

Zhixing Zhang

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Science

Major(s): Mathematics & History (honors track)

Minors(s): None

Scholar Group Membership: Greater China Scholars

Did you received other funding for this project?: Liu and Kellogg

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Planting the Seeds of the Modern East Asian Dilemma: Myths and New Interpretations of the Japanese Invasions of Korea (1592-1598)

Project Location: China, Japan, and Korea

ND Faculty Mentor: Professor Julia Adeney Thomas

Project Type: Research

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Research/experience necessary for senior thesis or capstone project, Prepare for professional school (MD, MBA, JD), Career discernment and/or preparation, Internationalize your Notre Dame experience

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Very Much

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Very Much

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Yes

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Very Much

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:Yes

Tell us about your experience.

My research concerns the Japanese invasions of Korea from 1592 through 1598 and the later perception of the war by the three East Asian countries. Hypothesizing that the war was the first seed planted in the current international dilemma among China, Japan, and Korea today, I conducted archival research at the National Library of China and the Nagoya University Library and the Kyoto University Library. I also conducted field research in Japan and Korea, visiting various historical sites such as the Osaka Castle, the Nagoya Castle the Nagoya Castle ruins (this is a different, much less famous Nagoya that is located in the Saga Prefecture, Kyushu), the Jinju National Museum. I was very fortunate to be able to use the resources of the National Library of China to find Korean and Japanese sources written in classical Chinese, which saved me a lot of time and energy locating them in Japan. What is more, through my archival research I confirmed my hypothesis in the proposal that each country's historians develop their own version of the invasions. Although a connection of this to the building of nationalism in recent centuries is yet to be found, I am confident that my research will carry into the next stage and will begin planning my honors thesis.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

When I decided to undertake the project, I considered it just an interesting topic that has been largely ignored by all the historians. However, as I began my research in Japan and visited Korea, I found that my perspective as a Chinese has misled me into a mistaken impression. Unlike China, where the war seems less well known and consequently less researched, in both Japan and Korea the invasions of 1592 through 1598 are considered a major historical theme and are actively pursued by historians all over the country. I was shocked (and a little daunted) by the volume involving the "Bunroku-Keicho" War (the Japanese etymology) or the "Imjin" War (the Korean etymology). When I was visiting the Nagoya Castle Museum in the Saga Prefecture of Japan, I conversed with a researcher there. He, like I was, had no idea about the work done by his colleagues in Korea and China. He told me that he will definitely urge himself and his colleagues to pay more attention to the Korean and Chinese versions of the story, as a comparison of all three would be extremely interesting and could reflect a lot about the past and present of the three countries. The language barrier is, of course, one reason, but the more obvious one seems the lack of an awareness for different perspectives. For the first time in my life I witnessed the power of perspectives. It is so mystical, useful, and yet so dangerous for the historical profession.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

My summer archival research experiences in China and Japan, as well as my field experience in Japan and Korea, contribute not only to the completion of a history honors thesis project, but also to deepen my understanding of East Asian international relations. My future career goal is to become a lawyer who specializes in international law and strives to remove the regional misunderstanding within East Asia. Aiming to become an active intermediary in the region, this past summer, which, thanks to my generous funding sources of CUSE, Liu, and Kellogg, has enabled me to closely observe the history as well as the society of East Asia. Such an insight would never have been gained had I not been awarded the CUSE funding and been able to actually go to Japan and Korea, live there for a period of time, and observe and communicate with the people there. The experience itself is one of a kind and therefore invaluable. It is sure to become my first step towards my long-term career goal.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

A student new to independent research myself, I do not think I am in any position to lecture other fellow students about what to do. I will just write down some reflections I have after my summer research experience:

As long as nationalism still prevails in our world, history is and will always be a kaleidoscope. One historical event that had a significant impact on one nation's history might just be a minor component in another nation's, and, depending on perspective, the invaders can look just as justified as the victims. I believe it is the task for all historians to examine both (and all, if more than two) sides of a single story. We need not recreate the exact reality—for that is

