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An Introduction to Japan.
By Herschel Webb



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AN INTRODUCTION TO JAPAN

by Herschel Webb



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AN INTRODUCTION
TO JAPAN



PREFACE

An Introduction to Japan has been prepared and published under the auspices of the Japan Society in an effort to meet a growing interest in Japan and Japanese-American relationships on the part of American colleges, schools, and adult education groups. In a sense the present volume is the successor to the *Japan Society Syllabus*, last published in 1937. Rather than prepare a new edition of the *Syllabus*, however, the editors have felt it desirable to begin afresh and to issue a completely new volume, which would not only reflect the great changes that have taken place in Japan in the intervening years but also take into account the fundamental alteration in the relationship between Japan and the United States from one of rivalry between two mutually distrustful powers to the far more complex interdependent relationship of today.

Readings and films listed at the end of each section are merely suggestions and are not intended to comprise an exhaustive bibliography. *Japan*, edited by Hugh Borton (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1951), is a convenient and reliable source of information on all phases of Japanese life and affairs. For further materials the reader is referred to the best short bibliography on Japan, *A Selected List of Books and Articles on Japan in English, French, and German*, revised and enlarged edition, compiled by Hugh Borton, Serge Elisséeff,

William W. Lockwood, and John C. Pelzel (Harvard University Press, 1954).

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The chapter decorations are the work of Charles M. Saito. The map of Japan was prepared by Vaughn S. Gray.

H. W.

February, 1957



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AN INTRODUCTION TO JAPAN

NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION OF JAPANESE AND JAPANESE
ORTHOGRAPHY

Consonants in Japanese have generally the same sound as in English, except that *g* is always hard. Vowels are as in Italian or as in the musical scale: *a* as in *fa*, *i* as in *mi*, *e* as in *re*, *o* as in *do*; *u* is like *oo* in *boot*. There is an almost even stress on every syllable, a syllable consisting of a consonant-vowel combination. A few syllables end with *n*, for example, the first syllable of *Man'yô-shû*. Vowels marked with a circumflex (Kantô, Kyôto) have approximately twice the time value of unmarked vowels.

Because of generally established usage, certain proper nouns are not marked. For readers who may be interested in knowing the pronunciation, however, these are the names of the islands—Hokkaidô, Honshû, Kyûshû, and Ryûkyû—and of the cities—Tôkyô, Ôsaka, Kôbe, and Kyôto. The *y* in these words is in effect a consonant: the *kyô* of Tôkyô is one syllable, and Kyûshû is pronounced Cue-shoo. Double consonants are both pronounced. In vowel combinations such as *ai* both are pronounced, but rapidly, so that the sound is similar to the noun *I* in English.

All Japanese and Chinese personal names are written according to the Oriental practice—family name first.

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JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

THE PAST DECADE

Never before in history has the relationship between the United States and Japan been so close as during the past ten years. Following the Second World War Japan, in theory at least, was occupied and controlled by thirteen Allied Powers, which sought to demilitarize her and to encourage democratic tendencies among her people. However, since the thirteen Powers by agreement acted only through the American government and a Supreme Commander in Tokyo (also an American), Japan's postwar treatment was largely in American hands. Thus it came about that the United States assumed primary responsibility for the disarming of Japan, the initiation of political, economic, and social reforms, the carrying out of relief measures, and even the defense of the country.

With the coming into force of the peace treaty in 1952 the occupation formally ended, and Japan regained her full sovereignty. At the same time, however, responsible leaders in both countries were well aware that without any armed forces of her own and without outside help Japan might become a power vacuum, open to communist subversion from within and Soviet and Red Chinese aggression from without. Accordingly,

the two countries negotiated simultaneously with the peace treaty a security treaty under which the United States is to keep armed forces in and about Japan until the latter can provide adequately for her own defense.

These two treaties, together with an administrative agreement spelling out in detail the status of the American forces in Japan (1952), a Mutual Defense Assistance Pact (1954), and a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation (1953), form the present basis of Japan's relations with the United States.

Treaties and pacts alone, however, do not wholly explain the importance of each country to the other. To America Japan is a bastion of strength against communist Asia, and the northern anchor of America's westernmost line of defense, which runs from Hokkaido to Australia. Further, with her highly developed society, modern industrial complex, and technological skills Japan stands in a special position to lend stability to the rest of Asia. To Japan the relationship has more than a military significance: the United States is a major source for her imports, a major market for her exports, a provider of dollar aid, and a powerful political ally that can help her to achieve status in the world.

SOME PROBLEMS

Public pronouncements from both sides of the Pacific attest to the willingness of both Japan and the United States to stand together politically, militarily, and economically. In the United States, however, these pronouncements have all too often bred either an overconfident belief that the current amity will con-

tinue automatically or an apathetic attitude that whatever happens to Japan is of no great concern to Americans. If only to counteract these prevailing moods, a note of caution is in order. Despite the cooperation of the two governments and evidences of friendliness between the two peoples, some friction does exist. Some of the more noteworthy causes are indicated below.

1. The rearmament of Japan is regarded in the United States as a necessary and sensible means of reducing the communist threat. Most Japanese, weary of war and apprehensive that Japan may again become a battlefield, see the rearmament issue in an entirely different light. Many fear a resurgence of Japanese militarism. Still more wishfully think that disarmed neutrality offers them a better chance of survival in another war than active belligerence on either side.

2. A particular irritant to the Japanese has been the American practice of conducting nuclear weapon tests in the central Pacific. Whereas the Japanese government has accepted the need for these tests realistically, it has done so only in the face of bitter and vociferous opposition from the public at large. This opposition is based in large part on fear of fall-outs and contamination of Japan's vital fishing catch as well as the tragic memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

3. Despite a generally good record of behavior by American troops in Japan, their continued presence eleven years after the surrender unavoidably causes resentment among Japanese. Specific grievances have been the extraterritorial privileges granted to the American security forces, prostitution near military installations, and a small but well-publicized number of occupation babies of mixed race. There is also a fear that the national way of life is becoming overly Americanized.

4. The territories which Japan lost as a result of military defeat included the Ryukyu and Bonin Islands, which the Japanese claim were not acquired by military aggression. Irredentist antagonism toward the United States, the present administering authority, is a natural consequence. However, the strategic importance of Okinawa in the Ryukyu group makes it unlikely that the United States will be willing fully to satisfy Japanese territorial desires, at least in the foreseeable future.

5. Possibly the most immediate danger of friction between America and Japan lies in the conflicting views of the two countries on Japanese trade with Communist China. The disagreement is a clear-cut instance of the possible incompatibilities between Japanese economic demands on the one hand and American military policy on the other. In the long run, it seems likely that Japan will need mainland goods and markets which are now prohibited under American pressure. Since Chinese demands for Japanese products are to a large extent limited to goods that could be used to build up communist military strength, it is extremely unlikely that the United States, under the present circumstances of international politics, will take kindly to renewal of full trade between the two countries. Positions so flatly contradictory as these might eventually lead to a serious strain in Japanese-American relations.

6. While at the present time trade rivalry between Japan and the United States is not strong, certain Japanese exports to the United States, notably cotton textiles, tuna, and pottery, have caused concern among American producers and led to pressure on Congress for increased tariffs or the establishment of import quotas. Dependent as they are on international trade, the Japanese are extremely sensitive to all such moves which

directly affect their livelihood. It appears likely that trade problems will be an irritant in relations between the two countries for some years to come.

It should not be overlooked that there exist on both sides of the Pacific certain groups that either deliberately seek or unwittingly abet friction between the United States and Japan. Chief of these on the Japanese side are 1) a small but fanatical communist minority, which can be expected to exaggerate and exploit every difference of opinion between Japan and the United States; 2) the socialist opposition, which because of the pro-American policies of the present government is frequently forced into the tactical position of making proposals which have an anti-American cast; and 3) a considerable number of the intelligentsia, who are inclined to regard American cultural achievements as inferior to those of Europe and Asia.

On the other side, despite the fact that organized anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States disappeared after the Second World War, there still exist in this country certain groups that could bring about a deterioration in the relations between the two nations. Lobbyists for certain Southern textile manufacturers, for example, have achieved state legislation designed to encourage crippling boycotts of competing goods from Japan. There exist, in addition, high-tariff interests, the success of whose efforts might well wreck Japan's already precarious economy, and isolationist groups, whose desire to withdraw from Far Eastern commitments raises Japanese fears that Japan will be abandoned and left to face the Soviet Union and Red China alone.

Nevertheless, it must be granted that most Americans and Japanese appear to be satisfied with the present close alignment

of the two countries. If some Americans have doubts about the ability of the Japanese to maintain their new-found political liberties and to avoid a resurgence of militaristic expansionism, they are at least content to adopt a wait-and-see attitude. If certain Japanese groups would prefer to adopt a course of neutralism rather than alignment with the United States, the majority of voters up to the present have been willing to support a government strongly committed to the West. So long as the Japanese people remain convinced that their present international position offers them the best hope of avoiding war and hunger, two omnipresent fears that far overshadow the fear of communism, Japan can be expected to continue close cooperation with the United States. Should they become disillusioned in this regard, their fear of war may breed further neutralism toward the East-West struggle, and their fear of hunger might easily lead them to attempt a solution in totalitarianism, be it of the right or of the left.

READINGS

Reischauer, Edwin O. *The United States and Japan*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1950.

Reischauer, Edwin O., and others. *Japan and America Today*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1953.