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# THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AND PROBLEMS WITH CHINESE SOCIETY'S RECOVERY MEASURES FOLLOWING THE SICHUAN EARTHQUAKES

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## Abstract

The Wenchuan Earthquake of May 2008 in Sichuan, which was five months prior to the start of the Beijing Olympics in August, on the one hand caused major damage to Chinese society, but on the other hand the speedy response of the Chinese government and the recovery work became a major source of prestige for China, the same as the Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai Expo. In accordance with the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting Against and Mitigating Earthquake Disasters, the Earthquake Mitigation and Disaster Relief Command Center was set up in the State Council, with Prime Minister Wen Jiabao exercising overall command. In June, the Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Ordinance was formulated, and then in August, the National Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Comprehensive Plan. Support for the recovery was carried out competitively using the pairing-support method. The three-year plan was shrunk to two years and the fact that it was actually completed in a two and a half years was publicized as a great achievement of the Communist Party. The Great Western China Development Plan, a project begun before the earthquake, was also accelerated alongside the earthquake recovery. While on the hand the government-initiated rapid response achieved a recovery that was possible precisely because it was done by the Chinese government, on the other hand, problems remain in reconstructing the lives of the individual disaster victims, including the problem of domestic disparities and the fluid population, which were concerns from before the earthquake. Also, the earthquake became an opportunity to press from change in Chinese society, including becoming the starting point following the launch of the new China for the activities of various volunteers and NGOs.

Key words: China, Sichuan Great Earthquake, recovery plan, pairing support (one-to-one support), China's NGO Year One

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## 1. Introduction

The objective of this paper is, while comparing the earthquakes in Sichuan of the Wenchuan Earthquake on May 12, 2008, and the Lushan Earthquake five years later on April 20, 2013, both in Sichuan, to verify the characteristics and problems of the Chinese government's disaster-recovery measures and to identify the problems in Chinese society that were brought to the surface by these earthquakes.

The Wenchuan Earthquake in 2008 was a major earthquake in China, which up to that point had not been known as a country of earthquakes, and it was widely reported on both domestically and internationally. Generally speaking, the Sichuan Earthquake refers to the earthquake with a magnitude of 8.0 that occurred on May 12, 2008, at 2.28 p.m. with an epicenter in Wenchuan County, Sichuan Province (70kms from Chengdu City, the provincial capital) (subsequently, the May 12th Wenchuan Earthquake) and also the earthquake that occurred five years later in Sichuan Province on April 20, 2013, with a magnitude of 7.0 known as the Sichuan Lushan Ya-an Earthquake (subsequently, the April 20th Lushan Earthquake). Major disasters in China had hardly been reported prior the 2008 earthquake and international society, which already focused on China prior to its holding of the Beijing Olympics in August, was surprised by the occurrence of such a major earthquake in China. This disaster caused the most damage of any disaster since China was newly founded as a nation in 1949. While on the one hand China made responding to it itself a priority, on the other hand it accepted an unprecedented level of support from international society and also reported on the earthquake. After the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, awareness had grown in international society that China is a country of many earthquakes, in part due to the announcements of the Chinese government. Following the magnitude 7.1 Yushu Earthquake of April 14, 2010, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao arrived at the scene of the disaster on the 15<sup>th</sup> around 6pm and took control of the rescue operations. Also, President Hu Jintao, who was visiting Brazil for the BRICs Summit, urgently returned to China and arrived at the scene of the disaster on the 17<sup>th</sup>. But conversely, in contrast to the Wenchuan Earthquake of 2008, China strictly regulated support from overseas and the entry of foreign reporters. Its basic policy following the Lushan Earthquake of April 20, 2013, was also to deal with the problem domestically. As a result, people were not aware of the local conditions in the disaster-affected areas and it is frequently heard that the damage from the April 20th Lushan Earthquake was not that great. However, as we can see in Table 1, it was certainly not the case that the damage was insignificant. The



PHOTOGRAPH: The Chinese Communist Party's English-language magazine (June 2013)

TABLE 1.  
A comparison of the major earthquakes in western China

Earthquake name	Sichuan Wenchuan Earthquake	Qinghai Yushu Earthquake	Sichuan Lushan Earthquake (Yu-an Earthquake)
Time of occurrence	May 12, 2008, 14.28	April 14, 2010, 7.49	April 20, 2013, 8.02
Magnitude	8.0	7.1	6.6
Epicenter	Wenchuan County, Ngawa Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province (70km from Chengdu) (on the Longmenshan Fault)	Yushu County, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province	Longmen Town, Lushan County, Ya-an City, Sichuan Province (on the Longmenshan Fault)
Number of fatalities	69,277 people	2,968 people	196 people
Number of injured	374,643 people	12,315 people	12,200 people
Number missing	17,923 people	270 people	21 people
Damage to homes	216,000 collapsed 4.15 million were damaged	15,000 private homes collapsed (near to the epicenter, more than 90% of homes collapsed). About 100,000 people lost their homes.	17,000 houses and 56,000 buildings collapsed. Between 45,000 to 147,000 houses were completely destroyed. Between 150,000 to 718,000 houses were completely or partially destroyed. (Note*1)

Note\*1): The data on homes damaged in the Sichuan Lushan (Ya-an) Earthquake is from Zhai, Kun·Akihara, Masato (2013) “Conceptual Research on the Recovery from the Sichuan Ya-an Longmen Great Earthquake” (<http://www.think-t.gr.jp/katudou/pdf/2013-No9.pdf>).

China Youth Daily (April 23, 2013) noted that “lessons had not been learned,” and that many of the buildings constructed after the Wenchuan Earthquake had been destroyed. But while support was not accepted from overseas, publications such as the Chinese Communist Party’s English language magazine did report in special features that the lessons from 2008 had been fully utilized and that the response to the earthquake had been performed skilfully.

Up until recently, China was not known as a country affected by earthquakes, such as Japan is. But in actuality, it has experienced quite a few major earthquakes in its history. However, because they are not as frequent as in Japan and also because they are rarely reported on, it can be said that they have not attracted that much attention both domestically and internationally and also that China’s earthquake recovery experiences have not been shared. Table 2 shows the main earthquakes China has experienced in its history. In terms of its recent experiences, the main earthquakes since the Wenchuan Earthquake of 2008 are shown, even if they did not reach magnitude (M) 7.0. We can see that in addition to in Sichuan and Qinghai, major earthquakes frequently occur in regions where many ethnic minorities live, such as Xinjiang and Yunnan. There has been practically no reporting of the earthquakes that occurred in Xinjiang. While on the one hand the regions where earthquakes occur do include mountainous districts and deserts where few people live and so little damage is caused, on the other hand there are cases where

TABLE 2.  
The major earthquakes in China's history

Date	Earthquake name	Magnitude (M)	Fatalities (people)
December 1920	Haiyuan earthquake (海原地震)	8.5	235,502
May 1927	Gulang earthquake (古浪地震)	8.0	41,419
August 1931	Fuyun earthquake (富蘊地震)	8.0	10,000
December 1932	Changma earthquake (昌馬地震)	7.6	200 (700,000)
August 1933	Diexi Earthquake (疊溪地震)	7.5	9,365
August 1950	Assam-Tibet Earthquake (西藏察隅—墨脫)	8.6	3,300
March 1966	Hebei Province-Xingtai Earthquake (河北省寧晉邢台地震)	7.2	1,000 (8,064)
January 1970	Tonghai Yunnan Province Earthquake (雲南省通海地震)	7.8	15,621
February 1973	Luhuo Sichuan Province Earthquake (四川省烱霍地震)	7.6	2,199
May 1974	Zhaotong Yunnan Province Earthquake (雲南省昭通地震)	7.1	1,541
February 1975	Haicheng Liaoning Earthquake (遼寧省海城地震)	7.3	200 (1,839)
July 1976	Tangshan Hebei Province Earthquake (河北省唐山地震)	7.8	242,800
<b>May 2008</b>	Sichuan Earthquake (Wenchuan) 四川大地震 (汶川)	<b>8.0</b>	<b>69,277</b>
August 2008	Yunnan Panzhihua Earthquake (雲南攀枝花地震)	5.9	36
May 2009	Xinjiang Earthquake (新疆地震)	5.2	
July 2009	Guantun Yunnan Yao'an Earthquake (雲南姚安地震)	5.7	1
April 2010	Yushu Earthquake (青海地震)	7.1	2,968
March 2011	Yingjiang County Yunnan Earthquake (雲南盈江地震)	5.5	25
September 2012	Yiliang County Yunnan Earthquake (雲南貴州地震)	5.7	
April 2013	Lushan Sichuan Earthquake (Ya-an) (四川芦山地震 (雅安) )	6.6	196
February 2014	Xinjiang Earthquake (新疆地震)	7.3	

Source: The table was prepared by the authors and is mainly based on the table in the Asahi Shimbun, June 12, 2008, and the table China's Earthquake Dangers, broadcast in the NHK special, China's Wenchuan Earthquake, on May 24, 2008. ([www.nhro.or.jp/disclosure/q\\_kenkyu/No14\\_2\\_1.pdf](http://www.nhro.or.jp/disclosure/q_kenkyu/No14_2_1.pdf) date of access: November 25, 2008) combined with other materials. There are some differences in the number of fatalities depending on the source. The table shows the most severe earthquakes only and many others have occurred. It has been further revised by the authors (from Otani, 2009).

information on earthquakes has been controlled for political reasons.

In addition to the Wenchuan Earthquake of 2008, the Tangshan Earthquake of 1976 is another example of a major earthquake in China in the past from which international society realized that China is a country where major earthquakes occur. However, it was difficult to ascertain the extent of the damage caused by the 1976 Tangshan Earthquake due to the authorities' control of information, such as the prohibition on taking cameras into the disaster-affected areas. Three Japanese nationals working for Hitachi who were in China to establish a joint venture died in this earthquake when the hotel they were staying in was completely destroyed. It was not until three years after this earthquake that it was announced that 250,000 people had died in it. This was announced by Deng Xiao Ping, who had recovered from a fall from power to become, in actual terms, the People's Republic of China's supreme leader. We can analyze that time of 1976 as being a special, cautious period in China's history (Otani, 2009). The Tangshan Earthquake

struck Hebei Province near Beijing on July 28, 1976.

On January 8, 1976, Zhou Enlai died, and then on July 6, the founder of the People's Liberation Army Zhu De also died. Then Mao Tse-tung died on September 9. It can be estimated that there was much turmoil within China's Communist Party on whether these deaths would mark the start of a new China and so it is considered that is strictly controlled information on disasters, which might fan the flames of social unrest among the people (Otani, 2009).

In the Wenchuan Earthquake recovery, it can be said that there clearly appeared an administrative style of the Chinese government encouraging a top-down approach. The Chinese Government and the Communist Party would use the progress reports on the recovery as opportunities for grand announcements. In March 2009, just before the one year anniversary of the earthquake, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao reported in the National People's Congress that while up to that point the target for the time period for the completion of the recovery in the disaster-affected areas had been set as three years, it had been shorted by one year to "within two years."

President Hu Jintao also announced at the memorial ceremony for the one year anniversary of the Wenchuan Earthquake that the recovery had been accelerated and would be "completed in two years."<sup>1</sup> He announced that the goal was "for the disaster victims to return to living comfortable lives as soon as possible" (Otani, 2012). On October 1, 2009, about one and a half years after the earthquake, at an event to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the new China<sup>2</sup>, the exceptional speed of the recovery from the Wenchuan Earthquake was praised as one of the greatest achievements of the new China. China's central television station announced in a propaganda style report that two years after the Wenchuan County Earthquake, "Lives are being newly created and transformed in the disaster-affected areas as a result of the reconstruction efforts over two years." However, the government did not clarify how many people had already moved into the more than 1.4 million homes that it had built for the disaster victims in the rural villages in the disaster-affected areas (Otani, 2012). On July 20, 2011, which was date of the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the founding of China's Communist Party, the recovery following the Wenchuan Earthquake was proclaimed to be one of the greatest achievements of the Communist Party (Otani, 2012). China was praised internationally following the success of the Beijing Olympics in August 2008 and the Shanghai Expo in 2010, which were major international events connected to China's prestige. In this context, it could be said that China was sensitive to making sure that it did not have its feet pulled from under it through the failure of its Sichuan recovery policies.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sankei Shimbun, May 13, 2009 "President Hu Jintao "Recovery achieved in two years," One Year Memorial Ceremony of the Sichuan Earthquake

<sup>2</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, May 13, 2009, "The political use of the Chinese tragedy, the Sichuan Earthquake, one year later; on the 60th anniversary of the nation's founding, President Hu Jintao emphasizes "unity"

## **2. The Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting Against and Mitigating Earthquake Disasters**

The Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting Against and Mitigating Earthquake Disasters (established December 1997, enforced March 1998) is China's general law for dealing with earthquakes. But it could not respond appropriately for the post-earthquake recovery measures following the Wenchuan Earthquake and in December 2008, this law was revised for the first time in 11 years. Various natural disasters, such as major floods, had occurred in China since it was established as a nation in 1949 and natural disasters were recognized to be critical events for the nation. But in the beginning, the government's basic policy was one of "self help" and it hardly provided any relief to disaster victims. Following the Great Leap Forward and the policy failure that resulted in famine, from 1963 the government recognized that it should also provide disaster relief. However, this relief policy collapsed during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. The Ministry of Civil Affairs was established in 1978 after the Cultural Revolution, and it was mandated to provide disaster relief to rural communities. Subsequently, in 1989, which was the United Nation's Year of International Disaster Reduction, China also established the China International Disaster Mitigation 10 Year Committee (Otani, 2012)<sup>3</sup>.

With regards to present day China's emergency-response plan, Miyao (2012) provided an overview of the overall framework of China's emergency-response plan for unforeseen incidents and also outlined its emergency-response plan for natural disasters and introduced some of their problems.

The Chinese government positioned the recovery from the Wenchuan Earthquake to be a major project connected to the prestige of the nation. As was previously mentioned, the government responded rapidly and the nation's leaders immediately visited the disaster-affected areas. Premier Wen Jinbao established an Earthquake Measures Headquarters on the same day as the earthquake struck and took control of the efforts in the disaster-affected areas (Otani, 2009 & 2012). President Hu Jintao was in Switzerland attending the World Economic Forum, but he returned immediately to China and visited the disaster-affected areas on the fifth day after the earthquake. The government's response was also exceptionally rapid for the construction of temporary housing. The construction of the temporary housing began on the 19th, one week after the earthquake, and people started moving in to the housing 10 days later, on the 29th (Otani, 2009 & 2012). Compared to the 1995 Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake, in which people moved into the temporary housing three months after the earthquake, and also compared to the experiences in the disaster-affected areas following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, the fact that people began moving in 10 days after construction started indicates a very fast response. The disaster-affected areas following the Wenchuan Earthquake covered a wide area and demand

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<sup>3</sup> Please refer to Otani (2012) on the history of China's disaster-recovery policies

in terms of the numbers of temporary housing required in the various places was completely different, and so subsequently the construction of temporary housing continued for several months. However, compared to the temporary housing in Japan, which were designed to have external shared facilities including toilets, bathrooms, and kitchens, the construction work in China omitted certain aspects, such as the installation of water pipes.

The response of the Chinese government to the Wenchuan Earthquake was rapid and it immediately established a national earthquake emergency disaster relief system. As prescribed by the Law on Protecting Against and Mitigating Earthquake Disasters (established December 1997, enforced March 1998), the Earthquake Mitigation and Disaster Relief Command Center was set up within the State Council. Premier Wen Jinbao took overall control and seven hours after the disaster, he had already visited the disaster-affected areas, and his visit was widely reported by the media. Even before that, two hours after the earthquake, a disaster relief emergency response system was put in place by the National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee, the National Emergency Disaster Relief Force was mobilized, and also requests were made to mobilize the People's Liberation Army and the armed police force. This extremely rapid establishment of a system for the initial mobilization is worthy of praise (Miyairi, 2011). In the background to this was the fact that the administrative style of the Chinese government that encouraged a top-down approach made possible a fast response. It was also possible because the national equipment management system established following the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)<sup>4</sup> in 2003 proved to be effective (鄧, 2010., Zhang · Otani, 2014).

In December 2008 following the Wenchuan Earthquake, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting Against and Mitigating Earthquake Disasters was revised and at this time, the State Council Legislative Affairs Office and the China Earthquake Administration compiled a report on the main lessons to be learned from the major earthquakes, which were summarized by Gu (2009) into the following seven points. ① The creation and implementation of an earthquake mitigation plan had not been sufficient. ② There had been insufficient observations by the state in the earthquake priority observation regions. ③ There had been insufficient capital investment in earthquake observations and forecasts, which impeded observation capabilities. ④ The overall ability to mitigate damage from earthquakes in urban areas was weak. ⑤ Hardly any homes were designed to be earthquake-proof in rural villages. ⑥ Local residents' awareness



PHOTOGRAPH: temporary housing in Xinxingzhen, Pengzhou City (there were medical facilities, fire stations, etc., in each town) (taken by the author on August 9, 2008)

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to Otani (2007) Section 3.5. SARS (page 65-100).

of earthquake mitigation was low, their self-help and shared-help abilities were insufficient, and they had not formed organizations for mitigation. ⑦ The earthquake emergency disaster relief system was incomplete and rules had not been formulated to recover people's lives, such as for shelter tents and temporary housing.

### **3. The Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Ordinance and the National Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Comprehensive Plan**

On June 1, based on a decision of the State Council's Earthquake Mitigation and Disaster Relief Command Center, the Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery Plan team was established. On June 4, the Standing Committee of the State Council passed, in principle, the Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Ordinance. This ordinance (formulated on June 8, 2008), which was the first to be formulated in China, was a special recovery law and a government ordinance related to the government-led recovery and reconstruction. Specifically targeting regional disasters, in total it is comprised of 9 chapters and 80 articles. Starting with the "philosophy" for the recovery and reconstruction following the Wenchuan Earthquake, it is a law that provides for this recovery and reconstruction from the emergency response through to the recovery plan, and prescribes the entire framework for the methods and processes for the recovery and reconstruction.

"The principles" of the earthquake recovery and reconstruction were prescribed to be as follows. ① Integrating disaster-affected areas own powers of self-recovery, state support, and pairing support; ② combining government-initiated measures and social participation; ③ combining a local recovery and reconstruction and relocation and new construction in remote locations, ④ combining prioritizing qualitative aspects with prioritizing efficiency, ⑤ combining addressing immediate problems with a long-term outlook, and ⑥ combining the economic development of society and the protection of the ecological environment and resources, etc. The firm policies when implementing measures as practice included "having people as the standard," "scientific planning," "consideration for unification and for each field," "progressive implementation," "self-recovery capabilities," "state support," and "social assistance."

On August 12, the National Development and Reform Commission published its proposal for the National Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Comprehensive Plan (master plan) (Otani, 2009 & 2012), and aimed to have the published national proposal determined by three months from the earthquake. Its August 12th announcement was approved, in principle, by the Standing Committee of the State Council on the 27th. The objective set in the published master plan was to have recovered the lives destroyed by the earthquake and economic activities to at or above the level prior to the earthquake by three years. Table 3 shows the overall structure of the comprehensive plan.

TABLE 3.

The Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Ordinance and the National Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Comprehensive Plan

The Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Ordinance, June 2008		
	The National Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Comprehensive Plan (master plan) August 2008	
Objective	To have recovered the lives destroyed by the earthquake and economic activities to at or above the level prior to the earthquake by three years.	
	Introduction	A list of the institutions that contributed to formulating the plan, table of contents, foreword
Analysis of the disaster	Chapter 1 Foundations of the recovery	The overall conditions in the disaster-affected areas, disaster damage, the problems faced, and advantageous conditions
General outline of the recovery	Chapter 2 The overall requirements	Guidance concepts, basic principles, and recovery targets
	Chapter 3 Spatial arrangement	Three regional divisions in the disaster-affected areas (optimal reconstruction region, moderate reconstruction region, and ecology reconstruction region), Securing recovery divisions, urban arrangements, industrial locations, securing housing for residents, land arrangements
Itemized discussion on the recovery	Chapter 4 Housing in urban areas and rural villages	Construction and repair of housing for residents of rural villages and urban areas
	Chapter 5 Urban construction	Policy of recovery and reconstruction in urban areas; municipal administration public-use facilities; cities, towns, and villages with famous history and culture
	Chapter 6 Rural village construction	Policy of recovery and reconstruction for rural villages: agricultural production and agricultural services-related, agricultural infrastructure
	Chapter 7 Public services	Education and scientific research, Medical treatment and hygiene, cultural and physical education, cultural heritage and natural heritage, work, social security, and social management
	Chapter 8 Infrastructure facilities	Transportation, communication, energy, and water supply
	Chapter 9 Industrial recovery	Industry, tourism, commercial trade, finance, and the culture industry
	Chapter 10 Disaster prevention and mitigation	Disaster prevention, disaster mitigation and rescue
	Chapter 11 Ecological environment	Ecosystem recovery, Environmental maintenance, land maintenance and reclamation
	Chapter 12 Mental health measures	Humanism and ethnic spirit
Planning, implementation, and policy	Chapter 13 Policy measures	Government finance, tax, finance, land, industry, pairing support (one-to-one support), assistance, and other policies
	Chapter 14 Recovery capital	Demand for capital and funding measures, reform financing, capital arrangement
	Chapter 15 Plan implementation	Organizational guidance, plan management, classification implementation, securing goods, and checks and inspections

Source: Otani, Junko (2009), “Contemporary China as seen from the Wenchuan Earthquake—together with a comparison of the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake and the Fukuoka Western Offshore Earthquake,” Journal of the Asia Center Kyushu University, No. 3, p.35, revised by the author (materials). With reference to State Council’s Earthquake Mitigation and Disaster Relief Command Center Recovery and Reconstruction Design (2008), Wenchuan County Earthquake Damage Recovery and Reconstruction Basic Plan, “Window on Sichuan, “Overall conditions of the earthquake damage and recovery work (1-1) (2010), (Japan-China Economic Association and the Sichuan Province Cooperation information site) and (Kamada, 2011) (Miyairi, 2011).

Support for the disaster-affected areas was not just disaster recovery, it also included various development plans originally formulated before Sichuan was struck by the earthquake, which included China's economic growth policy and plan to significantly develop western China. For example, it originally included the construction of a high speed expressway connecting Chengdu City, the capital of Sichuan Province, with Dujiangyan City, and the plan was completed by May 2010. By speeding up its completion, it was used for symbolic publicity to eradicate people's suspicions that the success of the Beijing Olympics would be given priority and that the recovery in the disaster-affected areas would be postponed. In the Subsidy Program for Electronic Appliances policy, people in rural areas received a subsidy of 13% for purchases of electronic appliances specified by the government, such as televisions and washing machines. This also helped to reconstruct the lives of rural people in the disaster-affected areas (Otani, 2012). The implementation of the earthquake recovery supported and accelerated the Great Western China Development Plan. It was a policy to counter the discontent felt by the people in western China about the problem of disparities within China, about which there had been concerns from before the earthquake.

#### **4. Policy of “pairing support (one-to-one support)”<sup>5</sup>**

Pairing support is a method that has been used as an economic development policy in China since the 1970s. It is a mechanism for provinces and directly-controlled cities that are comparatively economically developed to provide one-to-one support to other regions that are lagging behind. This method was also adopted for the recovery in the Wenchuan Earthquake disaster-affected areas. A lot of support flowed into the disaster-affected areas, but quickly the government came up with a pairing support (one-to-one support) policy and determined which province or city would support which disaster-affected area (Table 4) and these provinces and cities would then compete to produce the best support results. Comparatively wealthy provinces were allocated areas that had suffered more extensive damage, so although a province such as Guizhou Province, which was the first to provide assistance, was adjacent to Sichuan Province, it was subsequently not allocated to provide assistance to it as it was a comparatively poor province. This was to avoid a bias of support concentrated in one place or duplicated support. But there was also a perception that it was a return to a government-led system, including among the movement of volunteers of Chinese people who voluntarily came to help in the disaster-affected areas following the earthquake. The recovery took place comparatively quickly and the quality of the construction was good in those regions that received the support of affluent provinces and cities, such as from Shanghai City or Guangdong Province. This policy of pairing

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<sup>5</sup> Pairing support (対口) refers to the forming of pairs and in Japanese corresponds to “pairing support (ペアリング支援)” or the “counterpart method (カウンターパート方式).”

TABLE 4.

Allocation of pairs in the Wenchuan County earthquake disaster-affected areas recovery and reconstruction “pairing support (one-to-one support)”

Shandong Province	⇒	Beichuan Qiang Autonomous County Sichuan Province
Guangdong Province	⇒	Wenchuan County Sichuan Province
Zhejiang Province	⇒	Qingchuan County Sichuan Province
Jiangsu Province	⇒	Mianzhu City Sichuan Province
Beijing City	⇒	Shifang City Sichuan Province
Shanghai City	⇒	Dujiangyan City Sichuan Province
Hebei Province	⇒	Pingwu County Sichuan Province
Liaoning Province	⇒	An County Sichuan Province
Henan Province	⇒	Jiangyou City Sichuan Province
Fujian Province	⇒	Pengzhou City Sichuan Province
Shanxi Province	⇒	Mao County Sichuan Province
Hunan Province	⇒	Li County Sichuan Province
Jilin Province	⇒	Heishui County Sichuan Province
Anhui Province	⇒	Songpan County Sichuan Province
Jiangxi Province	⇒	Xiaojin County Sichuan Province
Hubei Province	⇒	Hanyuan County Sichuan Province
Chongqing Province	⇒	Chongzhou City Sichuan Province
Heilungjiang Province	⇒	Jiange County Sichuan Province
Shenzhen City	⇒	Wen County Gansu, Wudu District, Kang County, Zhuguo County
Tianjin City	⇒	Ningqiang County Shaanxi Province, Lueyang County

《汶川地震灾后恢复重建对口支援方案》the State Council 辦公厅 June 11, 2008 《汶川地震灾后恢复重建总体规划》the State Council September 19, 2008

Reference: 《汶川地震灾后贫困村重建进程与挑战》黄承伟·向德平 (ed.) Social Sciences Academy Press China, 2011, p.45. Map of Sichuan Province, Chengdu Cartographic Publishing House, 2010, p.124-125

support (one-to-one support), entailing the pairing of a disaster-affected area with a regional city, contributed to speeding-up the recovery.

The main details of the pairing support for the Wenchuan Earthquake are as follows. (1) Preparing a recovery plan, construction design, consulting by specialists, services such as engineering and construction and supervision; (2) constructing housing in urban areas; (3) maintaining schools, hospitals, and public facilities, such as for culture, sports, and social welfare; (4) Constructing infrastructure facilities, such as roads in urban areas, water drainage, gas, and electricity; (5) constructing infrastructure facilities for agriculture and in rural villages; (6) providing a labor supply and job opportunities and providing services, such as for agricultural, science and technology; and (7) offering incentives for business investment and factory construction and constructing market-service facilities, including for commercial distribution. In other words, we can see that the support was for the hard aspect of establishing and maintaining infrastructure.

The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake is of reference for measures for a large-area disaster. It was verified that a sense of responsibility among the supporting prefectures and continuity for the work was secured through the use of pairing support. For example, in the Union of Kansai Governments, Kobe City assisted Natori City, Nishinomiya City, and Minami Sanriku Town<sup>6</sup>. While referring to the experiences of China, the Union of Kansai Governments adopted an independent method of pairing support. That is to say, by alternating the local government in the union—for example, for assistance for flood damage in Wakayama Prefecture, other towns entered to provide assistance even when assistance was being provided from within the Wakayama Prefecture region—instead of pairing support through single pairs, it facilitated responses through pairing support in blocks. One of the strengths of the assistance provided by the Union of Kansai Governments is that the specialists and the stage where the assistance take place can be supplemented and so the assistance is unlikely to lose its momentum or burn out. So Japan's pairing support also utilized a “soft” aspect.

Support can be provided over a long period. Moreover, because multilayered support at each administrative level, such as prefectures, government-ordinance cities, core cities, and municipalities become possible, for example even if the prefectural employees don't know how to respond, employees of municipalities will know how and are able to respond. Coordination is speeded up, information is consolidated, and it became easier to manage traffic. Overall capabilities are improved.

The goal of the central government in adopting pairing support in China, which has major economic disparities domestically, is that by entrusting financial resources for the restoration and recovery to comparatively affluent provinces (cities), the fiscal burden placed on the central government can be reduced. Also, it can be used to mitigate the problem of domestic disparities through a horizontal redistribution. By deciding on which province and city is allocated to which area and by recognizing the achievements of those who provide major support quickly, it fosters competition for the recovery according to who provides the most support the fastest. As a result, the aim is to achieve a major outcome for the recovery as a whole. Moreover, in order to achieve the goal of achieving harmony between each level of society, as expressed by the slogan “the reconciliation of society,” that the Chinese Communist Party announced in 2004, this method can be said to be symbolic of the Chinese government's effective recovery policy.

As a consequence of this policy, a phenomenon could be seen in Dujiangyan City, which received assistance from the most affluent city of Shanghai City, in which compared to other regions, it clearly received superior support, from the construction of temporary school buildings through to the construction of permanent infrastructure. The Shanghai City Government has built a large museum on the recovery work in Dujiangyan City, which displays an exhibit on the

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<sup>6</sup> Municipalities top seminar, fiscal 2012, “The Great East Japan Earthquake and pairing support—aiming to increase capabilities to receive support and preparing for a major disaster—” Yamanaka, Shigeki, February 8, 2013 (Friday) at City Plaza Osaka (<http://www.masse.or.jp/ikkrwebBrowse/material/files/group/17/topseminar.pdf>)



PHOTOGRAPH: The recovery museum constructed in Dujiangyan City by the Shanghai City Government (left), Photograph on display: the pairing support signing ceremony (right). Explanations in the displays in China's recovery museums are provided in English as well as in Chinese. Clearly it was built by Shanghai for publicity purposes. (June 2013, taken by the author)

success of the recovery. The local people leaked that “This is government constructed publicity (it only shows one aspect of the actual situation).” The appearance of the surrounding area has been transformed and it has become a modern and new commercial district with many European-style coffee shops. There is a large park in the vicinity of the museum and sign has been erected showing a blueprint of the recovery plan, such as the high-rise recovery residences that are scheduled to be built in the future, and it resembles the construction in a major city. On the other side of it is an expanse of tranquil farmland.

The Wenchuan Earthquake commemorative museums have been constructed over a wide area in the disaster-affected region. In a village that was completely destroyed in the earthquake in Beichuan Qiang Autonomous County, which is famous for its Tibetan ethnic minority, in conjunction with the objective to develop it as a tourism destination, a new town was constructed on vast farmland in two and a half years. The cost of the construction is thought to be more than 100 billion yen. General hospitals, such as the Qiang Autonomous County People's Hospital, have been established with the latest equipment, while schools have been constructed to be earthquake-proof. An exhibition space to publicize the disaster recovery was created and explanations are provided in both Chinese and English (Otani, 2012). As can be seen in Chapter 9 of the National Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Comprehensive Plan (Table 3), one of the government's industrial policies is to promote the development of the tourism industry, as it is aiming to achieve a recovery in the disaster-affected areas through tourism.

Following the catastrophic damage in Beichuan County, where many of the Qiang Tibetan minority live, the reconstruction project accompanied the transition from the former Beichuan County, which had traditional houses and streets unique to the area, to the new Beichuan County, which was a town constructed for tourism, such as by having the ethnic Qiang wear traditional ethnic costumes. But various discussions have taken place, such as on whether this was the kind of life requested by the disaster victims and whether the enormous investment in constructing

TABLE 5.

The pairing (one-to-one) of a Sichuan Province government agency with a county (city) damaged in the earthquake

Sichuan Province Development and Reforms Committee	⇒	Beichuan Qiang Autonomous County
Sichuan Province Traffic Agency	⇒	Wenchuan County
Sichuan Province Construction Agency	⇒	Qingchuan County
Sichuan Province Economic Committee	⇒	Mianzhu City
Sichuan Province National Assets Administration Committee	⇒	Shifang City
Sichuan Province Education Agency	⇒	Dujiangyan City
Sichuan Province Civil Administration Agency	⇒	Pingwu County
Sichuan Province Finance Agency	⇒	An County
Sichuan Province National Land Resources Agency	⇒	Jiangyou City
Sichuan Province Labor and Social Security Agency	⇒	Pengzhou City
Sichuan Province Water Supply Agency	⇒	Mao County
Sichuan Province Agriculture Agency	⇒	Li County
Sichuan Province Forestry Agency	⇒	Heishui County
Sichuan Province Commerce Agency	⇒	Songpan County
Sichuan Province Culture Agency	⇒	Xiaojin County
Sichuan Province Sanitation Agency	⇒	Hanyuan County
Sichuan Province Environmental Protection Agency	⇒	Chongzhou City
Sichuan Province Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television Agency	⇒	Jiange County

Reference: (Otani, 2012), Map of Sichuan Province, Chengdu Cartographic Publishing House, 2010, p.125

the museum was made ahead of the investment in reconstructing the disaster victims' lives<sup>7</sup>. But even in the new Beichuan County, in addition to tourism there are plans to construct a vast industrial district continuing on from the tourism district.

Table 5 shows the one-to-one relationship between the government agency and the province (city) damaged in the earthquake. However, it is not the case that each government agency only carried out the activities in the disaster-affected areas shown in the Table; rather, they have jurisdiction over the entire Sichuan Province.

<sup>7</sup> Mainichi Shimbun, May 12, 2009, "One year after the rapid recovery following the Sichuan Earthquake in China (no.1) The voices of the disaster victims are not being heard "on the preservation of the collapsed school buildings," and the government is giving priority to the construction of museum." Sankei Shimbun, May 13, 2009, "President Hu Jintao "Recovery achieved in two years," One year Memorial Ceremony of the Sichuan Earthquake." Mainichi Shimbun, A journalist's eye, Kenichi Nuruzawa, China Bureau, July 10, 2012. "Four years after the Sichuan Earthquake in China; sharing the experiences of Japan on China on relief for disaster victims. Bewilderment of relief workers on location at venues being turned into tourist destinations, local people also tell of their dissatisfaction about what is being left behind."

## 5. 2008, “China’s NGO Year One”

As was previously described, it can be said that there clearly appeared in the Chinese government an administration style that encouraged a top-down approach about the recovery itself. But it is necessary to see the form taken by China’s NGOs as one of the characteristics of Chinese society in the recovery from the Wenchuan Earthquake.

A phenomenon in present day Chinese society worthy of special mention is the major transformation that occurred in it following the earthquakes, with many NGOs coming into existence and a movement emerging in which people became volunteers.

First, this can be easily explained as China’s NGOs emerged in a different society to that of Japan and the West. As such, NGOs don’t actually exist in China and a situation has continued in which many NGOs are actually GONGO (government-organized NGO). The spur for the development of grass-roots NGOs was the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. During the Congress, the first Women’s NGO Forum was held in Beijing, and for the first time, the concept of NGOs and the related problems became to be known in China. At that time, the All China Women’s Federation, which came to play a leading role as an NGO that developed its organization nationwide, was also a GONGO, as was the Red Cross Society of China, which is extremely active following a disaster.

In China in 1998, the State Council renamed the former Bureau for the Administration of Social Groups within the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Bureau of Civil Organizations and positioned NGOs as “civil organizations” in public venues (Zhai 齊 2000: 30). Following the November 2007 Exchange Meeting on the Nationwide Construction of Social Organizations and Experiences of Administrative Affairs, instead of “civil organizations,” the name “social organizations” started to be used. The government designated that “social organizations” were “social groups” “non-enterprise units,” and “foundations” that had registered at each level of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Based on the directives of the State Council of Ordinance No.250, “Social Organizations Registration Management Ordinance” and Ordinance No.251 “Non-Enterprise Units Registration Management Provisional Ordinance,” that were promulgated on October 25, 1998, and Ordinance No.400 “Foundations Management Ordinance” that was promulgated on March 8, 2004, social groups, non-enterprise units, and foundations that correctly registered with and were administered and supervised by the government sector were designated to be “lawful NGOs (legal NGOs)” (Zhang · Otani 2014) In China, NGOs are broadly classified into three types: “registered NGOs (legal NGOs),” “grass-roots NGOs,” and “residents’ organizations” (Li 2009: 4-5).

Prior to the earthquake, NGOs in Chinese society were concentrated in regions such as Beijing and Yunnan Province and were active in areas including women’s issues, environment protection, and poverty. But following the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, there emerged a wave of NGOs in the form of the voluntary activities of people throughout the nation. Mr. Yong Guang Xu,

who is a pioneer of philanthropic projects in China, positioned 2008 as the “Birth year of NGOs in China” (Zhang · Otani, 2014).

But is extremely difficult to register as an NGO in China and in fact, many NGOs are unable to register as NGOs and give upon the complicated procedures and register as a company, thereby having to pay tax. An organization cannot accept donations if it not registered as an NGO<sup>8</sup>. Article 3 and Article 5 of the “Non-Enterprise Units Registration Management Provisional Ordinance” (promulgated October 25, 1998, as the State Council Directive No.251) prescribes that it is necessary to have a review by the “ministry with jurisdiction over operations” and registration by an “registration management institution” (the Ministry of Civil Affairs in the State Council and the departments of civil affairs at the level of each region above the provincial level; in other words, dual administration). Article 11 stipulates that “There can be only one organization per field per administrative sector.” So establishing multiple organizations in the same region that are working in the same field is prohibited. The registration of organizations is also used for the objectives of clarifying the management of the industry categories of economic agents under a planned economy, avoiding competition, and securing the benefits of each group. So in the large majority of cases, “the ministry with jurisdiction over operations” cannot be expected to bear responsibility for the registration and they do not actively engage in registrations. Therefore, it is difficult for voluntary civil organizations to find the “ministry with jurisdiction over operations.” (Zhang · Otani, 2014). So it is problematic for grass-root NGOs to become legal organizations and many of them are, in actual terms, excluded from registration (Li, 2010: 2-3). Due these sorts of conditions, it was difficult for NGOs to register as NGOs and continue their activities following the Wenchuan Earthquake.

After the 2008 earthquake, there were 300 private-sector organizations participating in disaster-relief activities in Sichuan Province. According to the report “Disaster-Relief Activities in China” (2009) by the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, the number of domestic and international volunteers had risen to more than three million people, while in the background there was also thought to be another 10 million volunteers providing support. Mr. Yong Guang Xu, who is a pioneer of philanthropic projects in China, positioned 2008 as the “Year One of NGOs in China” (Zhang · Otani, 2014). It was also called “the birth year of volunteerism” (Shinya · Yamaguchi, 2009). The NGO 512 Voluntary Relief Service Center set up by researchers in the Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences established an information platform and was comprised of 38 allied NGO organizations and more than 80 affiliated organizations. It has left documentary record of its experiences, including research reports<sup>9</sup>. Many NGOs took on the “foundation” form.

But five years after the May 12th earthquake, many NGOs had ceased their activities. Yet

<sup>8</sup> “Postquake activism blunted by Beijing”, Japan Times, 12 May 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Please refer to Guo (郭) (2012), etc.

even today, there are still grass-roots NGOs in the disaster areas that are continuing to provide support for the post-earthquake recovery. They also played a major role in the disaster relief following the earthquake of April 20, 2013 (Zhang · Otani, 2014).

At the time of the Lushan Earthquake of April 20, 2013, based on the experience of the Wenchuan Earthquake of May 12, 2008, the coordination of NGOs and the government was physically strengthened. The Ya-an City Earthquake Mitigation and Disaster Relief Social Organizations and Volunteer Service Center was established in Ya-an City and it is symbolic that practically all of the NGO groups that were active in the disaster-affected areas following the April 20th Lushan Earthquake had their office or a desk in this building. But it can be said that in terms of the system, the government strengthened its management of NGO volunteer organizations. Ya-an City is a distance of 200km from Chengdu City (2 hours by car) and the distances from Ya-an City to the towns and villages that suffered extensive damage also require car journeys of several hours (the region is vast).

Previously, it was stated that more than 300 private-sector organization participated in the disaster-relief activities in Sichuan Province after the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, but the majority of these could not or did not continue their activities. However, precisely because some of the NGOs continued with their activities from 2008, they were able to respond quickly following the Lushan Earthquake of April 20, 2013<sup>10</sup>. A case study taken up in research (Zhang · Otani, 2014) describes an NGO that was created to provide mental care support to mothers who had lost their only child in the earthquake, but that following the Lushan Earthquake of April 20, 2013, changed the content of its activities to provide mental care support in elementary schools for children in the disaster-affected areas.

## **6. The various problems involved in reconstructing people's lives**

When considering the reconstruction of people's lives following the earthquakes, it is necessary to look at the social security system that is unique to China. When discussing China's social security system, the fact that it is one nation but two-systems cannot be disregarded. A discussion of China's social security system generally relates to that one part of the population that is registered in urban areas. Within the same country, the non-rural-registered population (the urban population) and the rural-registered population are treated completely differently and only the minority of the people register in urban areas are recipients of the social security system (Otani, 2007: 157). In other words, China's social security system can be said to be limited in that it only covers a minority of people who are registered in urban areas. So a social security system is not in place for those registered in rural villages. China's establishment of a social security system as a measure to address its rapidly aging population, which is one of the problems

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<sup>10</sup> Please refer to (Zhang · Otani, 2014) as research that presents this case study.

it is facing, is one of the most serious issues to be dealt with by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security in the Chinese government. But at the same time, it already has its hands completely full dealing with the population registered in urban areas. Occasionally, newspapers will report that social security is to be expanded to those registered in rural villages or that measures are to be implemented that would register several thousand of those registered in rural villages in the urban register. But this would be just a drop in the ocean. In this sort of discriminatory society, for the people registered in rural villages, children are not simply to help them with work on the farm; they are also security for their old age. Moreover, to lose one's own child is not only very sad, it has also become a real issue in modern China due to its unique one-child population policy. On the noticeboards in the temporary housing within the disaster-affected areas following the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, the Family Planning Commission posted notices that, "Parents who lost their only child in the earthquake are permitted to have another child"<sup>11</sup> (observed on location in March 2009). This was not effective when it was observed in August soon after the earthquake in May 2008, but it was decided upon on July 25, 2008, at the 4th meeting of the 11th Sichuan Province Standing Committee to Report to the People. It also provided fertility treatment free of charge<sup>12</sup>. But conversely, it was reported that many of the disaster victims suffered miscarriages and stillbirths. This was not only due to psychological stress, as environmental factors have also been pointed to, such as the bonding material used for the construction of the temporary housing and the chemical formaldehyde that was used in the homes' foundations<sup>13</sup>. There are similar reports of these factors causing sick building syndrome in the disaster-affected areas following Hurricane Katrina in the United States. Among about 5,000 married couples who were exempted from the one-child policy as they lost their child in the earthquake, in the two years following the earthquake approximately 2,000 couples had already had a child, and the woman was pregnant in a further 500 couples<sup>14</sup>.

No data has been compiled on elderly disaster victims, but a Hong Kong doctor providing emergency medical treatment in the disaster-affected areas after the earthquake contributed an article to a U.K. medical journal and reported that, "While there was no data on them, there were concerns for what would become of the elderly disaster victims based on what we felt intuitively on location" (Chan, EYY, 2008).

These feelings of the people on location, that a large proportion of the disaster victims were elderly, raised concerns not only about the elderly disaster-victims' health problems, but also

<sup>11</sup> Japan Times, May 28, 2008 "China's one-child policy makes exception for quake"

<sup>12</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, May 9 2009 "In shadow of the recovery: the one year from the Sichuan Earthquake (no.2) Authorities fear the anger of parents who question why the names of the child they lost have been erased"

<sup>13</sup> Mainichi Shimbun, May 13, 2009, "On year on from China's rapid recovery from the Sichuan Earthquake (no.2) Bereaved families from the collapsed school buildings, even incentives to have another child...". Mainichi Shimbun, May 12, 2009 "One year after the Sichuan Earthquake, the authorities are controlling information on a series of miscarriages and stillbirths within the temporary housing"

<sup>14</sup> Sankei Shimbun, May 17, 2010 "Construction with short cuts; two years after the Sichuan Earthquake, confrontation on the collapse of school buildings"

due to the fact that the Sichuan Earthquakes occurred when China is undergoing a rapid aging of its population, it has also been reported that intuitively there are major concerns for how those elderly that survived the earthquake will fare in the future. Even if they survived the earthquake, an increasing number of these people in actuality cannot do farming work and cannot go to a different location to work, so cannot earn a livelihood<sup>15</sup>. Originally in Sichuan Province since the economic reforms and the openness policy, the population moving to a different location to work (the fluid population) has been increasing and this increase has been accelerated by the disasters. In each of the disaster-affected areas, the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Cross Society of China has constructed and are managing homes for the elderly<sup>16</sup>.

Many disaster victims in the mountainous regions where the earthquake struck were farmers. Also, many of them were members of the Tibetan ethnic minority, which is one of the problems that China faces. In China, the disparity between the coastal region and Sichuan Province in western China is considerable.

Moreover, the economic disparity between ethnic minorities living in rural villages in mountainous regions and the affluent urban population is also large. Even if rural farmers go to the cities to work, they are still registered in their rural village and changing their registration to be included in the urban-population census is not an easy task.

Another problem related to the reconstruction of people's lives is those people who, although they survived the Wenchuan Earthquake, suffered serious injuries. As was previously described, many people registered in rural villages do not receive social security. But in the recovery plan, the Chinese government indicated that it would newly build rehabilitation centers and recovery centers that were considerate to people with serious injuries, and the central



PHOTOGRAPH: Notification posted on a signboard by the Family Planning Committee in Pengzhou City Lichun county Baiguo community (麗春鎮白果社區) temporary housing constructed with the support of Fuzhou City, Fujian Province (taken by the author, March 12, 2009)



PHOTOGRAPH: An elderly man in the mountainous district of Wenchuan Earthquake disaster-affected areas stares vacantly and cries, "Everyone is dead." He does not understand the standard Chinese dialect (taken by the author in 2008 August).

<sup>15</sup> Mainichi Shimbun, July 15, 2008 "China's Olympics" on the eve of its opening, (1) Poverty in the Sichuan Earthquake disaster-affected area. No jobs, "Prestige," Supporting moving to other locations for work.

<sup>16</sup> Japan Times, May 12, 2009 "Quake survivors crave return to normal life", page 4.

government's plan itself was intended to contain content that would take into consideration people with serious injuries (Otani, 2012). But conversely, those registered in rural villages with serious injuries and their families were confronted with the major barrier that they were not covered by social security and so were forced to bear the major burden of their medical costs<sup>17</sup>. Because there is no system for major earthquakes if there are no government measures to respond to it, it can be said that thanks to the earthquake, if only temporarily an opportunity arose to put a system in place.

While on the one hand the Chinese government prioritized the recovery from the Wenchuan Earthquake, on the other hand it conducted a campaign using a slogan that urged the disaster victims to recover by their own efforts. The government prioritized restoring infrastructure, but it can be argued that it left unaddressed the issue of what measures should it investigate and take to meet the needs of individual people for the reconstruction of their lives. For example, the Chinese government created a recovery plan on the scale of around 15 trillion yen and through this plan, aimed to reconstruct 2.18 million households in the rural villages alone. The plan included "securing jobs" for the disaster victims and raising their standards of living to a level above that of prior to the earthquake. However, the funds from the government alone were insufficient for the disaster victims even to be able to move and buy a house in a different location. If they moved to a different location, they would not be able to work on their farmland and feed their animals, so they would lose their source of income<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, attempting to "restore infrastructure" required implementing large-scale engineering projects, such as for traffic and communications. The recovery plan, which was to be progressed for the prestige of the nation, was focused on the construction of homes. But in reality, funding from the government alone was insufficient and the residents were forced to bear much of the cost themselves. Building homes is the key to reconstructing lives, but in the case of rural villages, the government paid a subsidy of 20,000 yuan (about 280,000 yen) for a home per household, and in addition prepared a system of low interest loans of about 300,000 yen. But even if the disaster victims received subsidies, building a new home costs around 100,000 yuan (about 1.4 million yen)<sup>19</sup>. Even one year after the earthquake, many of the disaster victims did not have work and instead only had debts and so felt anxious about their lives in the future (Otani, 2012). According to the International Federation of the Red Cross, even after three years, the disaster victims were still having problems finding work and with debt<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> May 14, 2009 Mainichi Shimbun "China over year after the rapid recovery from the Sichuan Earthquake (no.3) The heavy burden of medical expenses; disaster victims after leaving hospital"

<sup>18</sup> Nihon Keizai Shimbun, May 8, 2009, evening edition, One year after the Sichuan Earthquake China is in the middle of its recovery (no.1) between the light and dark of creating a tourist region

<sup>19</sup> Sankei Shimbun, November 12, 2008 "Half a year on from the Sichuan Earthquake protests to eradicate *okara* construction, rising anxiety, people want to return to their own homes, satisfactory food, clothing and housing even when living in tents for, subsidies of 20,000 yuan for the reconstruction of lives"

<sup>20</sup> Asahi Shimbun, May 10, 2011 "Eradicating the anxiety about the strong recovery. Three years after the Sichuan Earthquake, clearing out the protests, taking no notice, two million unemployed, people are in debt."

Even if the disaster victims were allocated a new home, in their new lives in a new town these new tenants still had to repay a large housing loan. For example, the media reported on the case of a 76 year old man (September 18, 2011) who had lost a son and his home in the earthquake and was allocated a new 3LDK home (approximately 90 square meters). However, while his bedding was provided by the government, he had to take out a loan of 50,000 yuan (about 600,000 yen) from the government in order to buy the home and also other household goods. Due to the lack of work opportunities locally, his two surviving sons had left to go and find work in the city and so no longer lived with him. It was noted that the difficulties he faced in living happily together with his family was a result of the government-led response to the earthquake that prioritized the speed of the recovery (Otani, 2012).

In Chinese society, which is strongly government led, a problem is that even if the residents have concerns, the government provides no window for them to consult with it on these concerns. It has been pointed out that the recovery work was progressed without communication between the government and the residents and as a result, there arose conflict between the two sides (Otani, 2012). So while from the outside it appeared that progress was being made in the recovery, such as the progress made in constructing buildings, voices of discontent could be heard among the local people. There were also people who were concerned that while construction homes had been completed, they were of poor quality. Concrete would peel off the outer walls and cracks would appear in the inner walls and some residents complained that corners had been cut in the construction work.

In March of this year, the signatures of around 300 residents of the newly constructed housing, or 15% of all the residents, were collected and an appeal was presented to the local government to test that the buildings were actually earthquake proof. In response, the local government simply claimed that the buildings were safe but provided no explanation on their earthquake resistance. These residents feel considerable unease about the buildings' safety, as many people lost their lives in the Sichuan Earthquakes when the buildings they were in collapsed. The Chinese government created earthquake-proof standards so that buildings could survive earthquakes of a similar magnitude.

The issue of the destruction of elementary and junior high school buildings in the earthquakes is one that even now for the Chinese government is a sensitive and taboo, but it seems to be one that must be touched upon. There are suspicions that the elementary and junior high schools were built through *okara* construction, in which local government officials collude with the construction company in order to keep down the costs of the construction by using inferior materials. It is thought that for this reason, the elementary and junior high school buildings collapsed, even though the buildings around them remained standing. So school buildings that should have been safe ended up costing many children their lives. These suspicions have developed into a social problem. One year after the earthquake, the government announced that

5,335 children had either died or were still missing<sup>21</sup>. The parents who lost their child demand that the local government determine the reasons why the buildings collapsed and the people responsible, but they have not received any response. However, the government's consistent position has been that it will not carry out an investigation as "The cause was solely the large magnitude of the earthquakes and there were no other causes, so it is not possible to investigate who was responsible." The local authorities urge the residents sign an oath that "in return for a payment of between 60,000 to 80,000 yuan (from 840,000 yen to 1.12 million yen)<sup>22</sup>, they would cease activities to pursue those responsible," and used methods such as taking people into custody so that people would not refuse to sign it<sup>23</sup>.

The public security authorities severely limit gatherings of bereaved families that might develop into a protest meeting, strictly monitored those mothers who were particularly vocal, and worked to prevent any protest activities. According to the Hong Kong media, in February 2010 a Chinese author who investigated children who had been killed in the earthquake received a prison sentence of five years on the charge of agitating to overthrow the government. A famous architectural designer in China who was going to appear in court as a witness was physically assaulted by the police immediately before his court appearance and was unable to appear. It has been noted that the relevant authorities have tried to resolve the problem of the collapsed buildings by providing vague answers (Otani, 2012). In addition, in places there have been attempts to expunge the existence of the collapsed elementary schools from people's memories, such as by rapidly constructing new buildings on the sites where they stood.

Noticeboards indicating emergency evacuation sites have been erected in parks and by school buildings. However, while it can be assumed that expansive parks are appropriate locations, doubts remain whether the safety of school buildings has been confirmed and that the notices indicated evacuation sites have simply been erected by these school buildings.

## 7. Conclusion

The Sichuan Wenchuan Earthquake of May 12, 2008, was a major shock for the Chinese government and Chinese society. Moreover, it was followed by the Sichuan Lushan-Ya-an Earthquake of April 20, 2013. This was also a major earthquake, but the memories of 2008 were still fresh and the recovery from it was still underway, and in this context it can be said that the response to it was rapid. But the Chinese government did not accept support from overseas

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<sup>21</sup> Sankei Shimbun, May 8, 2009, "5,335 children were killed or are missing due to the Sichuan Earthquake," The provincial government releases favorable appraisal

<sup>22</sup> Mainichi Shimbun, May 12, 2009, Reporter's eyes, "One year after the Sichuan Earthquake, "Hopes for the Chinese government, the road to recovery is sharing the resentment and not silencing the voices of the disaster victims," Joji Uramatsu, China Bureau

<sup>23</sup> Nihon Keizai Shimbun, May 11, 2009, "One year after the Sichuan Earthquake China is in the middle of its recovery (no.1) Faulty construction; the bereaved families continue to search for answers"

as it had done in 2008 and attempted to respond to the earthquake by itself. The Wenchuan Earthquake of May 2008 occurred just before the Beijing Olympics in August, and throughout the world, special reports took up the various problems facing China that was achieving remarkable economic growth. The Wenchuan Earthquake that struck at this time not only caused major damage to a vast area of national land and to people, particularly in Sichuan Province, it also caused the eyes of the world to further focus on how the Chinese government was steering its nation. The recovery work became a major project connected to the prestige of the nation, similarly to the Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai Expo, and the Chinese government responded rapidly.

The Earthquake Mitigation and Disaster Relief Command Center was set up in the State Council, and Chinese Premier Wen Jinbao himself took overall charge of it. In June, the Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Ordinance was formulated, followed in August by the National Wenchuan County Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Comprehensive Plan. Then in December, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting Against and Mitigating Earthquake Disasters was revised. The comprehensive plan was originally a three-year plan, but it was shrunk to two years and the Communist Party announced as a great achievement that it had actually completed it in two and a half years. The Great West China Development Plan that had been begun before the earthquake was accelerated, while the competition for support was also accelerated by utilizing the pairing support method. While the extremely rapid government-initiated response is one of the characteristics of the Chinese government's disaster-recovery policy and its implementation, but the earthquakes did bring to the surface problems in Chinese society that had started to attract attention even before the earthquakes, such as disparities between regions and the fluid population. These problems, which include the social security system-related problem that is unique to China of the discrimination against the population registered in rural areas compared to those registered in urban areas that is occurring in conjunction with the rapid aging of its population, also connects to the problems experienced by individual disaster victims in reconstructing their lives. Moreover, the Sichuan Earthquakes became the starting point following the launch of the new China for



PHOTOGRAPH: a notice for an evacuation site in a large park within Chengdu City (taken by the author in June 2013 June)

people's activities as volunteers and in NGOs, and in this way NGOs in Chinese society are systemically different to those in the West and in Japan. But their activities became an opportunity to expand the framework of the support to reconstruct people's lives. How is the Chinese government using NGOs, while registering them and managing and restricting their activities? Going forward, it will be necessary to continuously keep a close watch on their development, together with the establishment in Chinese society of social security system for the disaster victims. China will need to continue to respond for both hard and soft aspects; namely, in addition to establishing and maintaining infrastructure, including for local residents, to also provide support for reconstructing the lives of disaster victims, such as job opportunities and income, and furthermore to provide them with mental support.

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