

Spotlight on Two Chinese Tech Transfer Groups in Japan

Two ethnic Chinese science and technology (S&T) support organizations in Japan--the Association of Chinese Scientists and Engineers in Japan (ACSEJ) and the Chinese Association of Scientists and Engineers in Japan (CASEJ)--are engaged in supporting the Peoples Republic of China's (PRC) high-tech development goals, according to information posted to their Web sites. The two groups acknowledge close cooperation with China in making "practical contributions" and in helping decide China's own S&T policies. The two groups typify the transfer organizations nurtured by Beijing in overseas Chinese communities, including the United States, to mobilize support for China's military and commercial S&T objectives.

ACSEJ is a nonprofit group made up primarily of ethnic Chinese scientists and engineers working in Japan, according to information posted to its Web site as of March 2003 (www.come.or.jp/acsej). Its stated purpose is "to promote and strengthen cooperation and exchanges between Chinese scientists and engineers in Japan and between relevant organizations, institutions, and scholars in China and other countries, especially Japan." ACSEJ's charter empowers it to convene academic conferences, promote exchanges and cooperation between S&T bodies in China and Japan, and engage in "other activities that it deems necessary" in support of these goals.

ACSEJ's management includes a director, a secretary, and heads of committees for propaganda, S&T exchanges, friendship exchanges, materials publication, and personnel management. There is also a "Returnees Friendship Committee" and heads of seven occupational subdivisions for medicine, engineering, computer applications and electronics, etc., responsible for initiatives in their areas. All members listed on the site have Chinese surnames. Two-thirds of ACSEJ's 731 members are employed in Japanese universities, research facilities, or large corporations. More than half are Ph.D.s, many of whom are top figures in Japan's high-tech industries.

Established in 1993, ACSEJ has participated over the years in numerous conferences, seminars, and exchange activities. "It has also on many occasions helped the Chinese government host S&T expositions between Sino-Japanese organizations" and has arranged technology exchanges "in service to China," the Web site states. The association acts as an intermediary to help members return to China, arrange "short-term work projects," and set up "joint research" between the two countries. Its contributions are acclaimed by the PRC government and its outreach organizations at all levels.

ACSEJ's role as a PRC support organization is also apparent in its newsletters and in clippings from PRC media posted to its Web site. For example, a 15 January 2003 newsletter describes a "2003 Exchange Meeting" held at the PRC embassy in Tokyo on 11 January at which ACSEJ elected new officers, heard the PRC science attache describe China's S&T projects, and produced with PRC embassy support a list of "returnee services" and plans to "found new industries to make China prosper." The association reaffirmed its motto of being "practical," "building bridges," and "making contributions."

Attendees were said to be "full of enthusiasm" in their expectations for China's development.

CASEJ, for its part, consists mainly of Chinese Ph.D.s working in Japanese educational and research institutions, according to its Web site (www.casej.org/newcasej). Founded in 1996, CASEJ's self-described goals are to "contribute to China's social, economic, scientific, and technical development" and "build bridges for academic exchanges between China and Japan." Its bylaws state the ways these goals are to be met, including "helping form PRC S&T policy and supporting China's development of new high technology," sponsoring academic exchanges, helping members find "dual appointments" in PRC research institutes, and arranging joint research projects.

CASEJ's structure is similar to ACSEJ's. All officers, and nearly all its members, have Chinese names. Among its subdivisions are a "Foreign Relations Department" and "China Affairs Office." The group responds to tasking from PRC embassy officials for participation in technology exchange projects sponsored by the PRC State Council's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, Ministry of Science and Technology, and Ministry of Personnel, the Web site states. One such exchange occurred in July 2002 at the Beijing College of Engineering under the theme "21st Century Science and Technology and China-Japan Academic Exchanges." CASEJ shares the same "practical, bridge building, contribution" motto with ACSEJ but adds the word "creative" to the formulation.

While separate organizations, ACSEJ and CASEJ participate jointly in PRC-sponsored activities in China and Japan. For example, ACSEJ's 4 February newsletter reported that the two associations would meet to discuss "areas for cooperation and improving the image of China-related groups in Japan." An ACSEJ repost from the 3 February "China Scholars Abroad" Web site (www.chisa.edu.cn) —a PRC-sponsored outreach organization— noted that the two organizations simultaneously attended a Spring Festival reception at the PRC embassy in Japan. The Chisa article went on to describe their differences:

"CASEJ is made up primarily of ethnic Chinese scholars, professors, and R&D personnel working at Japanese universities and laboratories. ACSEJ is composed chiefly of ethnic Chinese R&D personnel working at Japanese companies, research institutes, and universities; its membership also includes nearly 100 ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs, who have set up high-tech companies, and overseas Chinese students in the learning stage [of their careers]."

Media coverage of the two organizations differs significantly by country. Whereas the two groups are largely neglected by the Japanese media, Internet searches turned up numerous news articles in the PRC mainstream media reporting on ACSEJ and CASEJ events, indicating the importance Beijing attaches to the support that overseas groups such as these lend to China's efforts to bypass what it calls the "technological protectionism" of other nations.

