

JAPANESE STUDIES IN OXFORD

Until comparatively recently, the history of Japanese studies in Oxford can best be described in terms of the contributions made by two personalities. The first of these was John Harington Gubbins (1852-1929), who spent nearly thirty years in a variety of important diplomatic posts in Japan, and after his retirement in 1909 was appointed Lecturer in Japanese and Fellow of Balliol College, positions which he held for three years until 1912. Gubbins published a number of important works, including *Dictionary of Chinese-Japanese Words in the Japanese Language* (3 Vols.), *The Civil Code of Japan, with Introduction on Japanese Family System* (2 Vols.), and *Progress of Japan, 1853-1871*. He belonged to that tradition of diplomat-scholar which left its mark in Oxford at the heyday of the British Empire before the First World War.

There were few universities in the Western world that encouraged the serious study of things Japanese until after the Second World War - with lamentable consequences for Western capacity to construct an effective policy towards Japan before, during and immediately after the Pacific War - and Oxford was no exception, despite the

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pioneering contribution made by Gubbins. Forty-three years were to elapse before another Fellow in Japanese studies was to be appointed at an Oxford college. Though it seems strange from the perspective of 1984, it should be remembered that as recently as the outbreak of that war in 1941, even in the United States the Government had only a tiny handful of academic Japan-specialists upon whom it could call for advice. Indeed, the idea that Japan should be the object of interest of a small number of antiquarian 'Orientalists' is perhaps not entirely dead even today, and it is noteworthy that the Inaugural Lecture of J.A.A. Stockwin, the first Nissan Professor of Modern Japanese Studies in the University of Oxford, specifically drew attention to this legacy of an earlier phase in our intellectual history - in which one may include the newer, disparaging notion that Japan's modern culture is largely derivative. At any rate, he felt it appropriate to argue cogently 'Why Japan Matters' and in fact to deliver his Lecture under that title (published at the Oxford University Press in 1983). In a sense Stockwin's observations decisively mark the end of this earlier phase - it scarcely seems necessary, nowadays, to feel obliged to state the case for Japanese studies (quite apart, in other words, from Japan's evident economic vitality and influence in recent years). Yet it is useful to be reminded of the dates, and to take note of the speed with which the study of Japan has acquired a new legitimacy in its own terms and, particularly in Oxford, a powerful new base of institutional support for a take-off into future self-sustained growth. We have certainly moved a long way in the forty-three years since 1941.

It seems clear that it is to the second of the two personalities that a good part of the impetus towards the proper establishment of Japanese studies in Oxford can be attributed. In 1955 Richard Storry was appointed to a Fellowship at St Antony's College; author of *The Double Patriots*, a study of Japanese ultra-nationalist Army politics in the 1930s, and also the extremely widely read book *A History of Modern Japan*, he cut a well-respected figure, both in Oxford and Japan, including the circle of the Imperial court. Most appropriately but perhaps belatedly, the University honoured him with a personal professorship in his last year before retirement, and only two years before his untimely death in 1982. It was in 1960, during the period spanned by Storry's activities in Oxford (supported, it should be said, by the work of the late Geoffrey Hudson, who was appointed Fellow of St Antony's in 1959), that the Japanese language came to be introduced into undergraduate teaching in the university (as part of the B.A. course in Chinese). The rest followed rapidly. St Antony's College offered Fellowships to the two Lecturers in Japanese studies subsequently appointed to the University - Dr Brian Powell, a specialist in modern Japanese drama, and Dr James McMullen, a specialist in Tokugawa intellectual history. And it was from St Antony's that the Oxford initiative was launched to approach the Nissan Motor Company for a substantial benefaction - which came about in 1979, when the University received £1½ million for the establishment of the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies under the direct control of the University. Close links with St Antony's

have been maintained: the building chosen for the Institute had housed the College's Far East Centre for some years, and academic staff members of the Institute have been offered Fellowships by the College and thus membership of its Governing Body. As if to complete the circle, the first Nissan Professor and Director of the Nissan Institute was recruited from the same university with which Storry had for a time been associated, the A.N.U. In a certain sense Arthur Stockwin, who took up his post only a few weeks before Storry's death, is indeed his successor, but Japanese studies in Oxford are now, under his leadership, being developed in quite new directions.

One of the principal aims of the Nissan Institute is to encourage the study of Japan as a mainstream subject of scholarship and instruction, rather than to let it be categorised as a peripheral, exotic ('Orientalist'?) area of interest accessible only on the premise of its inherent 'uniqueness'. Hence, for example, the effort has been made to introduce the comparative study of Japanese economics, history, politics and government into the relevant B.A. and M.Phil. courses at the University, whilst the Institute itself hosts a regular inter-disciplinary seminar and provides supervision for students working on research degrees not only in Oriental studies. There are, in fact, four Faculties of the University (as well as St Antony's College) that are represented on the Inter-Faculty Committee for Japanese Studies, which is the body that formally administers the Nissan Institute. These are the Faculties of Modern History (which, curiously, is alone responsible for appointing the Nissan Professor in Modern Japanese Studies), Oriental Studies, Social Studies, and Anthropology and Geography. The Institute's academic staff fairly reflects this spread of interests: in addition to the Nissan Professor, who is a specialist in contemporary Japanese politics, the academic staff comprises two Lecturers - Dr Ann Waswo, who teaches modern Japanese history, and Ms Jenny Corbett, an economist whose lectureship is in the 'Economic and Social Development of Contemporary Japan' - and an Instructor, Mrs Chihoko Moran, whose job it is to teach the Japanese language to students of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, as well as a non-intensive course in Japanese to any members of the University interested in acquiring a knowledge of the language. In addition, the Institute invites a Visiting Fellow each year from Japan - and these have been drawn from a variety of academic disciplines. Whilst anthropologists are not yet specifically catered for with the present staff complement - despite an evident growing interest in Japan amongst postgraduate students of anthropology in Oxford - the Institute invited an anthropologist, Professor Teigo Yoshida, to fill the position of Nissan Visiting Fellow for the session 1983-4; and in a kind and energetic manner Professor Stockwin placed the facilities of the Institute at the disposal of the anthropologists who gathered in Oxford in March 1984 for an international Conference on the Social Anthropology of Japan.¹ It is hoped that this subject will

¹ This Conference, the first of its kind, led to the formation of

gain further institutional support in Oxford - it is currently being mooted to provide for a Nissan Junior Research Fellow in the social or cultural anthropology of Japan, tenable at St Antony's College.

Oxford's resources in Japanese studies are not, however, limited to those funded directly by the Nissan benefaction. Dr Powell and Dr McMullen are responsible, along with Mrs Moran, for nearly all the teaching of the courses for the B.A. in Japanese in the Faculty of Oriental Studies. Courses on the history of Japanese painting and applied arts are offered by Dr O.R. Impey, Assistant Keeper in the Department of Eastern Art of the Ashmolean Museum; in addition to its holdings of Japanese lacquer ware, paintings and prints, one can find in the Museum an exceptionally good collection of Japanese export porcelain (descriptions of some of which can be consulted in O.R. Impey and M. Tregear, *Oriental Lacquer*, published by the Museum in 1983; and in the Museum's Catalogue of the Memorial Exhibition [1981], *Eastern Ceramics and Other Works of Art from the Collection of Gerald Reitlinger*). A number of other scholars have a strong comparative interest in Japan from the standpoint of a particular discipline, for instance Professor Jean Gottmann in Geography, and Dr Andrea Boltho in Economics. The anthropology of Japan is well covered by Dr Joy Hendry, who has an extensive field-work experience of the country; she studied at the Institute of Social Anthropology in Oxford and now teaches the subject at Oxford Polytechnic. Dr Hendry was responsible for organising the Conference on the Social Anthropology of Japan referred to above. Finally, it should be noted that the Pitt Rivers Museum (the Ethnology and Prehistory collections of the University) has extensive Japanese collections. Particularly notable are *netsuke*, *Nō* masks, charms, arms and armour, and a variety of Ainu ethnographic material; the archive collections include about 700 photographs of Japanese interest dating from 1864 onwards.²

Of some 46 universities in this country only four teach Japanese studies in any serious way, though a few others teach some aspect of Japan as part of comparative programmes in particular disciplines. The Nissan benefaction to Oxford clearly constitutes the major recent development of the field, both in terms of resources and the consequent readjustment of emphasis towards modern social

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² On the importance of the Pitt Rivers Museum photographic collections generally, see the contribution by Elizabeth Edwards in B.A.L. Cranstone and Steven Seidenberg (eds.), *The General's Gift: A Celebration of the Pitt Rivers Museum Centenary, 1884-1984*, Oxford: JASO 1984 (JASO Occasional Papers, no. 3), pp. 26-35.

science studies. Arrangements at the three other universities (Cambridge, S.O.A.S. and Sheffield) vary considerably, though an interest in developing social studies of modern Japan seems characteristic of these centres also. Collaborative enterprises are well advanced, notably the Japan Library Group (to pool information and resources with respect to library holdings of teaching and research materials), supported financially by the Japan Foundation Endowment Committee, which also assists in arranging study trips to Japan; and as a further move in the pooling of resources, from 1984 undergraduates studying Japanese in Oxford will spend their first year of language training in Sheffield at its Centre of Japanese Studies. But perhaps the most significant feature characterising the current state of Japanese studies is its growth generally: recently undergraduate options (in Japanese language, modern history or society) have been established in various departments at eight or nine universities, and this year a new degree course has been introduced at the University of Essex; in addition, there are recognised interests in Japanese studies at two polytechnics in the U.K., at Oxford (where Dr Joy Hendry teaches a course on Contemporary Japanese Society) and Huddersfield. There is, correspondingly, a marked rise in the level of graduate research interest in Japan - though the total number of university posts, at the four main centres, with primary responsibility for Japanese studies, is less than thirty.

In a context such as this, there is probably little occasion for surprise that British social anthropologists have been turning to the study of Japan in recent years. The difficulties are clear (some of which are reported by Roger Goodman elsewhere in this issue). On the one hand, Japan is a highly industrialised, even post-industrial complex society exhibiting the characteristics studied by anthropologists concerned with other such societies, yet on the other hand there remains a persistent and adaptive indigenous tradition of social organisation. Institutions which seem similar to those elsewhere (indeed often on which they may even have been modelled) may therefore actually operate in quite different ways. In other words, Japanese economic success and modernisation has not necessarily entailed massive structural change so often presumed to be the case elsewhere, but at the same time it has been found possible to break out of the restrictiveness of a tradition that could have inhibited that process of modernisation. One notes the large number of long-term face-to-face groups which lend themselves well to traditional anthropological analysis, involving such matters as diffuse social sanctions and informal processes of decision-making. Hence, for instance, the work of macro-social scientists, who study Japan in a typically global framework, needs to be complemented by an understanding of the non-verbal communication which is retained among members of such groups. Research carried out in rural Japan, in particular, has identified aspects of social relations and notions of cosmology which are directly comparable with those of technologically much simpler societies. It may even be the case that the use of such examples as illustrations in teaching social anthropology can help to break down the primitive/civilised dichotomy which some students of the subject

still seem to find hard to relinquish.

The anthropological research theses on Japan that have been completed in Oxford at the Institute of Social Anthropology over the last ten years amply testify to a preoccupation with these themes: Rosamund Bell, *Women and Religion in the Ryukyu Islands: Mediation and Peripherality* (M.Litt.1984); Joy Hendry, *Changing Attitudes to Marriage in Japan* (D.Phil. 1979); Ok-pyo Moon Kim, *Outcaste Relations in Four Japanese Villages: A Comparative Study* (M.Litt. 1980), and her *Economic Development and Social Change in a Japanese Village* (D.Phil. 1984); and Mary J. Picone, *Rites and Symbols of Death in Japan* (submitted for a D.Phil., but not yet examined at the time of writing).³

It is hard, finally, to resist the observation that in the last resort the success of Japanese studies in Oxford is due in no small measure to the quality of Oxford libraries. There are four libraries concerned with the subject. Two of these are research, non-lending libraries: the Bodleian and the Eastern Art library in the Ashmolean. The other two (in fact under a single administration) are working, lending libraries: at the Oriental Institute, which by arrangement concentrates its Japanese holdings on works before 1850, and the library of the Nissan Institute, which complements the latter by specialising in works after 1850 (particularly in the English language, except for certain reference books and source-materials in Japanese). However, the most important holding of Japanese material in Oxford is to be found in the Bodleian, Oxford's largest library, on which a separate note, by a member of the Library's staff, is appended below.

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Bodleian Japanese Holdings

The Bodleian Library currently possesses almost 40,000 volumes in Japanese. The collection is particularly strong in the fields of religion, history and Sinology. Of some note are the holdings of works relating to local history amounting to about 2000 volumes, which provide a rich source of information on folklore, folk religion and local customs. The Department of Oriental Books has recently undertaken to provide materials in support of researches

³ Anthropological theses on Japan completed at other universities during the last ten years include the following: Eyal Ben-Ari, *Community Action and Community Care in Present-Day Japan* (Cambridge Ph.D. 1984); Kazuo Francesco Inumaru, *The Japanese Business Community in Milan* (Cambridge M.Litt.1978); David C. Lewis, *An Anthropological Comparison of Tokugawa Japan to 'Feudal' Outer Mongolia, With Regard to Some Pre-Conditions for Urbanisation* (Manchester M.A. 1980); and Brian Dermot Moeran, *Social Aspects of Folk Craft Production, Marketing and Aesthetics in a Japanese Pottery Community* (London S.O.A.S. Ph.D. 1980).

into the modern period undertaken at the Nissan Institute of Japanese studies and has begun to build up a significant collection of works in the fields of modern history, politics, economics, anthropology and sociology.

Historically, the links between the Library and Japan were not particularly close. However, the Bodleian does possess certain significant treasures. The log book of Captain Will Adams, known to the Japanese as Miura Anjin (*Ms. Savile 48*) contains records of four voyages made by Adams between 1614 and 1619, to Siam, Cochin China and Japan. A number of examples of the output of the Jesuit Mission Press, operating in Japan at the beginning of the seventeenth century, are also held.

In 1881, the Japanese Buddhist scholar Bunyu Nanjō visited Oxford and published a catalogue of Japanese books purchased from Alexander Wylie and donated by Max Müller. Following this, 328 volumes of Buddhist literature were presented to the Library by Sir Ernest Satow (1843-1929), British Minister in Peking and Tokyo.

Important early printed histories of Japan are also to be found in the Library - works such as Siebold's *Nippon* and Englebert Kaempfer's *History of Japan*. As one of Britain's copyright libraries, any book relating to Japan published in Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland is automatically received. The appearance of relevant texts in Western languages published outside these territories is carefully monitored, and as far as resources permit, works of academic value are acquired by purchase.

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