

Editor's Introduction

A NEW STEP IN JAPAN-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

In 1991, fifty years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan-U.S. relations have evolved into a new phase. The year will be remembered and recorded by historians as one of the most turbulent years of the 20th century, beginning with the Gulf War and ending with the demise of the Soviet Union. However, the continual U.S. presence in the Pacific is one of the most vital issues for Japan, as it has been ever since Commodore Perry came to the Bay of Tokyo. Over the past one hundred and thirty-odd years, both parties have experienced quite a number of delicate physical and metaphysical international relationships.

Almost as a painful result of World War II, American Studies was introduced to Japanese academics as a new interdisciplinary approach to the complicated aspects of American culture and civilization. As a pedagogy it served to provide an ideal introduction for undergraduates, and as a research field it offered a new methodology to understand the amalgam of reality in the United States. Japanese scholars have been devoted to translating the major documents of American history and literature, and their achievements have culminated in quite a number of books and articles, but mostly written in Japanese for domestic consumption. Quite often these works were charged with an evangelical propagation of the American way of life.

Currents, however, began to change as America celebrated its Bicentennial. The Japanese Association for American Studies decided to publish an English-language *Japanese Journal of American Studies*.

This publication has been supported by a grant from the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission. The first issue came out in 1981 as a special issue devoted to the U.S. Policy toward East Asia: 1945-1950. The issue begins with a crisp statement, "A key to Japan's success in rapid modernization lay in her eagerness to absorb foreign cultures"; thus began the President's message from Makoto Saito.

The editor's introduction follows, "United States policy toward East Asia has been one of the major fields of research and writing for Japanese specialists of American studies." Tadashi Aruga, the first editor, gave an introductory survey of scholarly outputs in the field mainly done in Japanese which were, therefore, less accessible to an international audience.

Following issues covered the American Revolution (No. 2, 1985) and Japanese Immigrants and Japanese Americans (No. 3, 1989), both under the superb editorship of Professor Aruga with his detailed introduction to respective topics. The first three volumes, however, were dependent on the support of outside foundations. Now in 1991, ten years after the inauguration of the *Journal* in English, the time is ripe for the Association to publish this new issue (No. 4), on the reassessment of the 1930s, on its own, with direct or indirect contributions from the members. In order to accelerate the publication, the editor's activities have, inevitably, become more functional.

For the time being, the *Journal* will be published every other year. But, as contributions are expected to increase in English, the English-language *Journal* will soon become an annual publication. Topics and suggestions are welcome, particularly global points of view from this side of the Pacific.

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Editor