

Australia-Japan Relations and Japanese Studies in the Age of Globalization

Alison TOKITA
Monash University

Both Australia and Japan have held inconsistent and ambivalent attitudes towards Asia, at times identifying with Asia, and at others playing the role of outsider to Asia. As the two most established democracies in the region and having early become post-industrial societies, it might be expected that the relation between the two countries would be closer. However, there is residual mistrust towards Japan on the Australian side, and strong disinterest, even apathy towards Australia on the part of Japan. Has the energetic pursuit of Japanese language education and Japanese studies achieved significant deepening of the relationship, or has it remained marginalized in Australian society and culture? In the post Cold War era, area studies have come to be seen as irrelevant in the academy. What is the future of Japanese studies in this context?

Asia's globalization

Globalization occurs at differential rates, even within one country. Cities such as Tokyo, Singapore and Sydney might all qualify as global cities, acting as much in tandem with London and New York, as with their immediate regions (Sassen 2001). The regional contexts of North East Asia, Southeast Asia and the whole Western Pacific show a high degree of local integration within the broader globalizing world.

Iwabuchi (2002) argues that a shift of global centre has occurred from America to somewhere around the mid-Pacific ocean, since Japan has become a significant generator of global culture. This suggests that East Asia is a cultural hub, as well as a globalizing region.

Chen (2002) discusses the changing of reference points for Asia from Euro-America to Inter-Asia. During the colonial experience, and subsequent modernization experience, Asian countries have defined themselves with reference to Euro-America, as a model to aspire to or to castigate, but never to ignore. Recently, there has been more evidence of seeing other Asian countries as worthy of notice, of trans-Asian solidarity, as globalization has increased. Chen calls this inter-Asian interaction.

Choi (2006) argues that the regionalizing tendencies in East Asia in the post Cold War era have led to active transnational intra-regional flows of capital, people, consumer goods, culture industries, creating an alternative to American-centred globalization. The boundaries of the nation state are porous as flows of people, mediated information and goods cross borders more and more rapidly within the new regional groupings.

Australia too has experienced a change of reference points, from Britain (up to the Second World War), to the United States thereafter, and in a slightly vaguer way to Asia since the 1980s. This indicates that Australia has strengthened its identity as a part of the

Asian region. Whether Australia is part of Asia has been debated from time to time since the nineteenth century, but with greatest intensity in the 1980s and 1990s (Broinowski 2003). The only regional grouping in which Australia participates however is APEC, which is circum-Pacific and diffuse. Australia has been excluded from both ASEAN and ASEM, and yet yearns for acceptance in Asia, even while being rejected. Koizumi's Singapore statement of 2002 was surprising in including Australia and New Zealand in his proposed East Asian community, given the less positive attitudes of Malaysia and Indonesia (Terada 2006).

Another change of reference points is the shift from bilateral to multilateral relationships and regional groupings. Again, Australia is struggling to be part of such groupings in the Asia-Pacific region and is actively seeking to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement with Japan. Meanwhile, the state of the bilateral Australia-Japan relationship has been coming under scrutiny recently. Lip service is paid to it as vital to Australia's foreign policy, yet in political and daily life alike, Japan seems to be marginal to the Australian experience, if its meagre exposure in the local media is an indicator. There are now only two Australian journalists remaining in Tokyo.

The past and future of the Australia-Japan relationship: from Orientalism to security threat to friend

The first contact between Australia and Japan took place in 1832, when Captain Bourn Russell demanded safe harbour for his leaky whaling vessel off the east coast of Hokkaidō (Meaney 1999). There were active contacts in the Meiji period with Australians professionally active in Japan (including traders, teachers, journalists, even a professional storyteller), and Japanese immigration to Australia (see Oliver and Ackland 2006). Japanese was first formally taught in Australia when the historian James Murdoch, who lectured for many years at the Tokyo Imperial University, was asked by the Australian government to set up a program of Oriental Studies at the University of Sydney in 1918. Although this would appear to be consonant with the prevailing paradigm of Orientalism, it was in fact an initiative of the Department of Defense, with a view to creating some Japan expertise in the country, as Japan was perceived as a potential security threat to Australia.

Japan entered the Second World War with the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941, and simultaneously took Singapore. This resulted in the capture of thousands of Australian prisoners, and was followed by the intensive Japanese bombing of many parts of Northern Australia. Trade between Australia and Japan had been suspended already, and all Japanese residents in Australia were interned in December 1941. The Australian army was mobilized to meet the Japanese in New Guinea, and intensive Japanese language training was set up in the military in order to intercept military intelligence. Australians subsequently took part in the Allied Occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952.

The memory of terrible treatment of Australians in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps led to extreme anti-Japanese sentiment in the postwar period, and there was initial strong resistance to allowing over 650 war brides enter the country. The sentiment changed as it became obvious that Japan was again to be a major economic partner in Australia's

own postwar development. Trade resumed and surpassed its prewar importance, and a landmark treaty of commerce was signed in 1957. Gradually many forms of grassroots level relationships were actively cultivated. As Japan moved toward economic superpower status in the 1970s, Japanese language education and Japanese studies grew strongly in Australian educational institutions, accelerating dramatically in 1989, ironically on the eve of Japan's bubble economy bursting. The surge towards learning Japanese continued unabated till 1994, and although it has since then dropped off somewhat, it has stabilized now as Australia is second only to Korea in absolute number of learners.

The Australia-Japan relationship is one of the strongest of any with Asia; certainly the trade relationship is still the most significant for Australia. The milestone conference in April 2001—The Australia-Japan conference for the twenty-first century—reaffirmed the importance of the relationship for both countries, and announced a variety of strategies to maintain and develop it further. While there is no denying that Japan is more important for Australia than vice versa, the outcomes of the conference were clearly significant for both sides. On the other hand, it is true that the Howard Liberal government (since 1996), and especially since 9/11, has been less focussed on Asia, especially Japan, than its Labor predecessors. This was underlined by the withdrawal of funding from NALSSAS in 2002 (ASAA 2002). Another factor is that China's ascendancy is crowding Japan off the national radar screen.

Japanese studies in Australia: changing paradigms

In response to the different stages of the Australia-Japan relationship, Japanese language and Japanese studies has also gone through different paradigms:

1. Orientalism or Japanology, which views Japan as the Other which has a wonderful exotic culture worthy of being studied, but weaker than Europe and backward.
2. Area studies: the anxiety of needing to understand the enemy, whether in terms of security, or as economic threat.
3. The new techno-orientalism of infatuation with Japanese popular culture, which is fuelling the demand for Japanese language education in our universities at present.

While Japanology was first formally taught in Australia in 1918, it was the experience of war with Japan that spurred the development of systematic training in Japanese language for military personnel (Funch 2003; Oates 2004). Postwar Japanese studies built on this investment, as many university teachers had been trained in the military or in the Allied Occupation of Japan. The later tsunami of Japanese language education was experienced most intensely in 1989. These days, the motivation for studying Japanese has shifted somewhat from economic and instrumental reasons to the infatuation with Japanese popular culture, at the same time as Japanese has become the most widely studied foreign language in Australian schools and universities (Japan Foundation 2003). A lot has been achieved in the area of Japanese language and Japanese studies in Australia. Japanese is the most studied second language in Australia, surpassing even French, and community

languages such as Italian and Greek. Everywhere one goes, one is told that a child, or a friend is studying Japanese or has gone to Japan on exchange, or has hosted a Japanese student at home.

Meanwhile, however, national educational priorities have de-emphasized Japan in particular and Asia in general, with the withdrawal of much funding support. Thus, before the study of Japan and Asia became truly mainstream, it has been fallen off the national agenda. In this sense, it could be said that the Japanese studies profession has failed in its mission. It is now vital for Japanese studies professionals to highlight the importance of a deeper engagement and familiarity with Japan (and Asia) for Australia's credibility in the region and to develop strategies for the future growth of Japanese (and Asian) studies in this country.

In spite of such changes, there has so far been little impact on the level of interest in primary and secondary schools, because of the inertia effect. From the early 1990s, a lot of effort was put into re-training language teachers for Japanese, and creating effective materials and curricula. At tertiary level, student numbers have been sustained by the flow-on effect from schools, and also by the interest of international students from Asia in studying Japanese. This reflects the rapid growth of enthusiasm for studying Japanese in many Asian countries in recent years, particularly South Korea and China. The antipathy towards Japan because of its colonial domination, and later for its economic exploitation, gave way to desire to learn Japanese for economic advancement. In recent years, however, clearly the interest in Japan and Japanese is motivated by enthusiasm for Japan's popular culture: animation, comics, characters, computer games, television dramas, pop music and so on. This factor has been much stronger in East and Southeast Asian countries than in Australia, indicating a regional cultural affinity. This effect extends to Asian diasporic youth in Australia, but does not touch mainstream consumers.

The energetic pursuit of Japanese language education and Japanese studies in Australia was initiated because of Japan's economic importance to Australia. Great numbers of students have acquired a positive experience of Japan in the classroom and by taking part in exchange programmes, as interaction with the Japanese has been a strong focus of Australian teaching methods of Japanese. It can be surmised that this has achieved a significant deepening of the relationship for a relatively small number of Australians. However, familiarity with Japan and ease with the language has probably remained marginalized in Australian society and culture, something viewed with awe if not suspicion by the mainstream.

2006 was designated as the Year of Australia-Japan Exchanges, commemorating thirty years since the ratification of the NARA Treaty of 1976, an all-round treaty of friendship between the two countries. In addition to trade, Australia and Japan have since the end of the Cold War developed joint security activities, collaborating in Cambodia, East Timor, Afghanistan and most recently Iraq. In March 2007, a joint security declaration was signed. There are over 100 sister-city or state agreements between Australia and Japan (the oldest one dates back to 1971), and 33 of the 40 universities in Australia teach Japanese studies (Japan Foundation 2003). Of 15,000 enrolments in Japan-related subjects, over 11,000 are in Japanese language. If one includes the large numbers of students of Japanese at primary and secondary school and community language courses,

Australia has the highest per capita concentration of any country in the world of people studying Japanese, and is second only to Korea in absolute numbers.

The Japanese studies profession has, by research and teaching, already contributed much towards Australia's Japan literacy. Australia has a strong international reputation for being on the cutting edge of Japanese studies in English language, and it has been a pioneer in moving forward to new paradigms of Japanese studies and new methodologies of teaching Japanese language. The almost ubiquitous presence of Japanese language education in Australian schools and universities has played a role in contributing to Japan literacy at the community level, and active student exchange programs mean that a large number of Australians have visited Japan or have had contact with Japanese in Australia. We have not yet tapped a latent resource of the 1.5 generation young Australians with Japanese background, or those of mixed Australia-Japan parentage. For this we need more appropriate courses in Japanese language and studies, and to maintain a positive image of Japan in the educational context and in the society as a whole, to make a society which values Japan expertise.

The status and future of area studies

In Australian universities, area studies have been under scrutiny since the 1990s. As Miyoshi and Harootunian point out in *Learning Places: the Afterlives of Area Studies* (2002), area studies were very much a Cold War construct, arguing that they should be mainstreamed and taught in general discipline departments, and that Asian languages should be taught as a prerequisite skill not as an academic discipline.

Similar to the way in which Soviet Studies developed in the context of the Cold War, Japanese studies too was fed by those who had learned Japanese in the military during the Pacific War and the subsequent Allied Occupation of Japan. In the post Cold War era, not only Soviet Studies, but area studies in general have come to be seen as irrelevant in the academy. In Japanese studies, being good at the language and "knowing Japan" will no longer be sufficient credential for academic survival (Miyoshi and Harootunian 2002). Unless Japanese studies can reinvent itself as a part of cultural studies, it will not survive, except as language study for a minority.

This creates a real dilemma for Japanese studies, indeed for Asian studies, in Western countries, for two main reasons. First, because of funding issues: there is a geopolitical contingency of dependence on funding and other support for Asian area studies from a particular nation state, which fosters the continuance of particular country studies. Second, there is the training of individual experts: it is necessary for an individual to acquire deep knowledge of one culture including its language over a period of many years, which again fosters a focus on a particular area, and a resulting personal loyalty, identification and commitment to that region.

What then is the attraction of area studies? As Japanese studies professionals, why do we spend so many years studying Japan and Japanese? Certainly not for financial gains and prestige. Rather, in most cases of extended contact, people seem to fall in love with Japan and aspects of its culture. (I think this is also the case with Korean studies professionals, though I am not so sure about Chinese studies.) Of course, there are exciting intellectual

challenges, but there is also a personal engagement and commitment which goes beyond the intellectual. Personal direct contact leads to identification with the target culture. As a profession, we are prepared to work hard because we care about Japan, about its achievements, its problems. We care about its position vis-à-vis its region, and Australia. It is interesting to note the high instance of marriage between Japanese studies professionals and native Japanese (Tokita 2002). This represents an extension of a traditional teaching strategy of study abroad and the homestay as a means of acquiring insider knowledge of language and culture. The scathing remark of Miyoshi and Harootunian seems to me unfair: “More than fifty years after the war’s end, American scholars are still organizing knowledge as if confronted by an implacable enemy and thus driven by the desire to either destroy it or marry it”; 2002: 5.

Changes in student demand and motivation: the market for Japanese studies

There has been a marked shift in the drawing power of Japan from that of an economic superpower to that of a cultural power. This is reflected in student demand. This shift has not yet been adequately documented and researched, and remains impressionistic and anecdotal, but we are starting to talk of an *Asianization* of Japanese studies in Australia. At least 80% of students in Monash University’s beginners’ level of Japanese language are Asian or Asian background students, many of them international students. It is clear to those teaching them that their interest in Japan stems from their infatuation with Japanese popular culture, rather than the desire to be employed in a Japanese company, which fuelled the boom of the late 1980s.

This relates to the recent growth in Japan’s official discourse of soft power, and the new confidence arising from not only the economic benefits of popular cultural industries but also the diplomatic benefits popular culture can provide for Japan. The application of popular culture to cultural diplomacy is very consciously carried out by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan Foundation.

This trend does not necessarily augur well for the future long-term viability of Japanese studies in Australia, as these students are not continuing through to postgraduate study in any discipline related to Japan.

At one level, the profession of Japanese studies relies institutionally on local student demand, the “market forces” within the academy (Mouer 2006). Japanese studies must compete with other academic disciplines (especially non-area studies), with more vocationally oriented courses (such as economics, information technology, law, medicine etc), and on the language front with Chinese and French (traditionally Australia’s first foreign language).

At another level, perhaps we can be pleased that non-vocational motives, that is, the appeal of popular culture, for studying Japanese language is replacing the narrowly vocational and instrumental, indeed that Japan is actually “interesting” (unlike a keynote paper delivered in 1997 by Miyoshi Masao, titled “Japan is not interesting”; see Miyoshi 2000).

My concern is that, in spite of tremendous gains in increasing Japan literacy through our educational programmes, this remains at the margins of the academy, and Japan remains

at the edge of the horizon in Australia's outlook.

The rise of China: Asian studies and International studies

Inevitably we must ask whether the rise of China will fully eclipse the Australian focus on Japan, and whether Chinese studies will overtake Japanese studies. In market terms, this is not yet happening with language study, though in scholarship and research, Chinese studies has always been and continues to be more productive than Japanese studies. From another viewpoint, it is crucial that Japanese studies have a more sophisticated understanding of Japan's evolving relations with China, as well as its relations with the Korean peninsula. In my teaching, I am more and more including these perspectives, although the one-eyed Japan enthusiasts among our students still want Japan alone.

We have indeed experienced pressure to come out of our isolation (of Japanese studies) and be part of an integrated Asian studies in the last decade, which has had salutary effect on both research and teaching. This coincides with the geo-political trend towards, or at least discussion of, the creation of an East Asian Economic Sphere. This approach has the potential to include Korean studies. Korea is arguably one of the most significant issues for the future of East Asia, although Korean language has not been competitive in the academic market, as it does not attract large numbers of language students. It is encouraging to note that student numbers at introductory levels have been growing in recent years, due to the effect of *hallyu* ("Korean Wave", the popularity of Korean popular culture). The issue of including the two Chinas in this new Asian studies could be a stumbling block.

More recently, as a result of the rise of Globalization and studies thereof, there has been a rise in the interdisciplinary area of International Studies. How interdisciplinary studies, such as International studies, Gender studies, Indigenous studies, Development studies etc, differ from area studies is a point which should be examined. One key difference is the need to study a language for full engagement with area studies, and the possibility of attracting funding from national foundations. "Asian Studies" as such does not have a ready-made Asian funding source such as had emerged recently from the European Union for European Studies. There are however reliable nation-based funding bodies in North East Asia, whereas South East Asia is still a recipient of aid rather than a donor.

On the other hand, with the growth of English as international, indeed global language one must ask whether extensive (and expensive) Asian language study in Australia is really necessary. If Asian scholars operating in English as well as their vernacular language become the chief generators of the New Asian studies, there may not be a need for Western countries to spend resources on creating Asia experts. When Asia becomes united like Europe, it is possible that English will be the ecumenical language. Then again, it might be Chinese, Japanese or . . .

The future

The Australia-Japan relationship has grown from an economic basis to a broader grass-roots people-to-people interaction on the one hand, including broad reception of

many aspects of Japanese traditional and popular culture, to a strong security alliance on the other. At the diplomatic level, this is seen as a mature longitudinal relationship, despite many imbalances and anomalies.

The profession of Japanese studies however continues to be dependent on Japanese support from bodies such as the Japan Foundation to maintain its research and teaching endeavours. The profession is also being buoyed up by the demand for Japanese language courses at the lower levels, due to the attraction of Japanese popular culture, especially among Asian-background students. However, we are not seeing significant numbers of students progressing to postgraduate and postdoctoral study.

When we write our applications for funding to the Australian Research Council (our premier funding source), the hardest section to fill in is the national benefit one, where we must make a case claiming relevance to one of the national research priorities such as “Safeguarding Australia”, and “Understanding our region and the world.” The rate of success of Japanese studies applications for funding is abysmally low, which leads to the conclusion that the Australian government’s valuing of the Australia-Japan relationship does not extend to significant support of Japan research in this country.

The Japanese Studies profession in Australia needs to ensure a more secure future of professional Japanese studies by media releases and advocacy with government bodies. It needs to lobby for more recognition and support of those responsible for creating Japan literacy and a deeper understanding of Japan in education. And it needs to capitalize on heritage students, as Chinese Studies does. The ongoing creation of knowledge of Japan through research is grounded in our deep intellectual and personal engagement with all facets of the country and its context, and can bring to the Australian community greater awareness of the profound changes which are taking place in Japanese society.

While Japanese studies as a professional activity in Australia has undoubtedly contributed and will continue to contribute to Australia-Japan relations, it has been reactive to the national and international context.

Japanese—and Asian—studies in Australia, are still struggling to come to terms with the post-area studies paradigm, and to develop a new vision. It is still predicated on the assumption that Japan/Asia as Other provides the raw material, factual data, which is then made into something significant by processing according to western scholastic theories and frameworks. While diasporic researchers and teachers have found a place in the Australian academy, we still have relatively limited intellectual exchange with Japanese counterparts. The discipline would benefit if it can enter into a more fruitful dialogue with voices and perspectives from Asia as *the* source of Asian studies.

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