan from China. Nichiren, the 13th-century Japanese Buddhist thinker and reformer whose teachings we embrace, went so far as to say: "In religious matters our country of Japan is a disciple of these two countries (China and Koryŏ)."[4] Japanese education thus developed from a cultural legacy transmitted to us from your country.

Gu: Confucian culture is a common fount of education in both China and Japan. Naturally, it developed differently in our two countries, but it can be compared to two great rivers emerging from a single source. Japanese education adopted Confucian writings as core texts from early on, but did not follow the Chinese educational model blindly; rather,

Japan was selective in choosing what to adopt and creative in establishing a uniquely Japanese educational system.

For example, the traditional education of the warrior class in Japan is quite different from the Chinese tradition of emphasizing "civil virtues" (*wen*). That is related to the warrior government that developed in Japan, isn't it? It seems to me that the "way of the warrior" (*bushidō*) that emerged in Japan must be related to the form of education promoted under the warrior government system. Would that assumption be correct?

Ikeda: Yes. Around 1185, Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–99) established the Kamakura warrior government. In 1192, the imperial court bestowed upon Yoritomo the traditional title *Seii Tai Shōgun* ("barbarian-quelling great general").[5]

This point at the end of the 12th century marked the full-fledged establishment of military government in Japan, also known as a shogunate. In the world of the warrior class, or *buke,* that persisted from the late 12th through the late 16th centuries, courage and heroic spirit were idealized, and skills in archery and horseback riding were prized. These and other martial arts were taught within each clan.

Some of the children of this class were also entrusted to temples and shrines for their education, where they studied the Buddhist scriptures and Chinese classics. Not all of them entered the Buddhist orders; some served in the temples as acolytes. Evidently, some children from common, untitled families studied alongside their warrior class counterparts as well.

According to one record from the Warring States period (the late 15th to the late 16th centuries), students at temples engaged in writing practice and mastering of the Japanese syllabary. They studied Buddhist scriptures—including the Perceiver of the World's Sounds Sutra, another name for the "Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and the Heart Sutra (also known as the Heart of Wisdom Sutra)—and the *Four Books and Five Classics,*[6] as well as such works of Japanese literature as the *Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves* and the *Tale of Genji*. In addition, the warrior clans created sets of precepts designed to promote clan loyalty and unity, contributing to the establishment of virtues and customs, based on Confucianism and Buddhism, that members of the warrior class were expected to observe.

As you mentioned, under the shogunate such virtues as valor and military prowess, austerity and fortitude, filial piety, and loyalty were

emphasized. From the 17th century, with the beginning of the Edo period (1603–1868), these were promoted as the samurai code known as *bushidō,* or the way of the warrior.

As for commoners, as commercial activity flourished in the cities from Japan's medieval period on, a distinct culture of the merchant or townsmen class emerged. To fulfill their ideal that "the art of the townsmen is accurate calculation,"[7] people of the merchant class received instruction in the practical skills needed to succeed in business.

Subsequently, in the Edo period, the townsmen or merchant culture flourished with the continuing growth of commerce and trade. Architectural, textile, and ceramics techniques also advanced, while currency exchange and transactions of commodity futures began to evolve, creating a foundation conducive to the introduction of modern industry brought to Japan from the West in the final years of the Edo period.

During the relative stability that Japan enjoyed in the Edo period, various forms of scholarship were also actively pursued, particularly Confucianism, National Learning, or the study of ancient Japanese thought and culture, and Western Learning (also known as *rangaku,* or "Dutch Learning"). Confucian Learning focused on the Neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi (1130–1200) of the Song dynasty, while studies of the Neo-Confucian philosophy of Wang Yangming (1472–1529) and a somewhat more fundamentalist branch of Japanese Confucian studies called *kogaku*—which sought a return to the original texts of Confucianism—also exerted some influence. The main texts studied were the *Four Books and Five Classics,* including the *Works of Mencius* and the *Analects*.

National Learning took such works as the *Records of Ancient Matters,* the *Chronicles of Japan,* and the *Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves* as its core texts, seeking to establish a native Japanese philosophy and worldview.

Eventually the Edo-period shogunate adopted Confucianism as the official ideology of the realm, and founded an academy, the *Shōheikō,* to teach it. In addition, the individual feudal domains also established their own schools, which taught not only Confucianism but National Learning and Western Learning, including medicine and military strategy. By the end of the Edo period there were some 230 domain schools, some of which evolved under the new educational system introduced in the subsequent Meiji period (1868–1912), into High Schools—the equivalent of today's universities.

At the same time, private academies unsegregated by social class

were also founded around the country. Children of both warrior and merchant families attended private academies in the towns, while in agricultural villages, they were attended by the farmers' children. They were quite diverse in their offerings, ranging from providing simple instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic with an abacus to specialized studies in various fields of learning and technical expertise.

In addition, so-called "temple schools" (*terakoya*)—private elementary schools that taught reading and writing to the children of commoners—numbered more than 15,000 throughout the country by the mid-19th century. Following the adoption of the new educational policy in the Meiji period, more than 20,000 elementary schools were speedily established in Japan, and some believe that the tradition of popular education as represented by the temple schools played a pivotal role in that development.

Institutional Reform Opens Way to Westernization

Gu: Upon entering the modern era, the development of China and Japan diverged widely.

Both faced intimidation and invasion from Western powers in the 19th century, and learned from the West, but they took completely different paths. This must be attributed to their cultural differences, as well as the different roles played by various political figures in both nations.

What is called the Self-Strengthening Movement in China, which sought to introduce Western technologies to strengthen China through institutional reforms, and the Meiji Restoration in Japan took place at much the same time. In Japan, the shogunate was toppled, and through the reforms of the Meiji Restoration, Japan wholeheartedly set forth on the path of Western capitalism. But China's Self-Strengthening Movement ended in failure. Why were the results so different in the two countries? I believe the cause can be found in the cultural and spiritual foundations and political orientations of the two countries.

First, Japan began by initiating political reform. It not only learned from Western science and technology and purchased battleships and cannons, but also introduced Western political systems, establishing a bourgeois government under an imperial system, and adopted three overarching goals: to enrich the country and strengthen the military; the promotion of new industries; and civilization and enlightenment. In so doing, in just a few decades Japan had become the strongest nation in East Asia and joined the ranks of the world's great powers.

China's Self-Strengthening Movement, however, adopted the aim of

mastering Western scholarship and technology while retaining traditional political and social systems. It sought to learn from foreigners to prevail over foreigners based on the Chinese feudality. China thus focused exclusively on the material and technological aspects of Western civilization, overlooking the true essence of Western Learning. In the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), the modern navy that the Chinese had adopted from the West was completely destroyed by the Japanese. Though in terms of armaments the Chinese were far superior to the Japanese, they were defeated.

Progressive Chinese thinkers of the day such as Tan Sitong (1865–98), Kang Youwei (1858–1927), and Liang Qichao (1873–1929) were fully aware of this problem, and they tried to instigate the *Bairi Weixin,* or "Hundred Days Reform in China" (1898), based on their conviction that the introduction of Western technologies and machines without political reform was doomed to fail. The movement was, however, ruthlessly suppressed by the feudal forces of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), and from that time on, China was forced into becoming a half-feudal state, half-colony.

China's ruling class realized that some level of reform was necessary in the face of the harsh reality of the colonial expansionism of the Western powers. Yet they were also fearful of the loss of China's feudal mores and, reluctant to relinquish their hold on their class privileges, they were unable to accept Western scholarship either on an ideological basis or as an alternative political system, thus dooming any chance for reform to succeed.

Education Subordinate to National Purposes

Ikeda: As you have noted, unfortunately the Hundred Days Reform was quickly quashed by the conservative forces of the Qing dynasty.

In Japan, after the shogunate and feudal domain system came to an end, the country not only reached out to embrace Western knowledge and technology, but also tried to reform its educational system along Western lines.

In terms of educational policies, the modern Japanese educational system made its debut in 1872. This is the beginning of a national policy on education, which was then followed by an "education as a means of enriching and strengthening the nation"—an idea articulated by Arinori Mori (1847–89)—in which education was assigned a subservient role to what were regarded as national goals. Schools did teach the latest Western information, but the essence of Japanese education became

increasingly dominated by a dogmatic moralizing rooted in nationalism.

The 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, for example, states: "Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education."[8] With this nationalism as its pillar, the educational system was designed to produce loyal and patriotic "subjects."

The pedagogical theories of German educator Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), an ardent advocate of "Internal Freedom," were also introduced at this time, but before such ideas could take root in Japan, education was transformed, as represented by the Imperial Rescript, into a system for indoctrinating loyal subjects of the realm.

Gu: In my estimation, Japan seems to have accepted Western civilization with an open mind, wholeheartedly embracing Western Learning while advancing its educational system, striving to better inform its populace and undertaking numerous educational reforms soon after the Meiji Restoration. In March 1870, it established new regimes for university, secondary, and primary education modeled after European systems.

And as you indicated, in 1872, the Meiji government promulgated the Education System Order, stipulating a thoroughgoing reform of the system. Though it met with opposition from proponents of National Learning and Chinese Studies, the government awarded priority to Western scholarship, and under the leadership of Minister of Education Arinori Mori established a modern educational system based on the emperor system.

There is one more point worth considering. The German model of nationalism fit well with Japan's policy of enriching the country and strengthening the military. Hirobumi Itō (1841–1909), a figure of eminent influence, had studied in Germany and actively sought to counter Western individualism and libertarian beliefs with German nationalistic thought. As you noted, in 1890, the emperor issued the Rescript on Education and, by stressing the virtues of the emperor and the loyalty of the people, forged a union between Confucian virtues and the ethics of modern capitalism. From that point on, Japan took the path of bellicose and bloody militarism.

Value-Creating Pedagogy Counter to Militaristic Education

Ikeda: As Japan plunged into an era of war, the educational system was

exploited by barbaric militarist forces. For example, in 1925, an active army officer was stationed in every school for boys of the middle school level and above, and military training was instituted in the schools.

Over a decade later, when I was a boy suffering from lung disease, I almost collapsed in the middle of such harsh military training, being conducted at school under the hot summer sun—a memory that remains with me to this day.

As militarism expanded its domination of Japanese education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), educator and first president of the Soka Gakkai, published, on November 18, 1930, the first volume of *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy,* the groundbreaking work of Soka (Value-Creating) education. In his preface to it he wrote:

> I have come to burn more and more with a fever to do something—and the sooner the better—about the deplorable state of the nation's education. Just the thought that through this effort might possibly come the difference in saving our million or more students from entrance difficulties, "examination hell," unemployment, and other contemporary neuroses has brought it all into focus for me.[9]

This was the year that Japan, buffeted by the global depression, entered what is known as the Showa Depression. Cities were filled with the unemployed, and many committed suicide in the face of financial ruin. In 1929, a film by Yasujirō Ozu (1903–63) captured the national mood. It was titled "*I Graduated, But . . .*"—the unspoken implication being that in spite of graduating from university, there were no jobs to be had.

It was in such a time that Mr. Makiguchi introduced Value-Creating pedagogy, education for the happiness of children, to the world.

Subsequently, of course, Japan was defeated in World War II, and under the U.S. Occupation, in 1947 the Fundamental Law of Education was enacted. Replacing the paternalistic educational ideals of the Imperial Rescript on Education, it was a declaration of the right of the people to education and, instituting the system of six years of elementary school followed by three years each of junior and senior high school, it marked the start of Japan's postwar educational system, which promoted democracy, individual rights, the renunciation of war, and other related values.

While Japan's postwar educational system acted as the driving force for the nation's miraculous economic recovery, it also produced numerous problems, such as the extreme competition to gain entrance into prestigious schools.

The Soka Gakuen (Soka Junior and Senior High Schools) that I founded opened in April 1968. It was a time when the "student power" movement was sweeping the globe. In Japan, too, students took to the streets, opposing the Vietnam War and calling for university reforms. On September 8 of that same year, at a Soka Gakkai student division general meeting attended by more than ten thousand students, I publicly called for the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan and an immediate cessation of hostilities in Vietnam.

In April 1971, Soka University opened with a commitment to sound learning based on three guiding principles: (1) Be the highest seat of learning for humanistic education; (2) Be the cradle of a new culture; and (3) Be a citadel of peace for humankind. The spring of 2011 marked the entrance of the university's 41st class.

Japanese education today faces a major crossroads as it attempts to address the changes of our times. That is a subject that I hope we can discuss further at another time.

Bilateral Exchange amid Education's Internationalization

Universal Principles for Growth

Gu: Education is an endeavor of fostering people and a process in their socialization.

It contributes to the economic growth of a nation and its people; yet, at the same time, the educational process must be governed by the principles of individual growth—and many of these principles are universally applicable. As such, there are numerous protocols and principles that should be observed as they relate to education's relationship with society, economics, and government, or in terms of techniques and methodologies required for the promotion of human development.

That is why, though the political systems and levels of economic development of China and Japan differ, I believe there is much that we can learn from one another with regards to educational policies, as well as to the methods and techniques of developing human beings. In particular, since both countries belong to Eastern zone of Confucian cultural influences, and as it is likely that we face many common issues, mutual exchange and research on related themes should be instructive and important.

For example, when confronted with Western cultural influences, how can one assimilate the progressive cultural results of the West while retaining and protecting the best of one's own culture and tradition? I

think that Japan has been more successful than China in this regard, and that we have much to learn from you.

Other common issues include finding ways to ameliorate the pressures on students to pass entrance examinations, combat the declining interest in studying, and respond to the suppression of creativity in our educational systems. In Japan, *yutori* education, or a "relaxed education policy," had been proposed and adopted for a while. I am aware that now that some of the drawbacks of that approach have surfaced, the number of classroom hours has begun to increase once again, but we have much to absorb and learn from such experiences and the lessons drawn from them.

At the same time, since entering the new millennium, China has engaged in curriculum reform, and I am certain that Japanese educators could also benefit from studying our experiences and the lessons we have learned in the process.

Age-old Cultural Benefactor

Ikeda: When reviewing the long history of education in China and Japan, it is noteworthy that education in both countries has always been influenced by exchange and developed through mutual stimulation.

For example, in the fourth to the seventh centuries in Japan, numerous immigrants from China and the Korean Peninsula arrived in Japan, where they transmitted such advanced crafts and skills to the Japanese as armor and weaponry making, textile arts, and agricultural techniques.

During the Sui and Tang dynasties, in the seventh to the ninth centuries, Japan repeatedly dispatched official delegations to China to engage in a comprehensive study of Chinese civilization, bringing what they learned back to Japan. Government officials and Buddhist priests accompanied these official missions, striving to master Chinese culture, which was clearly more advanced than Japan's. Ono no Imoko (c. early 6th to late 7th century) is famous for having traveled on one of these missions to Sui China, while Kibi no Makibi (695–775) and Abe no Nakamaro (698–770) visited Tang China.

Kibi no Makibi brought back many Chinese writings, which played a major role in rooting Chinese culture to Japan. Abe no Nakamaro, meanwhile, took the Chinese civil service examinations and was awarded an official post in the Tang government, dying in Chang'an. Accounts of his lasting friendships with the Chinese poets Li Bai (701–62) and Wang Wei (699–759) are recorded in their highly emotive poetry. Among the Japanese Buddhist priests who traveled to China, the

Great Teacher Dengyō (also known as Saichō; 767–822) is especially famous. He studied the Tiantai (or Tendai; 538–97) teachings and upon his return to Japan founded the Japanese Tendai school.

The official missions to China were not, however, simply a matter of Japanese traveling to China and then returning home. They also functioned as a conduit allowing individuals from other cultures to travel to Japan. Although only a few Chinese officials visited Japan, there were a number of Chinese Buddhist priests who had, as had Indian Buddhist priests such as Bodhisena (704–60). The Chinese priest Jianzhen (688–763, known as Ganjin in Japan) arrived in Japan after numerous trouble-fraught attempts, bringing many followers and others with him. Jianzhen not only introduced the Buddhist precepts to Japan, but also brought over numerous important Buddhist texts, such as the Great Teacher Tiantai's *Great Concentration and Insight, The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,* and *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*. In addition, he introduced other aspects of culture from the glorious heights of the Tang dynasty, including sculpture and knowledge of medicinal herbs.

Trade between China and Japan remained active in the Song dynasty (960–1279), and many Chinese artifacts were brought to Japan from the 10th through the 13th centuries. Later, the Mongol Empire tried to invade Japan on two occasions (1274 and 1281), but in the following Ming dynasty (1368–1644), trade and exchange resumed with renewed vigor.

The arrival of the Chinese Confucian teacher Zhu Shunshui (1600–82) in Japan in the 17th century—the time of turmoil coinciding with the late Ming and the early Qing period—was an important historical development. He forged strong friendships with the Japanese Confucian scholar Andō Seian (1622–1701), a feudal retainer of Yanagawa domain, and with Tokugawa Mitsukuni (1628–1701), the lord of the Mito domain. Zhu has been admired as an important teacher of the Confucian scholars of the Edo period.

Most of the scholars of the Neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi school, the fundamentalist *kogaku* branch of Japanese Confucian studies, and those of the Mito school (the scholarship and academic traditions that arose in the Mito domain) were strongly influenced by Zhu Shunshui, whose thought also contributed significantly to the idea of *sonnō jōi*—reverence for the emperor and the expulsion of foreigners—that emerged two centuries later and provided part of the impetus for reform at the end of the Edo period.

Gu: Looking back at Japanese history, exchange between our two

countries began at a very early age. As far back as the Earlier Han (202 BCE–8 CE), the Later Han (25–220), and the Three Kingdoms period (220–80), there was regular contact between China and the area that is now northern Kyushu, an island in southern Japan. According to the *History of the Later Han Dynasty,* tributary envoys from Japan arrived at the court of Emperor Guangwu of Later Han in the year 57, and the emperor presented Japan with a golden seal. Around the fifth century, Confucianism was transmitted from China to Japan, and soon afterward Buddhist scriptures arrived in Japan by way of the Korean Peninsula. From the seventh to the eighth centuries, Japan entered a period of intense assimilation of Chinese culture, just as the Tang dynasty was reaching its peak. Japan sent missions to Chang'an and Luoyang more than ten times, on a very grand scale, each mission including from five hundred to six hundred members. They studied the core texts of Confucianism, history, the calendar and astronomy, and mathematics, and brought these disciplines and other skills back to Japan. The Buddhist priest Jianzhen whom you mentioned made numerous attempts to get to Japan, finally reaching Nara on his sixth effort, at the age of 66.

This history has long been recounted by the peoples of both of our countries, and represents a heartwarming chapter in the long annals of Chinese-Japanese friendship. I have visited Kyoto and Nara several times, and Kyoto in particular gives the impression of being in an ancient Chinese city. Of course, Japanese architecture has many unique features, but I was surprised by how similar the buildings in Kyoto are to old Chinese buildings. Looking at the buildings in Kyoto provides clear testimony to the amicable tradition of exchange between China and Japan that has existed from ancient times.

Studying the West through Japan

Ikeda: During my first trip to China in 1974, I visited Xian City, the modern city built on the site of Chang'an, and I, too, sensed the origins of the ancient Japanese capitals of Nara and Kyoto there. Japan clearly owes an incalculable dept of gratitude to China.

Friendships and exchanges among Chinese and Japanese scholars and cultural figures deepened and expanded following the Meiji Restoration. A large influx of students arrived in Japan from China at the beginning of the 20th century, and many Japanese books were translated into Chinese. In addition, many Western writings that had been translated into Japanese were retranslated into Chinese. The Shanghai publisher Jiaoyu Shijie Chuban She ("Education World Publishing"), founded in

1901, translated and published many Japanese textbooks, and in 1902 another publisher, Zuoxin She ("Society for Renewal"), published translations from Japanese by Chinese students in Japan of Western research and works, including the theory of evolution by Charles Darwin.

Japan's Meiji government actively encouraged Chinese students to come to Japan to study, and numerous schools for them were established.

In 1896, one of the first Japanese to welcome Chinese students was Jigorō Kanō (1860–1938), the founder of Judo. Kanō would expand the scale of his educational activities, establishing the Ekiraku Shoin, a school for Chinese students, three years later, followed by the founding of the Kōbun Gakuin (Kōbun Institute), which would emerge as one of the foremost private schools for Chinese students, in 1902. Lu Xun (1881–1936) studied at the Kōbun Gakuin, and the revolutionary, feminist, and writer Qiu Jin (1875–1907) also studied in Japan at this time.

After the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), unfortunately, certain elements of Japanese society grew increasingly intolerant of foreign exchange students, treating them with contempt. It was from this time on that Japan would fall under the subjugation of militarists.

Gu: You have mentioned the large number of Chinese students studying in Japan at the start of the 20th century, and in fact China acquired a great many of its modern educational ideas from Japan. Japan exerted a tremendous influence on China in this respect, to the extent that it is fair to say that the former student had become the teacher.

From 1860 to 1890, during the period of China's Self-Strengthening Movement, the majority of Chinese students studying abroad were doing so in Europe and the United States. In the following Guangxu New Policy[10] period starting from 1901, Japan became the preferred destination for overseas study, the number of students growing year by year.

In 1896, the Qing government sent thirteen students to Japan. In 1902 the number had grown to 500. In 1903 it was more than 1,300, and from 1905 and 1906 it grew to nearly ten thousand. The first national education system implemented by the Qing government in 1904, the Guimao Educational System, was based on the Japanese system.

Why did the Qing government send its young people to study in Japan rather than the West? Several reasons can be cited. First, since the Meiji Restoration, while facing many of the same challenges confronting China, Japan had successfully brought its feudal warrior government

to an end, instituted a bourgeois regime under the emperor system, rigorously advanced education, and rapidly strengthened the country. Chinese reformers were eager to emulate the Japanese experience, foster capable individuals through education, and carry out political reform, preserving the imperial system on the domestic front while responding to external threats with strength and confidence.

Second, while the new Japanese educational system had been introduced from the West, with special reference to the French and German educational systems, the Japanese had engaged in two decades of revision and adaptation and created a distinctly Japanese educational system. This was perhaps best expressed in the popular Japanese slogan "Japanese spirit with Western Learning"—in other words, learning from Western culture while preserving the essence of Japanese culture, and skillfully employing both together for the maximum effectiveness. This strongly resembles the slogan adopted by the proponents of the Self-Strengthening Movement, "Chinese essence and Western Learning," as their guiding ideology and educational approach. As such, Japan became their model for East learning from West.

Third, Japan very actively and quickly incorporated Western scholarship, and already had in its possession many Japanese translations of Western academic books. Studying Japanese education was therefore a way of studying Western education and culture, in a manner that was quick and easily accessible.

Fourth, as neighbors China and Japan shared similar cultural traits, and their languages and writing systems exhibited marked similarities. Studying in Japan was economical in terms of both time and money. A Qing-government imperial edict of August 2, 1898 recognized the advantages of studying abroad in the East versus studying in the West in terms of geographic proximity and cost. The edict also noted that the similarity between the Chinese and Japanese characters facilitated communication, and that the Japanese had already translated important areas of Western scholarship.

But the new Chinese educational system did not in fact fully reflect the spirit of the reforms that had been implemented in Japan's educational system. As I noted earlier, in learning from the West, China and Japan took two completely different paths. Japan took that of modern Western capitalism, while China became a half-feudal state, half-colony.

In education, too, though the two countries ostensibly resembled one another to a degree, there was a great gap in the spirit with which they tackled the task.

Educational Exchange Leads to Humanity's Development

Ikeda: You mentioned that post-Meiji era educational reforms in Japan had an effect on our neighboring country of China. We must never forget that from ancient times China and Japan, so close both geographically and culturally, have existed in a relationship of growth through mutual influence.

In the early 20th century, large numbers of Chinese students made their way to Japan to study, and strong bonds of friendship were formed. Perhaps the friendship between Lu Xun and his anatomy teacher in Sendai, Genkurō Fujino (1874–1945), best exemplifies this beautiful drama of exchange.[11]

As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Makiguchi taught geography at the Kōbun Gakuin for almost four years, starting in 1904. His stint overlapped with that of Lu Xun, who was at the Kōbun Gakuin through April 1904, for two months, but it is not known whether they were acquainted. We do know, however, that Mr. Makiguchi developed a close relationship with his Chinese students, building a bridge of Chinese-Japanese friendship at a time when Japan was plunging ahead on a course of intensifying military belligerence.

Another example of unforgettable friendships is that formed between Kamejirō Matsumoto (1866–1945)—who also taught at the Kōbun Gakuin and later founded Tōa Higher Preparatory School—and his student, the young Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), the future premier of the People's Republic of China. When Zhou Enlai's wife Deng Yingchao (1904–92) visited Japan, she met with members of the Matsumoto family and expressed her husband's feelings of gratitude.

The friendship of Sun Wen (1866–1925) with various Japanese is equally noteworthy. Torazō (Tōten) Miyazaki (1871–1922), a Japanese philosopher, met Sun Wen in Yokohama in 1897, was deeply moved by his revolutionary spirit, and forever after supported the Chinese revolution.

There are numerous other examples of these kinds of friendships, and since the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China in 1972, exchange on the civilian level has continued to grow.

While the number of people traveling back and forth between our two countries was less than ten thousand a year at the time bilateral ties were normalized, by 2007 it had climbed to 5.12 million. It is estimated that some twenty thousand Japanese are studying in China, and about seventy thousand Chinese students are studying here in Japan.

Our two nations have maintained close educational exchange from the

distant past. From a broad perspective, educational exchange is a great path of development for both nations and humanity as a whole.

Carrying forward Mr. Makiguchi's beliefs, we have consistently promoted Chinese-Japanese educational exchange, mainly through Soka University—which was the first Japanese university to accept officially funded Chinese students from Communist China. In April of 1975, the year after my first visit to China, I personally became a guarantor, as founder of Soka University, to the first Chinese students to study at our institution, and I supported them wholeheartedly during their stay in Japan. One of those initial exchange students is Cheng Yonghua, who in February 2010 was appointed China's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Japan.

Reestablishing Closed Channels of Exchange

Gu: We have spoken of the extremely close educational exchange between our two countries, but troubled times lay ahead. Unfortunately, after the September 18 Incident (also known as the Manchurian Incident or the Mukden Incident), Japan engaged in a war of aggression against China. In the 1930s and 1940s, exchange on an equitable basis between China and Japan was impossible.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Japan, bowing to pressure from the United States, did not recognize China, so there was no exchange on an official level.

But even under those circumstances, there were individuals in Japan who privately promoted exchange with China—for example, Kinkazu Saionji (1906–93), Yasushi Inoue (1907–91), Kenzō Matsumura (1883–1971), and Kanzō Uchiyama (1885–1959) were among those Japanese who repeatedly visited China, while several leading Chinese figures, such as Guo Moruo (1892–1978), Liao Chengzhi (1908–83), Zhao Puchu (1907–2000), and Lu Xun's wife Xu Guangping (1898–1968), visited Japan.

Ikeda: That's true. I have known and been friends with many of those whom you mentioned. I have fond memories of Liao Chengzhi and Zhao Puchu, as well as Matsumura, Inoue, Saionji, and Tatsunosuke Takasaki (1885–1964) on the Japanese side.

Though I never had the honor of meeting Guo Moruo or Xu Guangping in person, I have often spoken about them and introduced their accomplishments in speeches to young people. I have a strong relationship with the University of Science and Technology of China,

which Dr. Guo served as its first president.

Gu: Xu Guangping was invited to and participated in the unveiling of the Lu Xun Monument in Sendai. At that time Premier Zhou Enlai had announced a policy of unofficial exchange between China and Japan centering on trade, in spite of the absence of normalized diplomatic relations, thus opening the way to renewed friendship between our countries. In June 1952, China and Japan signed a non-governmental trade accord, and both nations began promoting commercial ties. But it remained difficult to reestablish educational exchange.

It was in those circumstances that the Soka Gakkai took the lead in calling for the normalization of diplomatic relations, expending great efforts in that direction. They bore fruit in 1972, and a new age of Chinese-Japanese relations began.

In 1979, when I was in charge of the International Relations Office at Beijing Normal University, we hosted a group from the University Issues Research Center of Hiroshima University (since renamed the Research Institute for Higher Education). I believe this was the first case of educational exchange between China and Japan after the Cultural Revolution.

In July of the following year, as I mentioned earlier, I made my first visit to Japan at the invitation of Japan Comparative Education Society President Masunori Hiratsuka (1907–81). During my visit I participated in the 4th World Congress of Comparative Education Societies held in Saitama Prefecture. In October of the same year, National Institute for Educational Research (now known as National Institute for Educational Policy Research) staff member Hiroshi Yokoyama visited us, marking the start of frequent educational exchange between our two countries.

I was in charge of international relations during my seven years as vice president of Beijing Normal University. From 1981, we accepted our first Japanese as foreign exchange students at Beijing Normal University. Yutaka Ōtsuka, the present president of the Japan Comparative Education Society, was among the students from Japan attending our university that year. I personally lectured to him on the history of the development of higher education in China.

Since then, the number of Japanese exchange students at our university has grown year by year, while we have also dispatched a large number of faculty and students for study in Japan. Ties between the Chinese Society of Education and Japanese Educational Research Association have been equally close, and we have engaged in various exchanges and collaborative programs with other schools. If I were to

recount all that in detail, it would amount to a book on the history of Chinese-Japanese educational exchange.

Youth Exchanges Foster Individuals of Peace

Gu: As I said earlier, at the point when there were no official relations between our countries and educational exchange had ceased, the Soka Gakkai was one of the first non-governmental organizations to call for the restoration of full diplomatic relations. The mission of the Soka Gakkai is to promote compassion in society and contribute to world peace, and it has engaged in educational reform to help people and children suffering in the world amid adversity. I regard this as a very important purpose.

The essence of education is to foster individuals who desire peace.

I agree from the bottom of my heart with your statement, President Ikeda, that cultural and educational exchanges are the keys to overcoming hatred and represent the shortest route to building trust and friendship. Many things are the province of political leaders in this world, and we, as educators, must not remain aloof from politics; but educating the next generation is an even greater responsibility.

For the sake of world peace, we need to teach the next generation ways in which people will take interest in and understand one another.

How can we do that? First, we must recognize the realities of today's world and respect the value systems of different nations and peoples, as well as their respective cultural traditions, their chosen social systems, and their cherished interests. The first step to doing this, and it is a very important first step, is to understand one another. The next step should be learning to trust each other, and then developing and growing together.

How can we attain this mutual understanding? By engaging in exchange.

The theme of the 2008 Beijing Olympiad was "One World, One Dream." With the support and cooperation of people around the world, the Olympics were a great success; it was a viable example of international exchange, mutual understanding, and cooperation, while at the same time further facilitating the mutual interaction and understanding of the peoples of the world and contributing to world peace. The Expo 2010 Shanghai China served in the same manner.

The Olympics promote exchange through the medium of athletic competition; I happen to believe that educational exchange and interaction are the most important, because they promote mutual understand-

ing not only among those of today's adult generation but also among those who will lead society in the future, extending their influence to the mutual understanding of the next generation. Educational exchange is the most desirable form of exchange, and the areas it covers, including language, science and technology, educational philosophy, and both content and methodology, are by far the broadest.

Foreign Language Skills Are Now Essential

Ikeda: I am struck by both the fiery passion and the profound spirit of friendship with which you have promoted educational exchange between our two countries. I would also like to repeat my sincere gratitude for your deep understanding of the Soka Gakkai. I completely agree with your statement that educational exchange is the key to world peace.

Above all else, a common language is crucial for fruitful cross-cultural interaction. In that context, I would like to talk about the importance of foreign-language education.

The great German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) declared: "A man who has no acquaintance with foreign languages knows nothing of his own."[12] We are living in an age that is incomparably more international and global than Goethe's, and it is exponentially more important to master not only one's native tongue but other languages as well.

One of my greatest personal regrets is that I never learned a foreign language. In my youth, Japan was obsessed by the war; English was regarded as an "enemy language," and studying it was strongly discouraged. After the war I was entirely absorbed in restoring my mentor Josei Toda's (1900–58) businesses—so much so that I was forced to drop out of the night school I was attending.

In my discussions with the world leaders and intellectuals today, I am assisted by outstanding interpreters, some of whom are Soka University graduates. Nevertheless, I often think how wonderful it would be if I were fluent in a foreign language.

One such case was a time when, during my discourses with the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889–1975), we found ourselves alone. He invited me to his gentlemen's club (the Athenaeum Club), and though he tried to use the simplest English he could, our conversation had to be conducted mostly through facial expressions and gestures. I look back fondly on that memory now, but at the time I felt very powerfully how much I wish I had studied a foreign language. Partly

because of my own experiences, I constantly stress the importance of mastering languages when I speak with students.

The success of language education in China is frequently reported in the Japanese press as well. What is language education in China like? I would be grateful if you could share some concrete examples and points with us.

Actual Use Is Key to Foreign-Language Proficiency

Gu: Being proficient in foreign languages is necessary for comparative education studies, and expertise in several languages enables one to access original source materials. Learning foreign languages, however, is quite difficult for us East Asians.

Speaking from my own experience, I spent the majority of my elementary and junior high school years under Japanese rule, so while I should have mastered Japanese, my revulsion for the Japanese military led me to skip most of my Japanese classes. I never imagined then that some time in the future I would become good friends with people from Japan. From 1980, I visited Japan on more than twenty occasions, and I have become painfully aware that my inability to speak Japanese with my friends there makes it inordinately difficult to communicate and interact with them.

I studied English in junior high school, but I never became proficient at it. Then I entered university in the Soviet Union, and as I studied Russian I completely forgot any English I had learned. This has had a major impact on my later comparative education research. I have deep regrets that my lack of language skills has prevented me from delving deeper into my research of comparative education.

Today, in this international age, foreign-language studies have become a vital component of our basic curriculum.

For a long time, language instruction in China was very poor. One reason was that language teachers were not properly qualified; another reason was that our teaching methods were obsolescent, with the result that foreign-language levels of even junior high graduates were not up to accepted standards.

As indicated by the phrase we have in Chinese, "Mute English," many such students could read but had no ability to carry on a conversation.

Ever since we entered a period of reform and liberalization in China, however, the Chinese government has placed special emphasis on language instruction. This emphasis has been particularly noteworthy in the last twenty years, with the government calling for the institution of

language instruction from the elementary school level; in most schools today foreign-language classes start from the third grade. In more developed areas, they begin from the first grade, and classroom hours are increasing annually.

Many schools have native-language speakers on staff, and classes are conducted in English. At the same time, foreign languages have become required subjects in entrance examinations for institutes of higher learning, and individuals who seek to enter graduate school have to pass a foreign-language proficiency test. Through a consistent effort to reinforce language learning, coupled with the upgrading of teacher qualifications and educational methods, students today have certainly come to show an improvement in foreign-language abilities.

But, naturally, on the national level, there is a considerable gap between highly developed areas such as Beijing and Shanghai, in contrast to western China, which lags considerably behind.

In recent years, with international exchange becoming more frequent, Chinese students have more opportunities than ever to interact with their foreign peers through such programs as summer and winter language learning camps, paving the way for a richer environment to learn foreign languages.

I think that the most important element for learning a foreign language is to provide environments where students can actually practice their language skills. If you have no opportunity to use the language skills you have studied, you tend to quickly forget what you have learned. In the early 1960s I studied German for two years, but when classes were canceled because of the Cultural Revolution, I forgot everything. That's why it is important, I think, to provide young people with as many opportunities as possible to interact with foreign-language speakers and chances to put the language skills they have learned to practical use.

Ikeda: Thank you for describing the language learning situation in China; I am surprised to learn that it is remarkably similar to that in Japan. Generally speaking, Japanese students devote many hours in junior and senior high schools to studying English, but in fact, though they may be able to read it, the majority of them still have poor actual speaking and listening comprehension skills. To alleviate this problem, various means for improving language education, including teaching English from the elementary-school level, are being adopted on a trial basis. There are also cases in which younger parents, who are intent on their children acquiring foreign-language skills, send them to special

schools or hire tutors to provide them with language-learning opportunities.

Many in Japan express concern that emphasizing foreign-language learning from an early age will interfere with children mastering their native tongue. The fact remains, however, that in our age of accelerating globalization, the ability to communicate fluently with the rest of the world has become indispensable. And if we wish to foster capable individuals who can be successful on the world stage, foreign-language mastery becomes even more of a priority.

As you noted, providing environments in which students can put their language learning to practical use is extremely important. Japan, in particular, is an island nation, and most Japanese have few opportunities to meet and interact with non-Japanese. Many have suggested that a significant reason that Japanese students' language skills don't improve in spite of all the hours they spend on language study is because an environment in which to hone and use foreign-language abilities has not been prepared properly.

Based on this, many universities are attempting new approaches to the problem.

At Soka University, the World Language Center was established in 1999 as a place where Japanese students can interact with the university's international students in their native languages; by prohibiting the use of Japanese, the students from Japan are able to practice their language skills and learn about other cultures at the same time.

Of course, many Soka University students also study abroad, and the university has entered into numerous academic exchange agreements and study abroad programs with institutes outside Japan, particularly in China. Among them, Soka University has a special Dual Degree Course with the Beijing Language and Culture University, whereby students can simultaneously earn a bachelor's degree from both institutions. The program's two years of overseas study have produced remarkable improvements in language ability, and its first participants graduated in the spring of 2011.

Soka University of America (SUA), meanwhile, has a program by which all students spend one semester during their junior year abroad, in either Japan or countries in which either Chinese or Spanish are spoken. By actually living in a foreign country for some time and interacting directly with other cultures and peoples, SUA students have the opportunity to learn "living" lessons in a foreign language rather than merely classroom instruction. This program is very popular with the students.

I am also happy to be able to report that several Chinese students who

studied at Soka University have mastered Japanese and are active as accomplished interpreters. At my meetings with Hu Jintao, president of the People's Republic of China, in 2008, and Wen Jiabao, premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, in 2007, both the Chinese and Japanese interpreters were graduates from Soka University, making the occasions a heartwarming reunion.

Our times are changing dramatically. Society is experiencing continuous change. We can no longer rely on the educational methods of the past. In response to students' needs, we need to offer a new curriculum reflecting new ideas.

Our students have the important mission of creating the future. The task of developing creative ways to improve their aptitude and enrich themselves as human beings falls entirely on our shoulders.

NOTES

[1] Rabindranath Tagore, "Unconquered," in *The Herald of Spring: Poems from Mohuā,* translated by Aurobindo Bose (London: John Murray, 1957), p. 33.

[2] The Way of Yin and Yang: A traditional Japanese esoteric cosmology mixing natural science with occultism. Drawn from Chinese philosophies, it was introduced into Japan in the 6th century and accepted as a practical system of augury.

[3] The Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Three Treatises, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, and Flower Garland schools.

[4] *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin,* vol. II (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2006), p. 348.

[5] The leaders of the warrior government were generally known as the shogun (general) and their governments are often called shogunate in English.

[6] The *Four Books* refers to the *Great Learning,* the *Doctrine of the Mean, Analects,* and the *Works of Mencius*. The *Five Classics* includes the *Book of Poetry* (also known as the *Book of Songs,* the *Book of Odes*), the *Book of History,* the *Book of Rites,* the *Book of Changes,* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

[7] Ihara Saikaku, *The Japanese Family Storehouse: Or the Millionaires' Gospel Modernised,* translated by G. W. Sargent (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1959), p. 123.

[8] William J. Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel, *The Essential World History: Sixth Edition* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2010), p. 558.

[9] *Education for Creative Living: Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi,* translated by Alfred Birnbaum; edited by Dayle M. Bethel (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1989), p. xi.

[10] Following China's defeat by invading European powers, Empress Dowager Cixi acknowledged the need for political reform incorporating Western ideas, and initiated the new Guangxu government in 1901—based, ironically, on the Hundred Days Reform that she had previously overthrown in a coup.

[11] Lu Xun began studying at the Sendai Medical Academy in 1904, the first foreign student of the college. There, Lu was mentored by lecturer Genkurō Fujino, a relationship that the Chinese student came to cherish and would later write an essay in tribute to his Japanese instructor.

[12] *The Maxims and Reflections of Goethe,* translated by Thomas Bailey Saunders (London: Macmillan, 1906), p. 154.

Daisaku Ikeda
President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a lay Buddhist organization with more than twelve million members worldwide, Ikeda was born in Tokyo in 1928. He has founded the Soka (value-creating) school system, running from kindergarten through graduate school at universities in Tokyo and California, U.S.A., an educational philosophy now practiced in schools around the world. He is also founder of various cultural and academic institutions, from the Min-On Concert Association and Tokyo Fuji Art Museum to the Institute of Oriental Philosophy and Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. He has engaged in personal "citizen diplomacy" from the 1960s to facilitate better China-Japan relations, establishing a web of cultural and educational exchange that now spans the globe. Based on an abiding faith in dialogue, Ikeda has met with world leaders and intellectuals in the fields of culture, education, and the arts, exchanging views on a diverse range of topics. Many of these meetings have led to the publication of dialogues (*http://www.daisakuikeda.org/*). He is the recipient of 338 academic honors (as of July 2013) from the world's universities and institutions of higher education, including Peking University, Moscow State University, and the University of Bologna.

Gu Mingyuan
Presently the honorary president of the Chinese Society of Education and Honorary Dean of the College of Education Administration (Beijing Normal University), Gu was born in 1929 in Jiangyin, Jiangsu Province. He studied in Beijing and Moscow, served as a professor, directed the International and Comparative Education Research Institute, and became vice president of Beijing Normal University, playing a major role in advancing education in China. Having served as president of the China Education Association for International Exchange and president of the Chinese Comparative Education Society as well as vice president of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, he is an honored educator on the global stage as well. China awarded him the title National Distinguished Teacher in 1991, while Beijing named him a People's Teacher in 1999. He was further recognized in Hong Kong with an honorary doctorate of education in 2001 from the Hong Kong Institute of Education, and awarded the Honorary Professor Medal from Teachers College of Columbia University in 2008. He has edited several encyclopedias and professional journals, including *Comparative Education Review.* Gu is the author of *Education in China and Abroad: Perspectives from a Lifetime in Comparative Education* (published in English) and other works in his field.