

JAPANESE STUDIES IN THE US: Historical Development and Present State

NIKI Kenji

St. John's Univeristy Library

To express the passage of time, the American Indian would say, "many moons ago", etc. Well, as I stand here today, I also must say, "many moons ago". I was born and spent my youthful years in the northern part of this ancient, beautiful, and eternal city of Kyoto. I, along with my colleagues, Ms. Mihoko Miki and Ms. Yasuko Makino, represent the field of resources for Japanese studies in the United States of America, appreciate and are delighted to be here attending this Kyoto Conference.

Together, we share this sentiment and express our congratulations and best wishes to the International Research Center for Japanese Studies. Truly, you have an impressive and magnificent facility here in Kyoto. There is no doubt Kyoto is the ideal location for the NICHIBUNKEN. We are grateful to the city of Kyoto, for opening her heart and showing the world another beautiful profile of Japan. Truly, we are happy to be here sharing and celebrating the 1200th anniversary of this marvelous city of Kyoto.

Today, it is our intention to present an overview of Japanese Studies and resource materials in the U. S. We will discuss the various available sources of research and present prospects for the future of Japanese Studies and resource materials in the U. S. Perhaps many people have already read extensively on the subject, since there are available several publications, monographs and articles on this particular field. However, we Japanese who live in the U. S. are slightly unique from the authors of the past who wrote on this matter. As librarians, Miki, Makino and I each have spent 18 to 30 years in the U. S., dealing primarily with the basics of Japanese studies in our daily exchange with faculty, students and researchers in this field. Therefore, it is our intention to offer you a thesis; though then again it might be an anti-thesis. Let us wait and see!!

As a beginning let me review some chain of events of the early stages of the relations between the U. S. and Japan.

I. Early Stages of U. S. — Japan Relations

Relations between the United States of America and Japan did not begin at the time Commodore Perry came to Uruga in 1853, but it began almost a half century earlier. According to the record, two American merchant ships stopped at Oshima (大島) in the Kii-peninsula in Wakayama in 1791 (寛政三年). Technically, that doesn't hold much meaning

for the development of intellectual relationships between the two countries, but as Plato said, surprise or astonishment is the beginning of recognition or knowledge. In this sense U. S. — Japan relations began exactly at this time.

1. Meiji Restoration and After

Since we were juveniles, we have repeatedly been taught that the Meiji Restoration and subsequent hold special value, because this is the time when Americans began coming to Japan and participating in the Japanese way of life. From the Harris Treaty to the Restoration and the building of a new Japanese polity (the fundamental character of a country), the entire nation experienced a Copernican revolution in their lives. It might be more significant than the experience of World War II for the Japanese nation.

American influences involved all phases of Japanese life, namely: Education, Religion, Arts, Literature, Science and Technology, Economy and Politics. Among these fields the most important factor was the religious influence, primarily American Protestantism.

Catholicism was the natural result of European influence; and incidentally, Japan's history of Catholicism predates than American history. It goes without saying that British, German and French influence must be considered in this era; but my focus is to discuss the U. S. and Japan. American Protestantism seemed to be the American civilization for Japanese of that era. Fukuzawa Yukichi (福沢諭吉), Uchimura Kanzo (内村鑑三), Niiijima Jo (新島襄), L.L. Janes, W.S. Clark were good examples of the above mentioned; and it might be said that so called JAPANOLOGY started at this particular time.

Actually, American civilization was just about the main motif of the Meiji Enlightenment (文明開化). However, it was during the middle of the Meiji period that Japan established a national system following that of the Western idealistic countries. With the creation of a new Japanese national polity which absolutely centralized the governmental system with the Emperor as (symbolic) Head of State, Japan adopted the Germanic legal system, along with western philosophies and medical concepts. By about 1890, the intellectual world of Japan had been absorbed in the European way of life. That meant, however, that the American concept of freedom and its system of republicanism became somewhat threatening for Japan. It is quite similar to the policy toward Japanese Catholicism executed by the Shogunate. Meanwhile Japanese public opinion had been transformed from the idolization of the West to Japanese nationalism which had been ignored for some forty years because of the Restoration. At this point in history we could say that U. S. — Japan relations entered their first level of tension.

Nevertheless, American influence did not lose its status entirely with Japan. Individuals such as Katayama Sen (片山潜), Tsuda Umeko (津田梅子), Baba Tatsui (馬場辰猪), Naruse Jinzo (成瀬仁蔵) and many more attempted to revolt against the Japanese main stream. They also created several mission schools (colleges) patterned after their education in America. Some even had to go to the U. S., because to them it was the country that satisfies their needs and concept of freedom and tolerance. Even in the literati world in Japan, writers such as Nagai Kafu (永井荷風), Arishima Takeo (有島武郎), Kunikida Doppo (国木田独步),

Iwano Homei (岩野泡鳴), Takamura Kotaro (高村光太郎) and so on, were greatly affected and influenced by the way and styles of American literature. This fact is important when we consider how America influenced many Japanese.

2. The Period of Taisho Democracy

From the Meiji Restoration through the entire Meiji era (almost 50 years) a dialectic formula of change can be observed. The end of the feudalistic Tokugawa period was the thesis; the new power group which opened Japan after 300 years of isolation with Western pressure as the antithesis; to the then new Japanese national polity, namely Meiji, as the synthesis.

Because of Japan's political and economic situation in the world at that time, it could not escape the chaos of World War I (1914-1918). Once again, Japan was caught up in a whirlpool of political, economic and intellectual involvement. The presence of America closed in on the Japanese intellectual world because of "Democracy". American pragmatism was imported to Japan, and Japanese universities opened American studies by American scholars like James C. Hepburn at Tokyo University. John Dewey (Columbia University Professor) traveled around giving lectures at several institutions including Tokyo University. In addition, Japanese scholars and literati also blossomed during this period. To recognize a few I mention: Nitobe Inazo (新渡部稻造), Takagi Yasaka (高木八尺), Yoshino Sakuzo (吉野作造), Kuriyagawa Hakuson (厨川白村), along with other notable scholars.

Besides scholars, many other professionals from the business and literary world became involved also. They included Shibusawa Eiichi (渋沢栄一) from the business field and Sato Haruo (佐藤春夫), Sasaki Kuni (佐々木邦) and Arishima Takeo, mentioned above, from the literati. But after the Anti-Japanese Law was instituted in the U. S., Japanese in general developed a strong antipathy towards Americans even though many came to believe in the American idealism. However, these factors influenced the real academic world of Japanology in the United States. They must be considered in our evaluation because the academic field is always vulnerable and cannot avoid influence from the general public.

Therefore, briefly reviewing this phase of the Early Stages of U. S. — Japan Relations, I simply want to say that our cultural relation could not afford to be independent from the current environmental factors at that time in the political and economical arena. The most important point of consideration in this case is that both the U. S. and Japan depended upon studies based upon personal exchange during 60 to 70 years of that time. In a word, since there was no systematic way of exchange available, pioneers of both sides relied upon idealistic dreams, and were amazingly brave of mind to challenge and receive knowledge from different civilizations. Also, their intellectual footsteps were quite deep and thorough and could not be erased. We certainly can not and should not forget to acknowledge the contribution of these years by the ancient sages in the fields. Contemporary Japanese Studies in the United States of America was based upon the undivided and absolute devotion of these pioneers in their fields.

II. The Beginning of Institutional Studies in the United States

From the beginning of relations with the U. S., Japanese civilization has still seemed strange or mysterious to Americas in general. Only a few intelligently devoted themselves to scholarly or literary interests in the early stage. Christian missionaries and personal tutors were quantitatively more than scholars, and they greatly influenced Japanese ideology. This stage is discussed not only from the aspect of cultural relations but also the establishment of Japanology.

1. The 1928-1945 stage

The first stage of academic institutional Japanology started on the East coast of the United States. If I may generalize, this was the establishment of the so-called Ivy League particularly at Harvard and Columbia Universities. Borton in his paper pointed out the year 1928 as the most distinguishable time for a beginning of Japanology in the U. S. He made reference to the fact that the Harvard-Yenching Institute was established in 1928. Secondly, the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) and the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) U. S. branch recognized the backwardness of Sinology and Japanology, prompting the U. S. branch of the IPR to appoint Edward C. Carter to investigate this matter.

Harvard invited Serge Elisseeff (Russian French) from Europe to the Yenching Institute. He became known as “The father of Japanology”, and Edwin O. Reischauer and John W. Hall became great scholars under his influence and discipline. From this Institute, under the guidance of Elisseeff, many scholars were born and it became the center for Japanology in the United States following the great Russian-French school of Japanology in Europe.

Another European influence was established at Columbia University. People referred to it as the “English school of Japanology”. Personally, I was the Japanese Curator at Columbia University from 1983 to 1992, so I maintain a special interest and fondness towards Columbia. Sir George Sansom of Columbia is compared to Elisseeff of Harvard in this regard. Sir George Sansom undoubtedly influenced many young American researchers in his time and perhaps many of them are now retired. When I worked at Columbia, daily I dealt with well-known scholars and heard frequently his name and Ryusaku Tsunoda referred to as “Sensei”. In addition Donald Keene considered Ryusaku Tsunoda as “the Father of Japanology” in a booklet published by Columbia University. Certainly, in this period I can’t fail to mention the name of Yasaka Takagi, one of the earliest and finest scholars on America in Japan, who published in 1935 *A Survey of Japanese Studies in the Universities and Colleges of the United States*. Some of his opinions and suggestions to the United States for the future were interesting. For example, he suggested the need for the following:

- establish a “Japan Institute” and make available Japanese language skills for young American researchers who need not to go to Japan only for its language.
- study about Japan in various professional fields.
- maintain scholarships and future positions.
- create cooperation among Japanologists.

These suggestions are truly excellent and currently offer value to any university and college in the U. S. They are invaluable to American scholars or administrators in institutions wherever Far East Asian studies are part of the curriculum.

In addition, Takagi's report also described how Harvard, Columbia and Michigan Universities attempted develop some sort of Center for Japanese Studies in 1930's. At this time the total number of Japanologists in America was approximately 101. Incidentally, Harvard, Columbia and Michigan still maintain viable, active centers of Japanese studies today.

In this stage two more individuals must be recognized. Namely, Asakawa Kan'ichi (朝河貫一) and Tsunoda Ryusaku. Asakawa had been a Yale University professor since 1907 and taught the medieval history of Japan. Tsunoda taught the intellectual history of Japan, Buddhism, classic literature and language at Columbia University. Tsunoda is still referred to as "Sensei" among the Columbia school Japanologists (I venture to say instead of the English school of Japanology at Columbia). Donald Keene, for instance, wrote on "Remembrances of Tsunoda Sensei" in the May 1962 issue of *Bungei Shunju*. His memorial booklet, *RYUSAKU TSUNODA SENSEI* was published in 1964 by Columbia University. These two scholars had to be spot-lighted by us particularly for the time and energy they devoted to establish collections of Japanese language materials for their respective institutions. Today, Columbia University's C.V. Starr East Asian Library Japanese Collection is the one of the best collections among the Western countries.

2. The 1945-1959 Stage

Hosoya Chihiro called this a "Flourishing period" in his works and that assessment was precisely correct. During World War II political and economic conditions for many countries were very difficult because of the pressures imposed upon them.

During the War Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Michigan employed every effort to maintain their course of studies. Then, after the War, Japanese studies seemed to flourish suddenly. Incidentally, not only Japanese studies but also Russian and East European studies flourished. These area studies in the U. S. were enforced and encouraged by the American Government, needless to say, because American national interest deemed it essential and necessary.

During this period numerous departments or centers for East Asian Studies seemed to blossom within U. S. universities and colleges. For example, East Asian Studies were part of the curriculum in 1945 at Yale; in 1946 at the University of Washington; in 1947 at Harvard and Michigan; and in 1949 at Columbia and Berkeley. Also, we must include here the University of Chicago, UCLA, the University of Hawaii, Stanford, Princeton and Cornell, which are viewed as major centers for Japanese studies today. In essence one can conclude that almost all major centers for Japanese studies were basically established during this period in the United States.

Simultaneously, these institutional developments generated both qualitatively and quantitatively many scholars and Japan — related professionals in the fields of business and

economics, political science, (particularly in the service to the Diplomatic Corps), and Library Science. In the course of events there developed a derivation of this motif (that is, schools or environments) as a few classes of Japanese scholars surfaced. Generally speaking, we refer to them as the group of missionaries' sons and group from military language schools. The first group takes into consideration not only this period but a continuation from the Meiji era. Some prominent figures in this category would be John W. Hall, Edwin O. Reischauer, E. H. Norman and Donald Shively. The second group includes Donald L. Keene, W. Theodore de Bary, Edward G. Seidensticker, James W. Morley, Herbert Passin, Arthur E. Tiedman and Marius B. Jansen, to name just a few. With the exception of Prof. Jansen, I intentionally refer to these scholars, since I had the good fortune of coming in to contact with them, while professionally employed at Columbia University.

Many of the aforementioned scholars have already retired and certainly some of them are unfortunately deceased. However, thanks to these scholars and many others we recognize and understand this certainly was the most flourishing era for growth of Japanese studies in the United States. Their fields of diversification encompassed Religion, Thought, Literature, Arts, History and Political Science. In addition to these humanities and social sciences, Japanese and American scientists began to open channels of correspondence. Methods of studies or the approach to research were gradually altered in the direction of area studies. We might say this was the introduction to research of specialized subjects, because this opened the way for the development of historical and cultural areas by scholars who wanted to consolidate and identify subject sources related to Japan. Another workable approach within the field was to set up research centers in the country of area studies, then collect original sources from Japan and complete their final studies in the United States. Even presently this strategy works very well.

The social and economical background for Japanese studies developed and expanded rapidly, and within a brief time frame financial aid became available from renown organizations like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. These contributory factors served to enhance the progressive growth of Japanese studies in this period.

Generally speaking, the average age of this generation's scholars is somewhere in the 70 plus years. Even today, there is a conscientious awareness of how they have influenced social thinking and various academic fields of study. Today, I honestly doubt that we will find this caliber of scholars within the academic arena. I had hoped this was only my personal observation or experience with the field of Japanese studies in the U. S. However, other colleagues have expressed the same concern and observation. For example Prof. Hosoya points out that the group including Ezra Vogel and Albert Craig, constitute the second generation of the "War Generation", and the bridge between the two generations is J. W. Hall. I have no objection to his opinion, but there is some insufficiency from the first generation. Or perhaps our impression of the first generation is so strong we may feel this way. Regarding this period, I will offer my personal observation in discussion of the last stage.

3. The 1960's Stage

After 1960, Japanese studies bloomed uninterrupted up to the present. During this span of 30 years the U. S. experienced many problems both internationally and domestically. It became involved in the Vietnam War, the Kennedy family assassinations, social conflict and an increasing number of crimes. Japan on the other hand experienced excellent economic development in spite of domestic concerns. Of course one should bear in mind that Japan's economic development largely depended upon the United States. But as I stated, in spite of the economic and social circumstances within both countries, Japanese studies in the U. S. continued to prosper.

During this 30 year stretch there was a fair amount of research done in the field of Japanese studies. In 1958 the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) devised a special project entitled "The Conference on Modern Japan" under the direction and leadership of John W. Hall, with the strong backing and support of the Ford Foundation. I am delighted to say, this particular project was successful and the results were publicized as the "Modernization of Japan." The success of the project depended on the cooperation of specialists in Japan such as Historians, Political Scientists, Business Economists and Sociologists. Their approach to the theme concentrated on the meaning of Japan's modernization from the concern of political and economical development. This required taking into consideration the social and cultural transformation and succession of traditional thought and behavior. This modernization of Japan, dominated the stage of consideration in the U. S. in the 1960s. We might say this was the beginning of an interdisciplinary approach in area studies within the universe of world institutions.

In accordance with the "Culcon Report on Japanese Studies at Colleges and Universities in the United States in the Mid-'70s" by Joseph and Elizabeth Massey, there were 840 researchers focusing on Japan who worked in 304 institutions in the U. S. for four years or more. In spite of the domestic social and environmental problems of the '60s the number of Japan researchers increased in the '70s. During this period the approach to Japanese studies faced a new stage of development, and one could not help recognize the confusion while we groped for a specific direction of research. From the middle of the '60s, we began to observe a relational strain surfacing between area studies which was dependent on the involvement of field work and the traditional theoretical subjects of study, namely, Business Economics and Political Science, to mention a few. Admittedly, researchers of Japan studies could not ignore this academic dilemma, and it became incumbent upon them to substantiate their position academically and intellectually.

However, because of this strain, the interdisciplinary way of Japanese studies was spurred and we notice an increase of students in professional schools such as Law schools and Business schools. I would site here the interdisciplinary studies on Japan at Columbia to illustrate my point. Columbia has four major schools and departments of intensive study on Japan. They are:

- a) Humanities studies at the East Asian Language and Culture Department

- b) Social sciences at the East Asian Institute
- c) International Law (China, Japan and Korea) at the Law school
- d) Japan business at the Business school

In addition the Art History Department also has their own curriculum on Japan. As you will observe, these fields are quite diversified, but very much co-related and available within these fields of subjects. This is just an example, but one can apply the Columbia situation to circumstances at other major institutions even though a few characteristics differ.

The 1960s through part of '70s witnessed the transformation of Japanese studies from the narrow area of humanities studies to the broad area of open subjects. Practically every subject attempted to fulfill field research in Japan, with travel back and forth between both countries. The reason they had to travel back and forth was because there was not enough resource materials available. Incidentally, this point is described in more detail in Mihoko Miki's paper. Hence, the success of one's field work was dependent upon available research materials and the ability to keep up one's language skills. Other causes were for more subject-oriented reasons. The fields of socio-linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and political science and business economics needed to attract active politicians and business figures.

Besides these factors, we must consider the phenomenon of the organized consortia and the middle-size or mini-size centers for the East Asian studies based at particular locations in the U. S. Namely, Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Columbia form, or make, up the Eastern Consortium. The University of Chicago, Michigan and Illinois comprise another cluster or the Mid-west Consortium, while the West Coast Consortium includes Stanford, Berkeley, UCLA and UCSD at present. From the late '70s till present, these movements have increased rapidly and vigorously in the various fields. There is an on-going exchange of information and curriculum among these Centers or consortia. There exist today more than 20 Japanese studies clusters within the U. S. which are not only large, old or traditional institutions, but localized and diversified.

4. The Contemporary Trend of Japanese Studies

The Japanese studies in the U. S. have been qualitatively and quantitatively transformed over the past 50 years. With the advent of computer technology developed in the '80s for personal applications, the academic researcher has at his disposal another source never available before. Personal computers have been utilized for research by many academic professionals including librarians. Researchers in the U. S. in particular have taken advantage of this opportunity more than any other nation. This phenomenon establishes a closer relation between resources and users, in spite of the variable formats of information. For example, researchers are able to access databases in the humanities, social sciences and other science fields.

Another application directly related to the PC is the communication function known as the electronic mail system. Provided one belongs to the some gateway (example, Internet), one can communicate easily and economically whenever one wants to. It provides the opportunity for easy exchange and allows utilization of resources faster than ever before.

However, what effect this has on the quality of research work remains to be seen as new methodologies become part of the academic environment. Nevertheless, the future impact and prospect on research materials and Japanese studies will be discussed in greater detail in Yasuko Makino's paper.

III. Conclusion

In this brief discourse, I have attempted to capture more than 70 years of history as we examined the case of Japanese studies in the U. S. from its earliest phase to the present. My theme focused on the stream of Japanese studies in the U. S. as it ran parallel with the current of political and social changes history.

Since I began my career as a librarian, I am pleased to say, I have met many sincere and diligent faculty and students in this special field, who are seeking a common denominator. As a librarian, I have closely observed many professors and researchers, and I have concluded that the generation from the U. S. military language school produced the most studious and genuine body of disciples in this field.

I can not deny I am perhaps skeptical and harbor some reservations about today's scholars. In the back of my mind there is a generation gap, or shall I just say a gap. Individuals of Prof. Keene's period performed their own personal research utilizing original source material. Today, even though there are recognized names in the field their method of research is different from Keene's generation. Some of them are quite similar to the independent scholarly way, but many of them who act like leaders in the field range in their age 50s make use of the language skills of native Japanese graduate assistants. Their task is to read original sources in Japanese and summarize in English so that this information can be used to write articles or books.

Is the generation gap really the true difference in the research standard? I don't think so, but we must acknowledge the difference between the generations. Today the younger generation can take advantage of the available technology; the various sources of monetary support, and any other opportunities extended to them, that perhaps were not available to Keene's generation.

In closing, I do want to say, I am very optimistic about the younger generation of researchers and graduate students in the U. S. They offer much hope and promise for the future. And because of their earnestness and sincerity, in time they will bridge any generation gap.