

ON STARTING THE JAPANESE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN STUDIES

A KEY to Japan's success in rapid modernization lay in her eagerness to absorb foreign cultures. Ever since the Meiji Restoration, Japan sent numerous students abroad, invited many Western teachers, and translated into Japanese a large number of foreign books. It may be said, therefore, that it was the basic orientation of modern Japanese culture to learn from and to catch up with what we called the advanced Western countries, which of course included the United States.

At the same time, Japan made it a national policy to recruit numerous talented youths from various parts of the country, regardless of their former feudal status, into such institutions of higher education as national universities, professional colleges, and cadet academies and put them in a position to direct the process of modernization from the capital city. This practice was another key to her rapid modernization. In other words, the absorption of advanced culture from abroad and the centralization of talent and power at home formed the centripetal characteristics of the Japanese cultural pattern since the Meiji Era. As I have stated, these characteristics were the keys to Japan's rapid modernization. It may also be said that Japanese culture was required to assume such characteristics to meet the demand of rapid modernization.

Being a part of modern Japanese culture, American studies in Japan was no exception to the general characteristics mentioned above. Japan was eager to learn from America. She sent numerous students there, invited many teachers from America, and translated into Japanese a large number of American books. This phenomenon was not restricted to the years after World War II. The term American Studies—*Beikoku*

Kenkyū—was in use as early as the 1910's. The Tokyo Imperial University (University of Tokyo) established the Chair of United States Constitution, History, and Diplomacy in the 1920's and several universities started lecture courses on American literature in the 1920's and 30's. Because of the basis laid in prewar years, American studies in Japan could make rapid progress in the postwar years. Everybody will agree in regarding Dr. Yasaka Takagi as the foremost pioneer in American studies in Japan. He linked its prewar foundation to its postwar development. In 1965, the American Historical Association elected him honorary member in recognition of his outstanding contributions.

Under Dr. Takagi's leadership, American studies in Japan made remarkable progress in the postwar decades. The Japanese Association for American Studies, founded in 1947, has grown into a society with more than 550 members. According to a survey made during the academic year 1974–75, 208 universities and colleges offered 1,912 courses relating to American studies. Student enrollment in these courses numbered 122,212. Many scholars of different disciplines cooperated to produce several multi-volume series in American studies: *Genten Amerika-shi* [A Documentary History of the American People], 6 vols., 1950–58; *Kōza Amerika no bunka* [Studies in American Culture], 8 vols., 1969–72; *Sōgō-kenkyū Amerika* [America—an Integrated Study], 7 vols., 1976–77; and *Amerika koten bunko* [The Library of American Classics, translated, annotated and with introductory essays], 23 vols., 1975–79. I would surmise that such a scale of publication in American studies is rather rare outside the United States.

The development of American studies in postwar Japan owes a great deal to the assistance of American scholars. A large number of American scholars came to Japan to lecture and conduct seminars on topics relating to American studies. Visiting professors who came on the regular Fulbright program have made great contributions to the growth of American studies in Japan. But there are several other programs and projects which have provided Japanese students and scholars with an opportunity to be stimulated by distinguished American scholars. The Stanford-University of Tokyo American Studies Summer Seminar began in 1950 and continued seven years with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation. Since 1951, the Kyoto American Studies Summer Seminar has been held every summer under the joint management of Doshisha and Kyoto Universities with the support of several foundations and the Fulbright Commission. A new project, the Sapporo

“Cool” Summer Seminar in American Studies started in 1980 with the support of the Japan-United States Friendship Commission. All the American scholars who served as lecturers in these Seminars were distinguished scholars in their respective fields. Many Japanese scholars who participated in these Seminars now make up the core of the Japanese community of American studies specialists.

In spite of the remarkable progress, both in quality and quantity, which Japanese scholars have achieved in American studies, most of their works are not known outside their country. They usually publish their works in Japanese for scholars and the reading public in Japan. Japanese do not have a closed mind in the sense that they have always been eager to learn from foreign cultures; but they do have a closed mind in the sense that their cultural output is usually aimed for home consumption. American studies is no exception to this general pattern. The existence of the language barrier has discouraged most Japanese specialists in American studies from attempting to publish for an international audience, from competing with their foreign colleagues and from contributing to the international community of American studies specialists. In other words, the barrier of the Japanese language has discouraged them from seeking readers abroad while it has protected them at home.

During the last several years, however, American studies specialists in Japan have made considerable efforts to internationalize their activities. From the standpoint of the internationalization of American studies in Japan, an epoch-making event was the Asia and Pacific Regional Conference of American Studies Specialists, held in Fujinomiya, Shizuoka, Japan, in September 1975. The Japanese Association for American Studies served as the major organizer, major sponsor and host for the Conference, one of the five regional conferences on American studies held in commemoration of the American Bicentennial. With this Conference as a turning point, American studies specialists in Japan have become more active in participating in academic meetings abroad. In this respect they have been helped by travel grants provided by the Japan-United States Friendship Commission and the American Studies Foundation of Japan. They have also increased their efforts to publish in English to open their dialogue with American studies specialists overseas. Their contributions to the *American Studies International*, for example, were a part of their efforts. The Japanese Association for American Studies, desiring to broaden their opportunity to write for the

international community of American studies specialists, plans to start the publication of an English language journal in addition to its annual publication, the *American Review* [*Amerika kenkyū*], in which most articles appear in Japanese. It is my great pleasure to write this short preface to the inaugural issue of the new English language journal, the *Japanese Journal of American Studies*, the publication of which was made possible by a generous grant from the Japan-United States Friendship Commission. On behalf of our Association, I would like to express our hearty gratitude to the Friendship Commission.

Let me mention here another aspect of the recent development of American studies in Japan. American studies is now spreading from such traditional centers as Tokyo and Kyoto into various regions. From Hokkaido in the north to Okinawa in the south, a number of regional American studies societies are flourishing. For example, the Chu-Shikoku American Studies Association, one of such societies, organized in 1980 a series of workshops on American studies education. The accomplishments of the workshops will soon be published.

With the two new trends I have described above, that is, internationalization and decentralization, American studies in Japan is entering a new centrifugal period from the old centripetal period. I sincerely hope that our new English language journal, a product of our new era, might serve as a channel of dialogue with the international community of American studies specialists and make some contribution to international American studies. We plan to publish this journal once every other year for the time being; but we shall make it an annual publication as soon as possible. The Japanese Association for American Studies welcomes any comments, criticisms, and suggestions from overseas colleagues.

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