

JAPANESE STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES: PRESENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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Introduction

Japanese studies in the United States today is a large and flourishing field, one in which literally hundreds of research works are published annually, which faces the challenge of increasing numbers of students, and which enjoys broad, public support, based upon widespread popular understanding of a national need for advanced training in Japanese language and professionalized knowledge of Japanese society.

Built upon the efforts of a generation of scholars who were active in the Allied Occupation of Japan after the end of World War II, Japanese studies is currently in the process of generational change, which will result in the field's leadership by a younger generation of scholars whose academic concerns differ significantly from those of its predecessors. To understand fully the implications of this generational change is the key to an understanding of the field today and to a realistic projection of its future prospects. This paper seeks to provide such an understanding, focusing on general trends within the field and upon issues for its future direction; thus, it neither attempts to present a statistical overview nor to summarize the situation in different disciplines. It concentrates upon the following five topics: generational change in leadership, linguistic issues, fiscal prospects, changing institutional arrangements for scholars of Japan, and the challenge to define the parameters of critical scholarship on Japan.

Generational Change

Beginning in the 1980s, that generation of Japan specialists trained during and shortly after World War II started to retire. These scholars dominated the field for over thirty years, and their perspectives on Japan pervasively influenced the character of the field. While by no means an en-

tirely homogeneous group, a certain unity among them, forged initially by the concerns of the wartime and Occupation eras, came to characterize the field. The diversity of experience, perspective, and ambition of the succeeding generation (or generations) of specialists, made possible in no small part by the spirit of tolerance and inclusiveness that characterized its predecessors, has not, so far, yielded so clear-cut a consensus on the larger mission of Japanese studies nor on the parameters of a genuinely critical study of Japan.

Japanese studies in the United States became established early in this century, but a study completed in 1935 found that while twenty-five institutions offered courses on Japan, and eight of these provided courses in Japanese language, only thirteen faculty members were able to use the Japanese language well enough to conduct research in it. In fact, most people teaching about Japan were also teaching Chinese subjects, having come to university life after a career in business or missions. Exceptions to this included Serge Elisseeff, a Russian-born Japanologist teaching at Harvard from 1932, Asakawa Kan'ichi at Yale, and Tsunoda Ryusaku at Columbia.¹

Because Japanese studies was still in its infancy at the end of the 1930s, it was less the universities than the military which provided the language training of those who became its greatest scholars after 1945. The Occupation generation of Japanese specialists in the United States shared with other Americans the experience of facing Japan as a wartime enemy. For such scholars as Marius Jansen, James Morley, Donald Keene, Robert Ward, Edward Seidensticker, Howard Hibbett, Solomon Levine, William McCullough, and Robert Scalapino, their first study of the Japanese language was gained as a part of military training, and their first visit to the country was as members of an occupying military force. Some of those in uniform during the Occupation, such as Edward Reischauer, John Hall, Roger Hackett, and Donald Shively, had been born and raised in Japan, often as the children of Christian missionary parents, and for them, of course, use of the Japanese language had been a part of their upbringing (Murata 1983: 41).

These future scholars witnessed at first hand the devastation of Japanese society by the defeat, and they were keenly aware of the fragility of the Japanese economy from 1945 to about 1960. They were concerned

¹ The Japan Foundation, ed. *Japanese Studies in the United States, Part 1: History and Present Condition*, Japanese Studies Series XVII (Ann Arbor: The Association for Asian Studies, 1988) contains an excellent treatment by Marius Jansen of the earlier history of Japanese studies in the United States.

for the preservation of Japan's magnificent cultural heritage, largely unknown to an American public that was slow to shed its wartime racist stereotypes and distaste for a defeated enemy. These various experiences and concerns for Japan eventually translated into a set of academic characteristics that came to typify the field as a whole.

The Occupation generation of scholars returned from military service and established the major centers of Japanese studies in the United States: Harvard, Princeton, Columbia, Yale, the University of California at Berkeley and Los Angeles, the University of Chicago, Stanford University, Cornell University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Washington. These universities became nationally recognized centers of scholarly research on Japan, offering undergraduate and graduate training in Japanese studies and Japanese language, and they accumulated major research libraries of Japanese sources.

In the early postwar years, Japanese studies' publications were few enough in number that specialists could read the total annual output as a matter of course. As a result, scholars tended to read widely across all the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, and they encouraged their students to do likewise. In this way, the study of Japan came to be a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary field of studies in which a person might specialize in a particular discipline, but nevertheless was routinely expected to accumulate a broad knowledge of Japanese history, literature, arts, society, and politics, as well as language.

So many aspects of virtually all fields lacked published research works surveying their basic issues that to translate some previously unknown work of literature or to introduce a major work of art, or to produce a biography of an historical figure, or in other ways to add to the cumulative fund of empirical knowledge about Japan constituted the basis of academic achievement. If, in addition, the surrounding commentary on a translation or the analysis of social circumstances accompanying the emergence of a powerful politician was insightful and added to one's appreciation of culture and history, so much the better.

In those days, the field was small enough that the major players could know virtually everyone in the field. The annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies provided an important forum for making known the results of their separate research. The problems they faced in establishing a base for Japanese studies within their separate universities were so similar that they profited greatly from an on-going exchange of information about administrative strategies, trends in language training, and the problems of placing their graduate students. So important was it that

the field be solidly established and that the players support each other and increase the country's understanding of Japan that they were able to a great degree to set aside individual differences in the spirit of tolerance and inclusiveness, and were pleased to promote all well-trained persons who shared their basic goal of increasing understanding and knowledge of Japan.

The spirit of toleration had limits, however, when it came to studies of Japan that seemed to be informed by leftist ideology. The Cold War decades were years of radical anti-communism in the United States, and a dislike of, even a taboo upon Marxist scholarship of any kind characterized the academy as a whole. The work of E.H. Norman, especially *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State*, widely understood as inspired by Japanese Marxist scholarship of the 1930s, was both tremendously influential and pervasively targeted for challenge (Norman 1975). American scholars of Japan were of course aware of the influence of Marxist scholarship within the academy in Japan, but they found it doctrinaire and increasingly out of touch with trends in Japanese society, where liberal democratic institutions were being established with American support, and where American aid helped to suppress the growth of the Communist Party (Norman 1975: 47-48). Occupation-generation scholars of Japan tended to form alliances with non-Marxist scholars in Japanese elite universities, and they worked towards the development of a neutral, non-ideological interpretation of recent Japanese history and social development. "Modernization theory" was the result.

The famous Hakone conference of 1960 represented the fruits of several years of preparatory work towards a multinational attempt to understand the complex of changes Japan had undergone since the Meiji Restoration. While principally an exchange between American and Japanese scholars, Australia, and Great Britain were also represented. In the words of Marius Jansen, one of modernization theory's chief architects,

It was agreed that the conferences should be open-ended and avoid any attempt to fasten a single interpretive scheme in order to avoid inhibitions of politics and ideology and in order to enlist as broad an approach as possible. As alternative to the strongly teleological modernization theory of Marxism which was then so influential in the Japanese scholarly world, a less structured framework was proposed as a neutral term. "Modernization" was designed as a broad generalization to indicate the great changes that had come over Japanese (and world) history under notions of progress, science, urbanization, mass participation in education, work place and industry and the centralization of power. The "modern" society was to be categorized by the presence of a cluster of attributes, and not held to show a specific organization of government or values; it

could be totalitarian as well as democratic (Jansen 1988: 48).

Modernization theory sought an answer in the broadest possible terms to the question how Japan had been able to transform what at the end of the Edo period had been a localized, "feudal" society into a powerful modern state capable of defeating a great western power by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. By comparison with the much longer and earlier process of modernization in the west, especially Britain and the United States, the comparable change had been accomplished much more rapidly and, in the view of the more optimistic of these scholars, virtually painlessly in Japan. To explain how this could have come about, scholars embarked upon such studies as those establishing the basis even within Tokugawa-period society of a strong value on education and an analogy to the work- and achievement-oriented values of the Protestant ethic, a strong state, and highly competent political leaders emerging in the Meiji Restoration of 1868. One major line of modernization scholarship focused upon the Restoration as the pivotal event of Japan's modern transformation as the key to a correct understanding of modernization as a whole.

Overall, the Restoration and the Meiji period as a whole received a very positive evaluation in modernization theory. Emphasizing an overarching narrative of overwhelming success in a very short time required a concomitant emphasis upon the macro-level view of social transformation and political leadership. Such a change could only have been brought about by enlightened leaders and a willing populace, it appeared, requiring these scholars to adopt a stance already being questioned in other areas of historical study—the "great man" theory of history, and simultaneously requiring them to ignore the social dislocations produced by rapid social change and the exploitation of women, minority groups, and (later) Japan's colonial subjects. This latter move was possible only by claiming that women and such other groups as the lower classes and the peasantry were of only minor significance in the overall story, although collectively they constituted the majority of the Japanese population at the time.

"Modernization theory," sometimes unfairly elided with illiberal, anti-Marxist apologism for Japan, was itself intended to redress the strait-jacketed approach of a particularly doctrinaire variety of Marxist scholarship in Japan during the 1930s. The issues it raised, and the lines of inquiry it laid down in the six volumes issuing from the Hakone conference and published from 1965 to 1971 from Princeton University Press

defined a kind of baseline for all future studies of modern Japan. The interpretation of the Meiji Restoration and of the transformation of the country set in motion during the Meiji period continues to provide the key issues defining United States' studies of modern Japan.

The Occupation generation's enduring accomplishments were numerous. They were extremely productive scholars, authoring hundreds of studies of all aspects of Japanese studies. They built strong academic programs of interdisciplinary scope, they promoted the professionalization of Japanese language pedagogy, and set a high standard of linguistic excellence in their own use of the Japanese language. They developed endowed research institutes of Japanese studies that are the envy of other area studies programs in the United States. They ensured the funding of graduate training and professional research and strengthened the Association for Asian Studies as a whole. They served government and advised on the formation of national political policy towards Japan in manifold ways. They built library collections excelled only by those in Japan itself. They developed strong institutional ties with the Japanese academy and encouraged their students to seek training in Japan and to develop a love of the country and its people. Their spirit of tolerance and inclusiveness made them sympathetic mentors to their students and junior colleagues. They developed a spirit of camaraderie that endures as the guiding spirit of a field that is much more diverse today than fifty years ago.

In short, the Occupation generation of scholars of Japanese studies set a very high standard of academic performance on virtually all areas. Their successors (of whom I count myself as one) will not find it easy to match that standard, far less to exceed it.

A 1970 report on Japanese studies in the United States found that the number of scholars of Japan had grown to 400, of whom half were under forty, information signalling the appearance of a new, postwar generation. Studies later in the decade showed that more than 200 universities offered courses work on Japan and that nearly 10,000 students were enrolled in Japanese language course. By 1986 there were 23,454 students studying Japanese language, and that number had at last overtaken the number of those studying Chinese (Jansen 1988: 152). Graduate degree programs were available at the following eleven universities: Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, Stanford, the Universities of California (at Los Angeles and Berkeley), Chicago, Hawaii, Michigan, and Washington (Murata 1983: 41). A 1990 study found that 45,714 undergraduate and graduate students, nearly double the number in 1986, were enrolled in Japanese language courses (Brod and Huber 1992).

It is not easy briefly to summarize the ways in which the younger generations of United States scholars differ from their Occupation predecessors. For one thing, the age range of the Occupation generation was somewhat artificially compressed due to the common experience of military service during World War II and the Occupation. By comparison, their successors span not one academic generation, but at least two and possibly three, and thus they are not so united by common experience. Nevertheless, for those scholars in their forties and fifties, the student movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, and the Vietnam war, tend to be foci of common identification. Some large part of the successor generations had an opportunity to begin Japanese language study at an earlier age and stage of academic training, and it is now universally assumed that Japanese language skills are indispensable to scholarly work in the field. It is no longer possible for teaching or research in the field by amateurs lacking language training to be taken seriously, and, as I will discuss in greater detail below, scholars now must think of Japanese language training as extending over the full extent of a career, rather than ceasing when one acquires the Ph.D.

Most younger scholars of Japan seek to acquire extensive experience in Japan itself. Other than that cohort which was raised in Japan (as the children of missionaries, business people, or attached to the United States' military bases in some way), most go first to Japan as undergraduate or graduate students. Their first experiences of Japan bring them into close contact with Japanese teachers, scholars, and fellow students. They go to Japan on terms of relative equality with their peers, and certainly not with a strong consciousness of themselves as the victorious side in a recent military conflict. Their fellow graduate students will be their colleagues for life; they will rely on them for academic advice, for the supervision of their own graduate students while they are in Japan; they form life-long friendship in Japan.

In terms of basic academic predispositions towards the study of Japan, they distrust both the academic quest for "Japanese uniqueness" and models of Japanese society which emphasize the harmonious workings of social relations as if conflict were not a persistent feature of both society and history. Taking their cue from an earlier strain of Japanese scholarship epitomized by Nakane Chie's *Human Relations in a Vertical Society*, United States studies propounding the harmonious cohesion of Japanese society ignored its internal cleavages along lines of class, sex, and ethnicity. Earlier generations portrayed Japan as highly distinctive, emphasizing its lack of "fit" with social theories developed in the west. This stance a-

ligned with a promotion of Japanese studies as gate-keeper for a unique society from which all branches of social science had much to learn, and with an on-going attempt by scholars of Japan to reform American racist attitudes towards Japan. While no one denies that there is much about Japan that is highly distinctive, younger generations of scholars are much more concerned to emphasize historical and social trends shared with other societies, especially other Asian societies. Moreover, they are keenly aware of the way that Japanese exclusivism plays into the hands of a kind of cultural nationalism and ethnic chauvinism existing on the fringes of the Japanese academy called *nihonjinron*.

Many more scholars of Japan than previously among the younger generations are women. In fact, nearly half of the Japan specialists registered with the Association for Asian Studies are women, a tremendous increase over the Occupation generation.² Frequently accorded the privileged status of "honorary male" when engaged in research in Japan itself, they tend to be keenly aware of issues of sexual discrimination within Japan (not to mention within the American academy) and of the necessity to clarify their intellectual stance towards these problems through the pursuit of feminist scholarship. They tend (along with many younger male scholars) to be acutely conscious of Japan's internal heterogeneity, to be more interested in occasions of conflict rather than in the maintenance of social harmony and consensus, and to take a greater interest in popular society, rather than concentrating exclusively upon the social and political elite.

A distinctive cohort among the younger generations of Japan scholars are Japanese-Americans. Frequently they share the painful experience of meeting a puzzled response in Japan. Whereas Caucasian students are readily given much sympathy and encouragement as they stumble clumsily in social situations and have difficulty expressing themselves in Japanese, Japanese-Americans may find a reaction of impatience and incomprehension. Because they may be visibly indistinguishable from Japanese, it is too frequently assumed that they should be able to speak and conduct themselves with the fluency and aplomb of a native Japanese. In

² The most current figures available from the Association for Asian Studies show that from a total membership of about 7,500, some 1,514 scholars identify Japan as the country of their primary interest. Of these, 706 (47 percent) are women, 787 (52 percent) are men, and 21 (1 percent) did not indicate their sex (information provided by telephone from the AAS secretariat, October 27, 1993). Even if one takes into account the predominance of women in Japanese language teaching, these numbers still represent a remarkable advance over the situation ten or twenty years ago.

fact, however, they struggle, in the early years of their training, with the Japanese language and assorted difficulties of adjustment to life in Japan as much as other American students.³ For Japanese-American scholars of Japan, then, issues of ethnic studies and the relation of Japanese studies to Asian-American studies are topics of urgent concern.

Linguistic Issues

The difficulties presented by the study of the Japanese are well known, but these are increased many times over if a student's native language does not use Sino-Japanese characters. While the methods for teaching Japanese to Korean or Chinese students are relatively straightforward and afford the luxury of concentration on speaking and hearing, Japanese language pedagogy for speakers of English has been subject to fads, whose vagaries have exacted a heavy price from their students. The field of Japanese language teaching has gradually professionalized, moving from a situation in which many native-speaker instructors had no professional credentials, to one in which the more prestigious institutions routinely expect their language staff to be directed by someone with a Ph.D., and other staff members are expected to have at least a Bachelors, and more often a Masters degree.

Language training remains the heart and soul of Japanese studies. Enduring prolonged training in Japanese is the most basic test of a student's seriousness of intent, without which no one can be encouraged to pursue post-graduate training. Graduate training in Japanese studies is greatly prolonged by comparison with other disciplines, because it is estimated that mastery of Japanese takes an English native speaker seven times the time necessary to master a European language. The increasing and on-going professionalization of Japanese language pedagogy can narrow the gap somewhat, but the necessary time will probably never be fully equalized. Thus, part of the job of exercising oversight of Japanese language programs as the most basic component in Japanese studies' training involves an on-going effort to make the disciplines and the administration of one's university's graduate division aware of graduate students' needs for prolonged support for their program of study.

In this connection, the Japanese language summer school program of Middlebury College in Vermont, the Inter-university Center of Japanese

³ For a poignant account of this kind of experience, see Kondo 1990.

language study at Yokohama, and the Stanford Center in Kyoto perform the valuable function of providing accelerated, intensive language study. Consortia of American universities contribute to the annual financial support of these programs and assist in teaching and in the selection of students. At the undergraduate level, many American universities maintain exchange programs with Japanese universities, and language instruction is generally the center of the curriculum. At the same time, there is an urgent need to promote the training of Japanese language in order to serve a rapidly increasing number of students.

Japanese studies specialists will face steadily escalating expectations of their linguistic competence throughout their careers, and woe to him or her who fails to devote systematic attention to increasing all areas of language competence—the price is to be overtaken by students trained in language programs much improved over the time of these students' instructors' basic training. Advanced, professional training for Japanese studies' specialists already employed as university faculty is available through the Inter-university Center, but this training is quite expensive, especially as one must reside in Japan during the period of instruction. I foresee a need to make such training more widely available within the United States as expectations of Japanese language competence continue to rise.

Fiscal Issues

The sudden growth of Japanese studies after 1945 owed much to direct assistance from the federal government in the form of the National Defense Education Act and the Fulbright-Hays Act. Scholarships for graduate training in Japanese studies (and other area studies) resulted from this legislation, greatly stimulating the field. Support was also forthcoming from such private foundations as Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, and the Asia Foundation. These sources began to cut back in the 1970s, but they were replaced by funds from Japan, such as those of the Japan Foundation, the Japan-United States Friendship Commission, and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (Murata 1983: 42).

The fiscal situation of Japanese studies in the United States today is influenced considerably by the economic situation of Japan and of the United States, as well as by trends in the internal funding arrangements of individual universities. Faculty salaries parallel those of humanities and social sciences disciplines. The value of a faculty salary in Japanese

studies varies more according to the prestige and ranking of the university where the person is employed than as a reflection of the standing of the field itself. Other than this, perhaps the most conspicuous variable is the question whether a person is employed mainly as a language teacher or as a teacher of literature, history, religion, etc. The language instructors tend to be less highly paid, as the work they typically perform in the development of curricular materials is not recognized as equivalent to the research, for example, of an historian. Non-language teaching faculty must often assume the stance of protecting the language staff and upholding the value of its work to a university administration.

Funding available for graduate student support and for faculty research are matters of growing concern. Support for graduate student training is underwritten to variable degrees by the universities with Ph.D. programs, but for the last ten years or so there has been a tendency to shorten the length of time allowed for the completion of the Ph.D.⁴ For example, when this writer received the Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1980, the average length of time necessary to complete the Ph.D. was nine years. There were, however, many students, especially in fields like Japanese that are unusually prolonged because of the increased time necessary for language work, who took much longer than that, and who managed to support themselves at various jobs within and without the university. Now there is a noticeable tendency to think of five years as an average allowable time for Ph.D. study for universities to curtail support after that time. Students try to bridge the gap between the support offered and what is really necessary by taking work, of course, and increasingly they prolong their time of study in Japan by working there at jobs unrelated to the dissertation research that takes them there in the first instance. Inevitably, many are lost to academics in this way.

It is increasingly difficult to fund both graduate training and faculty research in Japan and to maintain Japanese-language library materials' collections, because of the appreciation of the *yen*, that has resulted from manipulation of the rate of *yen*-dollar exchange in the context of the trade imbalance between the two countries. The number of fellowships for graduate and faculty research from such foundations as the Japan Foundation, Fulbright, and the Social Science Research Council, has remained fairly stable over the last five years or so, but this level represents a massive decline relative to years just before 1988. There is wide-

⁴ William Bowen and Neil Rudenstein, *In Pursuit of the Ph.D.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) makes the case for contracting the time allowed Ph.D. study.

spread anxiety that funds from Japan will decrease because of the economic recession there, and that the gap will not be filled by American university budgets, which are in a period of austerity. Some see a danger in Japanese studies becoming too dependent upon Japanese sources for its basic support, as the implication can be drawn that the field may become prepared in some unspecified way to do the bidding of its funders in Japan. Furthermore, the cost of maintaining the Inter-university Center in Yokohama and the Stanford Center in Kyoto is becoming prohibitively high. Libraries face skyrocketing costs for Japanese publications and postage, and the likelihood is that only the strongest collections can be maintained in the strength they enjoyed prior to the appreciation of the *yen*.

Institutional Models

Academic life in the United States is principally organized by university *departments* of history, English, politics, and so on; the intellectual rationales for these branches of study are regarded as well established, even beyond serious question. In contrast, the intellectual rationale for area studies *programs* is coming into question in this era of fiscal restraint, and many university administrations argue that, ideally, scholars of Japanese, Chinese, and Soviet studies ought to be absorbed by disciplines, thus obviating the existence of area studies programs, except as curricula of language study. Thus we would find specialists on Japan in the disciplines as economists of Japan, specialists in Japanese politics, Japanese literature and history, and so on.

One can now perceive the outlines of a division within scholars of Japan between those who are more identified with the disciplines and those who aspire more to the stance of an area specialist. The former group tend to be more interested in the theoretical issues established by their disciplines (especially the Europeanists in any disciplines, who tend to be the ones to set the theoretical agenda) than in gathering empirical information for its own sake on Japan or in establishing what it is that is special or unique to Japan. There is some tendency for these discipline-oriented scholars also to be less committed to language study and less interested in the issues of Japanese language pedagogy. The area specialists, by contrast, while not uninterested in theoretical questions by any means, are keenly aware of the various ways in which Europeanist theory's origins and presuppositions limit its applicability to Japan, and of

the tendency towards Orientalism and to the exoticizing of Japan. They tend to devote more time and energy to on-going language work, and to developing close ties with Japanese scholars and institutions. They tend to define their own research interests along the lines in which related topics are being examined by Japanese scholars, rather than being guided exclusively by the theoretical questions enjoying popularity in their home disciplines in the west.

The leading centers of graduate training in Japanese studies exist within their separate universities in a decentralized form. At Harvard and Princeton, for example, a department of East Asian studies (however named) houses the language program, scholars of premodern history, and of Japanese literature to the appropriate disciplinary departments. In the absence of departments of smaller fields such as ethnomusicology or religion, scholars from these fields tend to be placed in area studies departments. The whole collection of faculty dealing with Japan may be coordinated within an East Asian studies program, whose committees oversee the B.A. curriculum. Co-existing with these departmental and program structures may be a research institute, housing senior (tenured) faculty. In such a case, both the department and the research institute would attempt to assist the East Asian library. A research institute may or may not offer courses, and the on-going "research" there may not be collective or centrally administered except insofar as individual faculty members may apply to it for support of their own, individual projects.

Japanese studies in the United States is not subject to direction from the federal government, and thus is not expected to develop a utilitarian direction in the study, say, of economics and politics. Business and law schools since the 1970s have been offering serious instruction on the practice of business and law in Japan, but one sees little interest from the more prestigious universities in the "quick fix" marketing of "Business Japanese" or other cash-cow courses of instruction. The field of Japanese economics has suffered greatly from a "brain drain" into business. Especially during the 1970s and 1980s, nearly everyone with expertise in this field could earn salaries astronomically higher than could be expected from an academic career. Also, the discipline of economics has seen an opposition between an area-studies orientation and theoretical sophistication, so that area studies scholars are too often regarded as *ipso facto* theoretically backward (Johnson 1988: 95-114). Political scientists of Japan are called upon to advise policy-makers of the federal government in rather informal ways, rather than being incorporated into the formal apparatus of government, though informal links with such agencies as

the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council are maintained at some universities.

The contrasting approach of incorporating Japanese studies into the disciplines or into an area studies framework cross-cuts another line of division within the field, that between historical and contemporary studies. While virtually every serious practitioner of Japanese studies recognizes the value of both areas of study, there is a tendency for those concentrating on contemporary Japan to be more guided by the theoretical issues of the social sciences as developed in the west, and for historians to find the lines of inquiry established in Japan itself more useful. Paralleling this difference is a tendency for social scientists to have a weaker grip on the Japanese language and for historians to devalue the study of contemporary Japan, seeing only a weak distinction between that and "current events." Occasionally, charges of "irrelevance" and "shallowness" are exchanged, and social scientists are frequently vulnerable to charges that their linguistic competence is lacking.

These strains can be seen as evidence of the knowledge explosion regarding Japan. No one can keep track any longer, as the Occupation generation did, of everything published in the field, and thus it is perhaps inevitable that lines of internal division such as these would appear. One faces a full-time job merely to skim the annual publications output from western scholars in one's own field, added to which is the greater task of mastering the scholarly output from one's colleagues in Japan. Few scholars manage any longer to maintain detailed knowledge of areas of study remote from their own.

In addition, however, to the rapidly expanding quantity of studies of Japan produced annually is the growing tendency to specialize in a particular discipline. As specialization in these terms is a trend affecting the American academy as a whole, its pull is inexorable in area studies as well. In fact, there is a tendency to evaluate the on-going professionalization of the field as a whole in terms of the degree of specialization attained. This trend is reflected not only in the character of faculty life and research, but in terms of the way new positions are defined and institutional arrangements created for them. Increasingly, social science departments see little necessity to maintain positions for Japan specialists, and it is highly likely that the chairs that the Occupation generation fought so hard to create in Japanese anthropology, economics, sociology, and political science will be lost, not replaced by Japan specialists when an Occupation-generation incumbent retires.

Japanese studies will, of course, be greatly impoverished by the loss of

these positions, especially since the social science disciplines continue to admit graduate students wishing to specialize on Japan. It is highly unlikely that a general, theoretical grounding in the discipline concerned can suffice for the training of these students, who are sometimes placed in the absurd position of having to convince their home department that it is a worthwhile use of their time to study Japanese language or to learn something about Japanese history and literature. Increasingly, the disciplines turn to people in area studies to make up for the deficiencies in their own programs.

It may be that area studies programs on Japan will become increasingly residual categories for the placement of scholars whose work is regarded as too arcane to be incorporated in regular disciplinary frameworks, but who can be counted upon to help students learn Japanese, to accumulate empirical knowledge about Japan, or to intercede with departments unaware of students' needs concerning the study of Japan. Or, seen from the point of view of those for whom the disciplinary framework is incompatible because they do not wish, for example, to be pressed endlessly into general teaching that gives them no scope for their own specializations, it may be that area studies programs will provide a venue for the pursuit of study and teaching impossible elsewhere. In any case, there is a pressing need to clarify the rationale for area studies programs on Japan. The implications that (1) they exist merely to "service" departmental deficiencies in language or other Japan-specific course work; (2) they lack theoretical interest and sophistication; and (3) they provide a refuge for the arcane and the retrograde, are not acceptable.

Defining the Parameters of Critical Studies of Japan

Defining the criteria of critical study of Japan is a pressing task for the field, and the longer it is postponed, the more polarized is public discourse about Japan in American public life liable to become. Inevitably, public rhetoric in the press and in the media seesaws between a somewhat ill-informed, laudatory impulse to "learn from Japan" (about auto manufacturing, management practices, and public education, *inter alia*), or to explain away social injustice in the name of a "holistic" approach (usually anti-feminist, elitist patriarchalism) on the one hand, and "Japan bashing" on the other. The academic establishment of Japanese studies is only a little more sure where it stands and where it is going. Rising generations of scholars of the field by no means present a united front on this

question,

The first lines of schism appeared in the formation in the 1960s of a break-away group from the Association for Asian Studies,

Younger scholars, led by those who took leading roles in the Concerned Scholars of Asian Studies (CCAS) held that "modernization" had contributed a view of modern Japan that was far too favorable and optimistic and that it had neglected the darker side of Japan's economic growth and regional expansion. It had also, they argued, tended to over-emphasize the divisions between prewar and postwar Japan. In emphasizing quantitative measures over ideology, some wrote, the "modernization" school had in fact held to a secret agenda of support for the Cold War foreign policy of the United States and its ally Japan (Jansen 1988: 66).

John Dower, Mikiso Hane, and Roger Bowen gave substance to the CCAS point of view in appreciative studies of E.H. Norman and in studies bringing to light the suffering endured by ordinary people in the modernization of Japan. Studies in Japan itself from the "People's History" school (*minshushi*) were quickly introduced in parallel with a new interest in popular society (Irokawa 1985).⁵ These works were quickly followed by studies in the United States undermining the notion of Japanese society as uniformly moved by consensus and upholding instead the preeminence of crisis and conflict. Scholars from the University of Chicago, especially Harry Harootunian, Tetsuo Najita, and Victor Koschmann, became particularly associated with studies of crisis (Najita and Koschmann 1982). Building upon insights gained in the re-evaluation of crisis and conflict, studies of Japan as a postmodern society incapable of abiding allegiance to *any* particular ideology, have captured the imagination of many in the field (Miyoshi and Harootunian 1989).

But now that the author is dead and the self is inexorably fragmented, where do we go from here? While the Occupation generation sought to be "neutral" or "non-ideological," it was taken to task for an allegedly hidden agenda of conservatism and opposition to the left by the Concerned Scholars group. The Concerned Scholars' position now appears to a slightly younger group to be hopelessly mired in conspiracy theory which erects the state as an omnipotent monolith bent on enslaving the helpless populace. It is not difficult to recognize the salience of crisis and conflict, but, having done so, no compelling narrative of modern history

⁵ See Roger Bowen, ed., *E.H. Norman, His Life and Scholarship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984) and Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels and Outcasts: the Underside of Modern Japan* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

seems to emerge as a result. The inherent anti-humanism of much postmodern scholarship seems to yield little more than a portrait of all concerned as having feet of clay and hopelessly convoluted psyches. In short, nothing is more clear about the generational transition in which we find ourselves than that whatever emerges next will be found lacking in some critical way, and that eager perpetrators of parricide and matricide will shortly be forthcoming. That being the case, we could do a lot worse than deal with our contemporaries as tolerantly as our elders have dealt with us.

We find ourselves momentarily paralyzed by the realization that all stances involve a positioning of self and other, whether or not the stance is explicitly, consciously identified with a particular ideology. Indeed, it hardly makes sense to invoke the notion of "ideology" to identify so all-encompassing a problem. We see that we must strive to weed our gardens of all traces of Orientalism, to clarify our positions, to avoid the self-important pretense of speaking "for" Japan. Our self-consciously narrowed perspective, the product of specialization-in-service-to-professionalization, leaves us ill-equipped to imagine alternatives to the current dilemma, and in any case we all know that our age distrusts nothing so much as grand theory.

It is not exaggerated to say that we face an existential dilemma, but if we are not to be reduced to silence, we must treat it as a practical problem, which must be amenable to practical solutions. We have to start somewhere. Two initiatives noteworthy in this regard are currently under way.

The first is the formation of a new Asian studies journal, *Positions: East Asia-Cultures and Critique*. Announced at the 1993 annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, *Positions* is guided by an editorial collective of which young historians of China were the original nucleus. The Japan editors, Norman Field, James Fujii, Yukiko Hanawa, Melanie Ivy, John Treat, and Miriam Silverberg, were motivated to establish an alternative to the *Journal of Asian Studies* by the desire to promote studies of Japan that would connect more self-consciously and systematically with the rest of East Asia and with Asian-American studies, and which would endeavor to make a contribution at a theoretical level to international intellectual life (as opposed, that is, to the accumulation of empirical, nation-specific information-accumulation). As one of the editors said, "Southeast Asian studies has given us subaltern studies, but what has East Asia really contributed" [in terms of theoretical paradigms that have advanced knowledge as a whole]? (Norma Field, October 26, 1993,

private communication). The journal is receptive, as the *Journal of Asian Studies* has not always been, to studies long considered "taboo" in Japanese studies: feminist scholarship on sexuality and gender, ethnic minorities, and *burakumin*.

Positions combines several noteworthy features of the younger generations of Japanese studies: (1) substituting for an earlier generation's desire to enhance knowledge and understanding of Japan the determination to contribute theoretically to the growth of knowledge as a whole through studies of Japan; (2) a belief that academically defensible study of Japan must be critical as well as appreciative; (3) a desire to link the study of Japan to its East Asian context; and (4) and insistence on clarification of the analytic status of the study of Japan. Having enjoyed a tremendous reception at its first presentation, *Positions* is about to produce its third issue. Not limited to the framework of Japanese studies, *Positions* nevertheless can be expected to contribute a great deal to it through engaging a broad spectrum of the field, especially its younger members.

The second endeavor returns to a topic of central interest for Japanese studies, Meiji Japan. Originally conceived of as a small-scale, local gathering to commemorate a magnificent archive, the Maruzen Meiji Microfilms,⁶ the Conference on Meiji Studies has captured the interest of a larger cross-section of our field than anything since the Hakone conferences on Japanese modernization. The aims of the conference are (1) to promote studies of Meiji Japan through a cooperative, multi-disciplinary, international conference; (2) to pool collective expertise in a way that bridges trends in Japanese and western scholarship as well as historical and social science scholarship; (3) to identify future research directions; and (4) to encourage the widest possible use of the Maruzen Meiji Microfilms. Sponsored by the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard, and scheduled for May 6 to 8, 1994, the Conference on Meiji Studies brings together over one hundred scholars from seven countries to re-examine every aspect of Meiji history, society, and culture. This conference assembles the generations from emmeriti to graduate students. Every conceivable point on the political spectrum is repre-

⁶ The Maruzen Meiji Microfilms incorporate the entire collection of the National Diet Library of Japan of books published during the Meiji period, about 120,000 titles on 16,000 reels of microfilm. In 1991 the Maruzen Meiji Microfilm collection was donated to the Harvard-Yenching Library by Nikko Securities. It is one of only two complete sets publicly available in the world and the only set in the United States.

sented, and the group's collective cultural diversity is also impressive.⁷ At the very least, it can be expected that this conference will underscore and vivify the sense of common endeavor in Japanese studies, in which our differences can be a source of strength as well as a challenge.

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⁷ Discussions with the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies resulted in the offering of travel grants for scholars to conduct research on the microfilm collection and to attend the conference. Two regional Meiji seminars, for scholars of East and West Coast universities, also supported by the Northeast Asia Council, are to be convened through academic 1993-1994 by Professors Carol Gluck and Joshua Fogel and their research presented at a special panel of the 1994 annual meeting of the AAS. Arrangements for coordinated presentations on the arts of the Meiji period are underway with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Peabody, Ashmolean, and Victoria and Albert Museums, the Japan Society of Boston, the Sackler, and the Edo-Tokyo Museum. A film series of movies set in the Meiji era is being organized at Harvard.

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