

Conclusion

Australia and Japan stand, in more ways than one, at opposite ends of the world. One is a sparsely populated continent in the Southern hemisphere and the other a well populated island nation in the North. Culturally, Japan is built on centuries-old tradition of the East. Modern Australia, on the other hand, is a relatively new nation built on the tradition transported directly from the West. Despite these vast differences, Japan has continuously attracted Australia's attention, throughout the past century. One clear manifestation of this has been the country's enduring interest in the study of Japan.

In the beginning, Australia's motivation to gain more knowledge about Japan was the fear of Japan. Japan's victory over China and Russia at the beginning of the century made Australians perceive Japan as the largest and closest military threat to its security. It was with this fear of Japan that the study of Japan and its language was first introduced into the country. The Australian government invested in it purely for the purpose of defence. Government funding continued to support the study of Japan until the end of the Second World War.

With the defeat of Japan, the long lasting military threat was removed. Australians now saw Japan as a former enemy and the guilty party of the war. Interest in the study of Japan lay dormant during the decade after the war. Academic interest in Japan was, however, kept alive by a small number of Japan scholars.

Australia's interest in Japan was rekindled in the latter half of the 1950s. Japan was making rapid economic recovery from the devastation of the war. Britain, Australia's traditional export destination, on the other hand, never regained its pre-war economic strength. Japan's importance as a market for Australia's exports began to grow. Australian traders and primary producers were pressing the government to support further increase in trade with Japan. On the world scene, the Cold War had totally changed Japan's defence position in relation to Australia. In the face of perceived communist threat, Japan was now placed on the same side as

Australia in the security arrangements in the Pacific.

In 1957, the Agreement on Commerce was signed between Australia and Japan, the first post-war trade agreement between the former enemies. Bilateral trade between Australia and Japan accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s, largely to Australia's advantage. In 1966, Japan became Australia's largest export market, and by early to mid 1970s, the largest trading partner.

In the mind of Australians, Japan had transformed itself from the former enemy to a valuable partner in trade and an ally in the Asia Pacific region. The realisation of this became the new motivation to expand the studies of Japan in post-war Australia. The first wave of expansion in Japanese studies occurred in little over a ten year period between the early 1960s and the 1970s. As a result, the study of Japan and its language emerged from the small confines of academia to the main arena of education. The consensus was that education in Japanese language and studies had to be made available to a larger population of Australians to ensure the future growth of Australia's link with Japan. The cultivation of Japan skills and literacy thus began in earnest.

During the 1970s, with the abolition of the 'White Australia Policy' Australia went through dramatic changes both internally and in its international outlook. Australia adopted multiculturalism internally, and Asia-focused policy internationally. These new national policies were largely the reflection of the country's awareness of Asia and its increasing importance to Australia.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the spectacular economic expansion in the industrialising nations in Asia, East Asia in particular, dramatically transformed the regional environment surrounding Australia and Japan. Some predicted that the changes in the regional landscape would reduce the relative importance of Japan in Australia's perception. This, however, did not occur. Japan still remained Australia's largest export market. The partnership between Australia and Japan, however, was no longer limited to trade, but further expanded in the context of regional cooperation. The

now famous *Tsunami* of 1988 occurred with this as a background. The growth of Japanese and Japan-related education has never stopped since.

Another factor which should not be overlooked is Australia's national language policies. Education in Japanese and Japan-related studies benefited from both the 1987 and 1991 National Policy on Languages. By far the largest impact, however, was brought about by the third and latest government initiative, the introduction in 1995 of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy. The NALSAS Strategy resulted in the expansion of teaching in all four Asian languages. The greatest expansion occurred in the teaching of Japanese, particularly at pre-tertiary level education.

As a combined outcome of the *Tsunami* of 1988 and the NALSAS Strategy, Australia recorded a staggering five hundred percent (500%) increase in the Japanese learning population between 1990 and 1998. In the cultivation of Japan literacy, Australia now holds a unique and prominent status in the world. Australia's prominence in the field is justified, not only by the size of Japanese language learners, but also by the academic and educational quality that the country offers.

The principal question asked at the beginning of this report was why Australia has achieved this status. As summarised above, Australia's interest in the study of Japan has always been generated by the dynamic undercurrent of Australia's modern history. The motivation to cultivate Japan literacy was very often linked with Australia's changing political, sociological and economic circumstances. At every turning point in its history, Australia found its need to learn more about Japan and to train its people in Japanese language and literacy.

The remarkable achievements in the cultivation of Japanese language and literacy, however, have not come about simply as an accident of history. Other factors have contributed towards it. The most important element behind the success has been Japanese academia in Australian universities. Australia has been fortunate that its Japan scholars maintained academic integrity throughout its eighty years history. Furthermore, university

academia did not confine its activities to the pursuit of purely academic research interest. Generations of Japan scholars assumed the responsibility to guide the nation in the cultivation of Japan skills and literacy.

In charting the direction for cultivating Australia's Japan skills and literacy, Japan scholars were pragmatic in their approach. The vital elements in Japanese education were identified early: Australia's national interest had to be recognised; the vocational relevancy had to be built into the curriculum; but the university's primary responsibility, of developing students' intellectual capacity, should never be compromised

The clear direction formulated by university academia gave strength to the subsequent cultivation of Australia's Japan skills and literacy. It also helped the formation of uniquely Australian features in the study of Japan. Australia owes a great deal to its Japanese academia for the unique and prominent status the country has achieved today.

Japan specialists in other countries may wonder why Japan scholars in Australia have been able to keep a relatively united front and have largely adhered to the common goal. One of the reasons for this is perhaps the scarcity of Japan scholars in the country. In Australia, leading scholars of Japan are in demand in many areas other than their own special field of expertise. They have to be educators, planners and administrators of Japanese programs. Their expertise is called for in the country's decision making processes. Many of them served on Government Inquiries and Advisory Committees, and collectively made contributions to the Australian community at large.

Geographically, Japan scholars are scattered wide in this large continent. The Japanese Studies Association of Australia (JSAA), the single such body in the country, has functioned for the past twenty years to provide a forum for all Japanese specialists in the country meet and discuss major issues concerning the study of Japan.

Another reason for the united front may be that Australian universities are relatively free of the negative impact caused by the severe competition

between universities found in some other countries. All Australian universities, with a very few exceptions, are federally funded institutions. They do not experience competition from privately funded universities. The situation demands less protectionism and allows more open cooperation between universities. Although the situation may change in the future, the current Australian environment is still favourable towards a collaborative atmosphere amongst Japanese departments across the country.

As this report is being prepared, Australian universities are experiencing severe cuts in government funding. All Humanity disciplines have been affected. Japanese studies is no exception. The discipline has never enjoyed adequate funding even when student numbers were rapidly growing. Now that Japanese enrolments in universities have slowed down, government funding cuts are hitting Japanese studies most severely. They are so severe that some smaller Japanese departments may not survive.

On the other hand, pre-tertiary Japanese education in recent years has experienced an unprecedented growth, largely due the NALSAS Strategy. In the latter half of 2002, however, the government abruptly announced the discontinuation of the NALSAS Strategy beyond 2002. The latest evaluation of the NALSAS Strategy also revealed that, although the overall number of Japanese learning students has grown enormously in the pre-tertiary systems, the comparative growth is not occurring in the number of students who continue with Japanese to Year 12. Consequently, universities have to re-assess the expected growth of students reaching the university Japanese programs, due to the impact of NALSAS Strategy.

The size of the NALSAS impact on university enrolments is thus less certain now. There is, however, no dispute that some of the NALSAS effects which are reaching Japanese program at universities now will continue to grow for some years to come. Japanese studies departments have to be prepared for this. The issue is how to provide quality education within limited resources to a larger number of students, who also have diversified levels of Japan knowledge.

Over eighty years have passed since the study of Japan began in Australia. Throughout the 80 year history, Australia's Japanese academia faced countless difficulties and came through successfully, with some brilliant achievements. As a member of that body, I am certain that Japanese academia will survive this period of difficulties and will be further strengthened as a result. The prospect towards the 21st century is exciting. It also holds enormous challenges that no previous generation of academia has ever experienced.

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Sydney Australia

Notes

¹ The figure quoted here has been estimated on the information given in two recent reports: Fitzgerald, J., et. al.(2002), *Maximizing Australia's Asian Knowledge*, published by the Asian Studies Association of Australia, and Erebus Consulting Partners (2002), *Evaluation of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy*, Released by the Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra

² Figures quoted here are from *Survey Report on Japanese Language Education Abroad* (Kaigai no Nihongo Kyōiku no Genjō) 1998, The Japan Foundation

³ Information from the Australian Archive materials largely relied on Brewster 1996, due to difficulties in accessing the originals.

⁴ For information on the early life of James Murdoch, the author has relied on Sissons, 1985, as the most reliable source, after exploring other sources and discovering inaccuracies in them. Meaney also cites Sissons' paper as an excellent account of Murdoch's career, in his 1996 publication 'Fears and Phobias' page 66.

⁵ According to the entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol.10, published by Melbourne University Press in 1986, Murdoch was born at Fetteress, Kincardineshire, Scotland. Here, however the author decided to rely on the information provided by Sissons, 1985.

⁶ As the source of this information, Sissons cites the publication in 1889, *Nihon Gaikō Monjō*, vol. 22, Tokyo, Nihon Kokusai Rengō Kyōkai, pp.550-553

⁷ In Australian universities, a long vacation occurs after the end of the academic year usually at the beginning of December and ends in February when the new academic