



# The Dissemination and Reception of Zhao Yi's Historiography in Japan

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## Abstract

*Zhao Yi's historiography enjoyed a high reputation in the world. It had a significant and profound impact on Japanese historiography. Japanese sinologists understand his historical thoughts, style, and characteristics through his epic poems. They printed and translated his historical works of "Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories", and showed a highly appreciation. They believed that Zhao Yi was a first-class historian in the history of Chinese historiography. The Kyoto School pays special attention to Zhao Yi's historiography. Naito Konan and his students were deeply influenced by it. Many of their theories, judgments, and works were formed on the basis of Zhao Yi's historiography achievements. This article analyzes the historical positioning of Zhao Yi's historiography through a review of relevant scholarly literature.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

A highly recognizable specialized discipline based on the historical achievements, ideas, methods, influence, historical activities, and life of Zhao Yi, a historian from the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods of the Qing Dynasty, can be named "Zhao Yi Historiography." His historiography enjoys a high international reputation and is a specialized discipline of great global significance. European and American sinologists have high praise for it. The scholar of Du Weiyun talked about the situation he learned during his study abroad in Europe: "Among the Western sinologists he met, mentioning Oubei Poetry Talk was always accompanied by admiration and praise. In recent years, there

have been many young Western students who are determined to study Oubei Poetry Talk. Their historical writings and reputation have now spread throughout the whole world [1]". Nevertheless, compared to Western historiography, Japanese historiography was more deeply influenced by Zhao Yi's historiography.

## II. THE DISSEMINATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF ZHAO YI'S WORKS IN JAPAN DURING THE LATE QING DYNASTY (LATE EDO AND MEIJI PERIODS)

2.1 The Spread and Acceptance of Zhao Yi's Poetry and Poetic Talks in Japan

Zhao Yi's historiography was first understood by the Japanese because of his epic poems. He is famous for his literary style and mainly appeared as a poet during his lifetime. His poetry has long been renowned both domestically and internationally. Not only did he receive a poetic name earlier than his historical name, but his poetic name also surpassed his historical name. His great historical achievements were made in his later years, and his historical name is actually his posthumous name. Before his historical works were introduced to Japan, it was his poetry and poetic talks. During his lifetime, his poetry and poetic talks had already crossed the East and gradually spread in the Japanese poetry world. Afterward, it spread widely and deeply rooted in people's hearts.

Wang Zhiben has lived in Japan for thirty years and has traveled to the four major islands, gaining a profound understanding of Chinese and Japanese society as well as poetry and literature. In the ninth year of the Guangxu reign (1883), he commented, *"Japan and our country are closely connected in culture and education and particularly fond of chanting. Li, Du, Yuan, and Bai from the Tang Dynasty, Su and Huang from the Song Dynasty, and various families such as Suiyuan, Oubei, Chuanshan, and Menglou from modern times all have set up their own books and recite them in the morning and evening [2]"*. The term 'modern' referred to the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, and the four listed scholars are Yuan Mei, Zhao Yi, Zhang Wentao, and Wang Wenzhi. Zhao Yi not only ranks among the famous poets and writers of the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods but can also be compared to Tang and Song dynasty poets and writers such as Li Bai, Du Fu, Yuan Zhen, Bai Juyi, Su Shi, and Huang Tingjian, which shows his high level of admiration in Japan.

Shortly after Zhao Yi's death, his poetry and poetic critiques were published in Japan,

spawning a wave of Japanese woodblock-printed editions (wakokubon). In the seventh year of the Daoguang era (corresponding to the tenth year of the Bunsei era in Japan, 1827), the two-volume *Selected Poems of Oubei* (Ōhoku Shisen), edited by Usui Kan and others, was published. This edition included a preface by Okuyama Yōsai (Preface to *Selected Poems of Oubei*) and an introductory essay by Ōkubo Shibutsu (Colophon to *Selected Poems of Oubei*). Following this publication, two additional Japanese editions emerged: one printed by Edo's Gyokugando and Izumiya Kin'emon, and another by Tokyo's Kobayashi Shinbei. The following year (1828), Gyokugando and Izumiya Kin'emon in Edo published the twelve-volume *Poetic Critiques of Oubei* (Ōhoku Shiwa), collated and annotated with kunten (Japanese reading marks) by Ōkubo Shibutsu and Tō Kōgai. This edition featured a preface by Miyazawa Kiji (Preface to *Poetic Critiques of Oubei*) and an appreciative commentary by Tō Kōgai (Colophon to *Poetic Critiques of Oubei*). Subsequently, two more Japanese editions appeared: one printed by Tokyo's Hōbunko Kobayashi Shinzō, and a later reprint by Tokyo's Bun'endo Asakuraya Kyūbei. Yuan Mei, Jiang Shiquan, and Zhao Yi are collectively known as the "Three Great Masters of the Qianlong Era" (also called the "Three Great Masters of Jiangyou"). Japanese poets likewise acknowledged their equal prominence, deliberately juxtaposing or comparing their works. Renowned Edo-period Sinologist Rai San'yō, an avid reader of Qing poetry, once composed a poem critiquing the trio: *Whose vigorous brush can rival the artistic realm of Master Cangyuan (Jiang Shiquan)? Zhao Yi's barracks-like vigor in poetry remains unsurpassed. Cangshan Jushi (Yuan Mei), with his flamboyant yet superficial prose, excels only in silver-tongued rhetoric, while secretly fearing the unrivaled talents of these two great scholars.*

*Why do people judge the Qing literary world through a narrow lens—like viewing a leopard's spots through a bamboo tube—reducing its entirety to Yuan Mei alone?* [3] The rise of Jiang Shiquan (Cangyuan) and Zhao Yi (Oubei) shattered Yuan Mei's (Cangshan) monopoly dominance, which had long overshadowed Qing-era poetry. With distinct styles, these three competed fiercely, standing as titans of Qing literary circles. Later, Japanese poet Kikuchi Kaisō wrote: *"Poetry critiques seem to harbor old grudges, Shallow words cannot judge eternity. Frost-edged swords and emerald moth wings—all mere costumes—For Yuan and Zhao remain the true veteran stars."* [4] Though tinged with subtle criticism, these lines ultimately acknowledge the profound poetic and critical achievements of Yuan and Zhao, affirming their unshakable stature in the literary pantheon.

Unlike Yuan Mei and Jiang Shiquan, Zhao Yi held another significant identity—that of a historian. His poetry contains numerous historical-themed verses imbued with historical insights, perspectives, and propositions. By reciting these poems, Japanese scholars could glimpse his historiographical philosophy, stylistic approach, and intellectual distinctiveness.

## 2.2 The Dissemination and Acceptance of Zhao Yi's Historical Works in Japan

Zhao Yi's historical scholarship, celebrated in global historiography, exerted its most profound and lasting influence on Japanese historical studies. Long before the Meiji Restoration (1868), his works were introduced to Japan as scholarly masterpieces, sparking fervent intellectual engagement. Zhao's reputation shone brightly, securing him an exalted position in Japanese academia. The Edo-period scholar Rai San'yō praised him: *"A figure like Oubei (Zhao Yi) is exceedingly rare even among ancient scholars—one might call him an unparalleled*

*historian in the annals of Chinese historiography"* [5]. Chen Yuan similarly noted that after *Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories (Nian'er Shi Zhaji)* reached Japan, it became *"a text read by nearly every historian,"* with Zhao Yi revered as *"the singular genius of historical scholarship across millennia"* [6].

Rai San'yō remarked, "Qing scholars, in their textual critiques, often sought to vilify Song dynasty thinkers to establish their own intellectual factions, thus offering little substantive benefit. Truly impactful works were but a few—Gu Yanwu's *Records of Daily Knowledge (Rizhi Lu)*, Zhu Yizun's *Examination of Classical Meanings (Jingyi Kao)*, and Zhao Yunsong's *Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories (Nian'er Shi Zhaji)*. As classical studies were already crowded with scholars, Zhao carved out a new realm, creating a 'school without factionalism'—this was Yunsong's unique achievement"[5]. In Rai's view, Zhao Yi stood alongside Gu Yanwu and Zhu Yizun as exemplars of applied scholarship, transcending the intellectual confines of their contemporaries. At a time when classical exegesis dominated academia, Zhao Yi forged an unconventional path, dedicating himself to historiography and pioneering fresh methodologies that elevated the discipline to unprecedented heights.

Similarly, Koga Moashi offered this appraisal: "Since ancient times, historians such as Liu Zhiji, Su Zhe, and Jiao Hong have numbered in the hundreds. In our own tradition, the Mito School's historiography was once deemed peerless. Yet upon reading Zhao Yi's *Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories (Nian'er Shi Zhaji)*, it becomes clear that he transcends them all. Though details of Oubei's life remain obscure, works like *Miscellaneous Examinations from the Foot of the Stairs (Gaiyu Congkao)*, *Oubei's Poetic Critiques (Ōhoku Shiwa)*, and *Miscellaneous Notes Under the Eaves (Yanpu*

Zaji) reveal a breadth and precision, an elegance and originality, unmatched by his contemporaries. While he left no writings on classical studies, one must infer he held profound insights yet chose silence—how unlike those pedants who exhaust themselves compiling trivial chronologies! What I admire most in Notes is its interconnectedness and thoroughness: it explores ideas unconsidered by others, argues points unaddressed by others, and with a single event illuminates a hundred others, dissecting flaws with surgical precision, leaving no stone unturned" [7]. Koga's evaluation unfolds across four key dimensions: Transcending East Asian Historiography: Despite the renown of Chinese and Japanese historians, none rival Zhao Yi's achievements. Unparalleled Scholarly Craftsmanship: His works stand peerless in their rigor and innovation. Latent Mastery of Classical Studies: Zhao's decision not to publish on classical texts suggests deliberate restraint, elevating him above conventional scholars. Methodological Brilliance of Notes: The text synthesizes events, draws interdisciplinary parallels, and delivers groundbreaking analyses with philosophical depth.

Military Chronicles of the Imperial Court (Huángcháo Wǔgōng Jìshèng) was another of Zhao Yi's historical works introduced early to Japan. The text vividly demonstrates his historiographical talents, showcasing his mastery of genre conventions, structural coherence, and narrative artistry. Rai San'yō deeply admired the work, offering critiques of its format, prose style, and analytical commentaries: "Zhao Yunsong served directly in the Military Affairs Bureau and participated in military campaigns—roles not of his choosing. Yet drawing from his experiences, he authored this enduring work. While it adopts the comprehensive narrative style of event-based

historiography (jishi benmo), others merely compile records, whereas Zhao crafts them into a cohesive whole, revealing his literary prowess. To vividly portray a single figure is easy; to narrate events with exhaustive detail yet avoid tedium is rare. Knowing the toil this demands, I revere Zhao. His evaluative commentaries (lunzan) also stand distinct from conventional chronicles. I was longing to read Zhao's miscellaneous essays, regretting their absence in anthologies. Reading this text, I imagine him drafting proclamations in camp tents, effortlessly wielding his brush" [5]. Rai's admiration is palpable, attributing the work's excellence to Zhao Yi's originality and literary brilliance.

The critiques by Rai San'yō and Koga Moashi profoundly shaped Japanese Sinologists' perception of Zhao Yi and his historiography. Consequently, his works saw widespread publication in Japan, most notably the reprinting of Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories (Nian'er Shi Zhaji). A search of the Japanese Database of Chinese Classical Texts reveals multiple editions circulating in Japan, both original Qing prints and Japanese woodblock-printed editions (wakokubon). Among these, the earliest Japanese edition was published in 1861—the first year of Emperor Kōmei's Bunk'yū era (corresponding to the 11th year of the Xianfeng era in Qing China)—by Kenkensha Press, collated and punctuated by Nukina Kai. This edition, spanning 36 main volumes and one supplementary volume across 18 volumes, retained the original Chinese characters without alteration, matching Qing prints. Its cover inscription—"Reprinted in the Xinyou Year of the Bunk'yū Era, Mid-Autumn"—indicates it was based on a Qing-era original. This suggests that Qing editions of Notes had already reached Japan and gained significant traction prior to 1861.

Following its reprint, the book rapidly gained circulation. Attached to the edition was the *Heian Bookseller Kyūjodō's Collection List*, which cataloged the Japanese woodblock-printed version (*wakokubon*), indicating its commercial availability. In 1866 (Keiō 2), Kenkensha Press issued a revised and re-collated edition. Consequently, the dissemination of Zhao Yi's historical works broadened, and their reception intensified. His scholarly achievements, ideas, methodologies, and stylistic innovations gradually became widely recognized within Japanese intellectual circles, elevating his historiographical reputation and stature. Nukina Kai marveled: "*We have annals-based histories (biannian), biographies-based histories (jizhuan), the Comprehensive Mirror (Zizhi Tongjian), the Outline and Details of the Comprehensive Mirror (Tongjian Gangmu), and the Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government (Tongjian Jishi Benmo)—historiography seemed complete. Yet now, with Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories, we may truly speak of a 'grand synthesis of historical scholarship!'*"[8]. By placing Zhao's work alongside foundational texts by Sima Guang, Zhu Xi, and Yuan Shu, Nukina's statement reflects profound admiration for Zhao Yi's historiographical contributions.

### III. THE REPUBLICAN ERA (JAPAN'S TAISHŌ AND EARLY SHŌWA PERIODS): JAPANESE SINOLOGY'S ENGAGEMENT WITH ZHAO YI'S HISTORIOGRAPHY

3.1 The Japanese Sinological Community's Recognition of Zhao Yi's Historiography and the Translation of His Works

3.1.1 Positioning Zhao Yi's Scholarly Identity

To Japanese Sinologists, Zhao Yi's status as a preeminent historian of the Qianlong-Jiaqing era—and indeed of all Chinese

historiography—was beyond dispute. In 1910, historians at Tokyo Imperial University conducted an anonymous vote to select the "Ten Greatest Historians of China," and Zhao Yi was prominently included, ranked alongside Confucius, Zuo Qiuming, Sima Qian, Liu Zhiji, Du You, Sima Guang, Gu Yanwu, Gu Zuyu, and Cui Shu [9]. This recognition underscores the unparalleled reverence for his scholarly legacy. In his General Survey of Qing Historiography (Shinchōshi Tsūron), Naitō Konan placed the "Three Great Evidential Historical Works of the Qian-Jia Era" at the forefront of his bibliographical framework, categorizing them under "Historiography" and "Critical Examination of Ancient Texts." This reflects his view that these three works—Zhao Yi's Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories (Nian'er Shi Zhaji), Wang Mingsheng's Seventeen Historical Critiques (Shiqi Shi Shangque), and Qian Daxin's Critical Investigations of the Twenty-Two Histories (Nian'er Shi Kaoyi)—shared comparable scholarly rigor and significance, positioning Zhao Yi as an equal to the era's most celebrated masters of evidential historiography.

Since the 18th century, Chinese intellectual circles gradually acknowledged Zhao Yi's identity as a historian but did not universally recognize him as a classical Confucian scholar. Japanese Sinologists held a similar view. In his General Survey of Qing Historiography (Shinchōshi Tsūron), Naitō Konan categorized Wang Mingsheng and Qian Daxin under the "Han Learning" subsection of the "Classical Studies" section, associating them with the Wu School. Notably, Zhao Yi—who shared the same Jiangnan regional roots as Wang and Qian and matched their stature in historical textual criticism—was excluded from this grouping. This omission reflects Naitō's assessment that Zhao Yi's contributions to classical studies fell short of



Wang and Qian's achievements, rendering him ineligible to be classified as a representative figure of the Wu School's Han Learning tradition.

### 3.1.2 Recognition of Zhao Yi's Historiographical Style and Methodology

Zhao Yi approached history with grand vision, synthesizing broad perspectives and excelling in discerning overarching historical trends. Naitō Konan (1866–1934) praised his talent for “articulating comprehensive theories of historical dynamics” and noted that “these theories brim with innovative insights” [10].

Zhao Yi mastered the use of inductive methods, weaving diverse sources into coherent analyses and delivering groundbreaking conclusions through meticulous organization—a style celebrated as “aligning rhetoric with factual rigor” (shuci bishi). This approach has long been admired by scholars across eras. Kuwabara Jitsuzō (1870–1931) particularly extolled Zhao's methodological sophistication, arguing that “he surpassed even Qian Daxin and Wang Mingsheng in inductive reasoning, rivaling Gu Yanwu himself” [11].

### 3.1.3 Translation and Dissemination of Zhao Yi's Works

In the early 20th century, *Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories* (Nian'er Shi Zhaji) was translated into Japanese, achieving wide circulation. During the 1920s, Japan saw a surge in translating Chinese classics, culminating in the National Translations of Chinese Classics (Kokuyaku Kanbun Taisei), edited by Tsuruida Hisaku and published by Kokumin Bunko Kankōkai. Volume 7, Part 3 of this series, titled “Continuation of Classics, Philosophers, and Histories,” included a Japanese translation of *Notes* by Sasagawa Rinpū and Kōda Rentarō, annotated and published as “National Translation of Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories” in two volumes. In 1931, the Continued National Translations of

Chinese Classics (Zoku Kokuyaku Kanbun Taisei), compiled by the Oriental Culture Association, featured *Notes* in Volume 20 under “Classics, Philosophers, and Histories.” This translation momentum persisted through the late 20th century, cementing Zhao Yi's influence in Japanese academia.

### 3.2 The Influence of Zhao Yi's Historiography on Japanese Historical Studies

Zhao Yi's historiography profoundly influenced Japanese academia, sparking significant intellectual reverberations. The University of Tokyo has long revered Zhao Yi and his scholarship, not only naming him one of the “Ten Greatest Chinese Historians” in the early 20th century but also establishing a specialized course on *Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories* (Nian'er Shi Zhaji) in 1983 [12], cementing his legacy within its academic tradition.

The Kyoto School of historiography was particularly shaped by Zhao Yi's work. While post-Meiji Japanese historians increasingly embraced Western methodologies, the Kyoto School drew deeply from classical Chinese historiography. Qian Wanyue notes that the Kyoto School's scholarly ethos and methods were heavily influenced by the evidential empiricism (kaozheng) of the Qianlong-Jiaqing era, with Zhao Yi occupying a central position in this intellectual lineage [13]. Naitō Konan, a leading figure of the school, and his disciples were profoundly shaped by Zhao's ideas—a consensus in academic circles. Liu Zheng's assessment is emblematic: “*Zhao Yi of the Qian-Jia School exerted the most substantial influence on Naitō's historiography and the Kyoto School*”; “*Mastering Zhao Yi's and Zhang Xuecheng's historical works became a hallmark of Kyoto School scholars*”; and Naitō's disciples regarded expertise in Zhao's scholarship as “one of their foundational intellectual tools” [14].

Zhao Yi's historiography served as a key source for Naitō's theoretical frameworks, most notably the Theory of Cultural Center Shift. This theory, rooted in 17th–18th century Chinese historians like Gu Yanwu, Ji Dong, Gu Zuyu, and Zhao Yi, drew particularly on Zhao's Theory of Chang'an's Geocultural Vitality. Naitō openly acknowledged: *"In formulating my 'Hypothesis on Geographical Forces,' I expanded upon Zhao Yi's ideas about Chang'an's geocultural vitality... Zhao's arguments form the core of this theory... though I sought to correct his perceived errors when drafting 'Japan's Divine Mission and Scholars'"* [15]. Here, Naitō both elaborated on and critiqued Zhao's theories, synthesizing them into his own Civilizational Mission of Japan.

Mitamura Taisuke observed that Naitō's Theory of Cultural Center Shift directly evolved from Zhao Yi's geocultural theories, though Naitō added the nuance that cultural and political shifts do not strictly align with geographical forces, crafting a unique cultural-historical perspective [16]. Li Qing identifies three pillars of Naitō's theory: Zhao Yi's geocultural thought, traditional Japanese philosophy, and Hegelian dialectics [17]. Lian Qingji emphasizes: *"Naitō Konan's 'Civilizational Center Shift' theory originated from Zhao Yi's 'Cultural Concentration Hypothesis'"* [14]. Liu Zheng further argues: *"The origins of Naitō's theory are inseparable from the geographical philosophies of Qian-Jia scholars, particularly Zhao Yi's historiography. Naitō elevated Zhao's pragmatic statecraft (jingshi zhiyong) and geocultural theories to their logical extremes"* [14]. Wang Yunyan also traces connections between Zhao's work and Naitō's Medieval Aristocracy Theory, noting that both theories were structurally indebted to Zhao Yi's scholarship [18].

Scholars across China and Japan affirm the intellectual lineage between Zhao Yi and Naitō. Du Weiyun states: "Japanese historians writing

on Chinese history borrow most extensively from Zhao Yi's Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories. Comparing Naitō Torajirō's Modern Chinese History with Zhao's Notes, one finds striking parallels—so much so that Western Sinologists suspect Naitō of plagiarism" [19]. Yoshimori Kensuke concedes that Naitō frequently cited Zhao's works, noting "a high likelihood of intellectual indebtedness" [20]. Fukuhara Yoshiro, analyzing Naitō's Medieval Aristocracy Theory, praises it as "the genesis of aristocratic institutional studies" while underscoring Zhao Yi's foundational influence [21]. Guo Luning further confirms that Notes served as a primary reference for Naitō's lectures on Chinese historiography, heavily cited and adapted in his teachings [22].

Shan Lei has also published a series of essays exploring the intellectual connections between Zhao Yi's historiography and Naitō Konan's scholarship, concluding the following:

1. Zhao Yi's Framework for the Tang-Song Transition: Zhao Yi provided clear, systematic, and critically rigorous analyses of socio-historical transformations during the Tang-Song transition, coupled with a strong methodological self-awareness. These insights became foundational intellectual resources for Naitō's formulation of the Theory of the Tang-Song Transition [23].
2. Zhao's Theory of Tang-Song Historiographical Reform: By tracing the evolution of Chinese historiography through dynastic records, Zhao Yi developed the concept of a "Tang-Song Historiographical Reformation," which directly informed Naitō's Theory of Tang-Song Historiographical Transformation as its primary intellectual source [24].

3. Textual and Methodological Borrowings: Naitō's works *Culture of Medieval China* [25] and *Modern Chinese History* [26] extensively drew upon Zhao Yi's scholarship in their arguments, evidence selection, analytical methods, narrative structures, and even phrasing.

Naitō's disciples matured as scholars by studying Zhao Yi's works and assimilating his ideas. A prime example is his early student Okazaki Fumio. In his preface to Okazaki's *Comprehensive History of the Wei, Jin, and Northern-Southern Dynasties*, Naitō praised

Okazaki's meticulous engagement with Zhao Yi's texts [27]. In the book's own preface, Okazaki identified the "Three Great Evidential Historical Works of the Qian-Jia Era" as essential reading for students of Chinese history, openly acknowledging his citations of Zhao's scholarship [28]. While such citations do not imply wholesale acceptance of Zhao's conclusions, they undeniably attest to their academic kinship. Though Okazaki did not systematically cite sources, a comparative reading of their works reveals unmistakable parallels (Table 1).

*Table 1 Okazaki Fumio's General History of the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties: Key References to Zhao Yi's Historiography*

Zhao Yi's Works, Volume, and Content	Content of "General History of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties"
From <i>Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories</i> , Volume 5, Entry "The Harm Inflicted by Eunuchs on the People": "The Eastern Han, Tang, and Ming dynasties all suffered grievously from the calamities wrought by palace eunuchs, yet their impacts differed. Under the Tang and Ming, the eunuchs first harmed the state and then the people; in the Eastern Han, they first harmed the people and then the state..." [29]	"According to Zhao Yi's analysis, a comparative examination of Chinese history reveals that the Eastern Han, Tang, and Ming dynasties were most severely plagued by eunuch-induced calamities. However, while Tang and Ming eunuchs first destabilized the state before harming the populace, the Eastern Han eunuchs directly targeted the people before eroding the state. In other words, the defining feature of the Eastern Han eunuch crisis was its immediate impact on ordinary citizens. To substantiate this argument, Zhao Yi cites various memorials submitted by officials, filled with accounts of eunuchs seizing land and homes, abducting women, and desecrating graves." [30]
From <i>Notes on the Twenty-Two Histories</i> , Volume 14, Entry "Emperor Xiaowen of Wei Relocates to Luoyang": "Emperor Xiaowen of Wei, recognizing the persistence of archaic customs inherited from earlier generations, resolved to relocate the capital to Luoyang to reform these traditions. The emperor, steeped in literary refinement, despised the crudeness of his people's heritage and sought to Sinicize them through Han cultural practices, thus daring to undertake this monumental act. Yet	"Zhao Yi's <i>Notes</i> identifies the relocation of the capital to Luoyang as a pivotal factor in the decline of the Northern Wei dynasty. According to Zhao's analysis, Emperor Xiaowen (Gaozu) prioritized cultural governance to the neglect of military preparedness, inevitably leading to the weakening of defenses. While this perspective holds validity to some extent, it would be more accurate to argue that Emperor Xiaowen initiated the relocation not because the move itself eroded the dynasty's foundational ethos, but rather in response to the preexisting decay of that ethos. This



the decline of the Northern Wei dynasty truly began here. After his reign passed to Emperor Xuanwu, then to Emperor Xiaoming, the Mandate of Heaven shifted. In his eagerness to emulate ancient sage-kings through cultural governance, he failed to notice the gradual erosion of military readiness." [31]	interpretation warrants further scholarly investigation." [30]
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#### IV. CONCLUSION

Yan Shaodang once asserted: "The promotion of Chinese national culture to the world began earliest in Japan, achieved the grandest scale, and received the most significant responses. Regarding such a splendid cultural phenomenon, Chinese scholars should make independent judgments based on our national cultural cultivation that reflect Chinese scholars' own understanding" [32]. How true this statement is! Ancient Chinese academic culture was comprehensively advanced compared to Japan, and academic cultural trends often took considerable time before becoming prevalent in Japan. The fact that Zhao Yi's works were transmitted to Japan shortly after their publication and received high acclaim reflects that Zhao Yi's historiography was particularly adaptable to Japanese academic soil. Regarding these phenomena, Chinese scholars should make independent judgments at both national and global levels.

Some scholars have recognized that after Japanese academia, having absorbed Western learning, introduced Chinese Ming-Qing historiography, they reinterpreted it through modern Western perspectives and transmitted it back to China, thereby promoting the transformation of Ming-Qing historiography into modern historiography [33]. While this perspective is enlightening, it requires case-by-case analysis. Here we illustrate this point by examining Zhao Yi and Zhang Xuecheng, both obscure during their lifetimes but

posthumously honored. The modern "revival" of Zhao and Zhang has been a much-discussed topic in Chinese and Japanese academia. However, since the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras, their historical receptions differed significantly. Domestic historians long undervalued Zhang Xuecheng's historiography. Its elevation in early 20th century largely resulted from Japanese sinologists' excavations and interpretations. In contrast, Zhao Yi's historiographical status gained substantial recognition as early as the 19th century, earning him parity with Qian Daxin and Wang Mingsheng. Compared with Zhang's works, Zhao's writings enjoyed far better circumstances in terms of publication, dissemination, and reception. When late Qing and Republican-era domestic historians drew upon Western historiography, they discovered striking parallels with Zhao Yi's works. Delighted, they directly absorbed nutrients from Zhao's scholarship to construct their ideal "new historiography". This was a widespread phenomenon, not something that required Japanese sinologists' modern reinterpretation before gaining Chinese scholars' attention.

The dissemination and reception of Zhao Yi's historiography in China and Japan developed in parallel, with domestic transmission forming the mainstream. This can be demonstrated through late Qing and Republican-era Chinese history textbooks. Although most new-style Chinese history textbooks read during this period were imported from Japan, their content predominantly drew from ancient Chinese

historiographical achievements, with Zhao Yi's works being extensively utilized. Conscientious domestic historians and history educators attempted to examine Chinese history through Chinese perspectives. While their compiled textbooks still borrowed formal elements from Japanese models, they predominantly sourced themes and content from traditional domestic historiographical achievements - particularly Zhao Yi's works.

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