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The ASJ and International Conflicts in the Meiji Period: A New Dimension in Early Japanology

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INTRODUCTION

The Asiatic Society of Japan (ASJ) was one of the learned societies established in the Meiji Period that focused on Japan. It is still active today and has a history of 130 years. The Society was located in Japan, which provided it with an advantageous position in pursuing research on Japan. Its publications are called "The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan" and are a valuable source for Japanologists. In my Master's thesis "The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan 1872-1912: a Development of Japanology in the Meiji Period" I discussed aspects of the ASJ and of its Transactions published during the Meiji Period. The Meiji Period has been chosen because it is the era to which the roots of contemporary Japanology can be traced. On the occasion of this publication I will focus on the part of my thesis that discussed the ASJ and international conflicts.

Two major conflicts of The Meiji Period changed Japan's history: the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). A direct result of these conflicts was Japan's entry into international society as a highly esteemed Asian power. How did these events influence the ASJ? Did they generate new research? Is it possible that there was a different approach to Japanese history and culture after these wars? Was the number of members and contributors in any way affected? To address these questions I focused on an examination of the Transactions[1)] immediately before, during and after the wars, in order to assess the impact of these events on the Society.

1. SUBJECTS OF PAPERS BEFORE 1894

The subjects of the papers handed in for publication had to be consistent with the objectives mentioned in the constitution (Article III) of the Society. In other words, they were required to be related to Japan and other Asian countries. From

the beginning, authors were at liberty to write about anything that stood in connection with Japan or Asia and therefore papers on the most diverse topics can be found in the Transactions. However, there were subjects that the Society did not appreciate. Until 1878, scientific studies and physical observations were included into the Transactions, but after a discussion on the importance of scientific data to the ASJ, abstract scientific topics were banned. As a general rule, scientific topics related to Japan were accepted for publication, but their importance and number decreased dramatically after 1878. Other subjects that the Society did not welcome were politics and religion[2]. Due to the many nationalities and beliefs represented in the ASJ, these controversial matters could cause antagonism between the different groups. To avoid this, the ASJ forbade debates on absolute faith, and conducted its discussions on creed in a scholarly manner. The religions of Japan were investigated at length but authors only brought forward Christianity from a historical point of view.

The wide range of topics to be found in the Transactions proves that nothing failed to interest the members of the ASJ. Examining the papers for classification reveals that Japanese history, together with language, literature and topographic descriptions (mostly travel accounts) were the subject matters most focused on during the period 1872-1894. From the formation of the ASJ, the topics chosen for the presentations and the publications generally dealt with Japan's past. Japanese history had still to be unravelled and was therefore of particular interest to the Society's members. An important characteristic of the papers during the above mentioned period, and one that is also true of papers throughout the Meiji Period, was the degree of specialisation. Although topics of general appeal can be found in the first few years after the establishment of the ASJ, research gradually became more specific.

2. THE ASJ AND THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR

Although the discussion of politics, and consequently foreign policy, was taboo in the ASJ, the Sino-Japanese War did leave its mark in the Transactions. No comments for or against the war can be found in the discussions, but a shift in topics can be noted. At the annual meeting of 1895, Chairman C. MacCauley addressed the members as follows:

> During the present year there is little of importance to note in the Annual Report beyond the ordinary amount of work done by the Society. The recent war between Japan and China may have diverted interest from the past to

the present events of this country, but the Society can congratulate itself on a very fair amount of progress in spite of hindrance[3].

C. MacCauley did not elaborate on this hindrance, but one can assume he was referring to problems of infrastructure, printing and the extra workload placed on the ASJ members of foreign delegations due to the war. That preoccupation of the members is evident by the fact that only five papers and a supplement were published in 1895, compared to 11 papers in 1894. In 1896, the year after the war, seven papers and a supplement were published. The Society's finances did not suffer any consequences as a result of the war as the annual report of 1896 shows: "The finances of the Society are in a satisfactory state and unless unforeseen accidents occur, the Society has nothing to fear on this score in the future"[4]. The membership of the ASJ also did not show any significant change. Fourteen new members joined and six memberships were dropped due to resignation or death in 1895.

It is important to stress that no explicit reference to the war as a motive for research can be found in the Transactions. However, there were two noticeable shifts in the members' interests and these most probably were a result of the Sino-Japanese War. The first of these shifts occurred during the war itself. As C. MacCauley noted, the war diverted the attention of the members to the present. This resulted in an increased interest not only in contemporary events, but also in contemporary subjects for research. W. Aston's 'The Önmun-When invented?' and Maurice Courant's 'Notes sur les Différents Systemes d'Ecriture Employés en Corée' (both published in Volume 23 of 1895) dealt with Korea. H. Newell's 'The Petroleum Industries at Nagaoka' (1895) gave a detailed description of the oil refineries in Urase, Hire and Katsubo including statistical data on the amount of petroleum produced and the production costs. Newell did not mention the motivation for writing his paper, but as petroleum is an essential resource for warfare, it is clear that his choice of subject matter was influenced by contemporary events. In an addendum to 'Silver in Japan' (1895), another paper on an economic topic, G. Droppers presented a table of prices of commodity goods obtained from an official publication of the Japanese government. He remarked how some prices continued to rise in recent years[5]. In this paper also, the war was not mentioned as a reason for the author's choice of subject, but since prices rose in Japan during the war, a connection can be assumed. The second shift in the members' interests manifested itself in the large number of papers which were either directly or indirectly related to China. In Volume 24 of 1896, 'A Review of the History of Formosa, and a Sketch of the Life of Koxinga, the First King of Formosa' by J. Davidson

and 'A List of Plants from Formosa With some Preliminary Remarks on the Geography, Nature of the Flora, and Economic Botany of the Island' by A. Henry both covered Japan's newly acquired territory Taiwan. In his review of Formosa, J. Davidson wrote: "(Formosa) will soon cease to be a land of mystery, for the Japanese engineering parties are already planning extensive work there"[6]. The planned engineering work can be interpreted as a motive for writing his paper. In the discussion following the presentation of his paper, J. Davidson commented that "The aborigines hated the Chinese, and were in general well disposed to the Japanese"[7]. This was J. Davidson's impression of the island after he visited it following the colonisation of Formosa by Japan. E. Clement's 'Chinese Refugees of the Seventeenth Century in Mito' (1895) is not directly related to the Sino-Japanese War, but is the first in a series of papers concerning a much broader field of research, namely the philosophy behind Japan's actions. This will be discussed in the following section of this paper. In Volume 25 of 1896 only two papers were published, both of which were written by I. Dooman. This volume contains two striking remarks by the author related to contemporary events in Japan and China. The first of these comments shows that the members of the ASJ clearly considered modern Japan to be superior to China. "(Japan) in the Middle Ages received its religion, art and all the forms of highest culture from China, but very soon we see it outstripping and beating the intellectual celestial both in the arts and war, and it is still beating him, and will beat him, with all probability till the end of this world"[8]. The second comment describes the rise of imperial Japan as follows:

> A nation which for not quite a quarter of a century has seriously turned its attention towards Western thought and civilization and in that short space of time has almost completely mastered all the machinery of European life and existence, and is gradually becoming the terror of the Aryan race – if not in war and arms at least in commerce – as it has been for ages that of the neighbouring countries![9].

3. THE ASJ AND THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

After 1896, there was a general decline in the ASJ membership, resulting in poor attendance at the Society's meetings. This can be attributed to two related changes in Japan's society. The first of these changes was that many foreign advisors finished their term of office in Japan and were often not replaced as the Japanese had mastered sufficient knowledge to continue without their help. The second change was a reduction in the number of positions offered to foreign

academics in schools and universities[10]. This was caused by a wave of nationalism following Japan's victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War. The decline in membership during the war years can be seen as a continuation of this trend, rather than a result of the war itself. During the Russo-Japanese War, the Society held very few meetings, and the number of lectures reached an all-time low. In 1904 there were four general meetings and in 1905 there were five. However, these statistics are not representative of the general amount of activity of the ASJ during those years. The Society concentrated its efforts on publishing the Transactions, which continued to appear despite the reduced number of meetings. One volume was published in 1904 and two volumes appeared in 1905, one of which was published in two parts. In the years which followed, the number of publications continued to rise. The first three parts of a four-part volume were published in 1906 and two volumes comprising six parts were published in 1907. The number of meetings also rose again after the war, reaching ten in 1907.

An examination of the Transactions shows that the war did not leave many traces on the contents of the papers. There were no papers which dealt directly with the conflict. In volume 32 of the Transactions (1905), R. Kirby published his translation of Jun Dazai's 'Bubi'[11]. Kirby's translation included his views on traditional warfare and a comparison of the military of China with that of Japan, explaining concepts such as *bubi* (military preparedness) and *fukkoku kyōhei* (rich country, strong army). Although R. Kirby did not give his reasons for choosing this topic, the content of the paper is closely related to Japanese military thinking and thus can be said to have been influenced by the ongoing war. *Bubi* was a basic concept used in the theories of Japanese intellectuals such as Shinpei Gotō[12]. Another paper that appears to have been influenced by the events of the Russo-Japanese War is A. Lay's 'Korean from the Standpoint of a Student of Japanese' (1906). A. Lay wrote, "(My notes) may perhaps be of some slight service to other students of Japanese proposing to devote their attention to the language of the country which is now related more closely then ever before to its neighbour Japan"[13].

Apart from the two papers mentioned above, there are no other papers related to the war in the Transactions. The war is touched upon on two other occasions in the Transactions, but only as a detail in studies on other aspects of Japan. In 'A Summarized Catalogue of the Postage Stamps of Japan' (1906), T. Woodward mentioned that in 1906 a stamp had been issued commemorating the review ceremony of the triumphal army of military campaign of 1904-1905.[14] In 'Japanese Patent Medicines' (1907) W. Royds wrote, "From January 1905, new special extra taxes, on account of the Russo-Japanese war, have been in force, and are still

to be continued for an indefinite period"[15]. Also, in 'Formative Elements in Japanese Buddhism' (1907), A. Lloyd commented on the rise of Japan as follows: "When Sakyamuni, was a young man, the whole world was astonished by the sudden and awful fall of Babylon, and the rapid rise of the Persian Empire, a rise as phenomenal as that of Japan in our days"[16].

The most significant influence of the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars on ASJ scholarship occurred in the fields of philosophy and ethics. ASJ members turned to the traditional Japanese schools of thought to provide answers for Japan's successes. They wanted to know what the underlying motives for Japan's actions were and from where they originated. Before the wars, little attention was given to philosophy and ethical teachings, and consequently it opened a whole new dimension of scholarship on Japanese culture and history. It was not only popular slogans on the battlefield or in the streets of Tokyo that were of interest to the scholars. Contemporary publications by leading Japanese intellectuals such as Inazo Nitobe's 'Bushidō' (1900) also generated a great deal of discussion. In 'Historical Development of Shushi Philosophy in Japan' (1907), a discussion based on the published work of I. Tetsujiro, A. Lloyd wrote:

> Fujiwara Seikwa, Hayashi Razan, Kinoshita Junan, Andō Seian, Muro Kyusō, Nakamura Tekisai, Kaibara Ekiken, are men whom the whole nation has learned to venerate as examples of practical piety, and it is perhaps not too much to say that the wonderful qualities exhibited by the whole of Japan during the testing experiences of the Russo-Japanese war were in a large measure owing to the system of education under the Tokugawas, which was almost entirely in the hands of Shushi thinkers[17].

It was E. Clement who wrote the most extensive works on the influence of Chinese philosophy. In 'Chinese Refugees of the Seventeenth Century in Mito' (Volume 24, 1896), 'Instructions of a Mito Prince to his Retainers' (Volume 26, 1898) and 'A Chinese Refugee of the Seventeenth Century' (Volume 30, 1902), he traced the history of Chinese philosophy back to the time when it was introduced to Japan and analysed its absorption into the Mitogaku (the philosophy of the Mito clan). Other papers also related to Chinese philosophy were 'Confucian Philosophy in Japan' by W. Dening (Volume 36, 1908) and 'Ancestral Worship in Japan' by R. Kirby (Volume 38, 1910-12). Chairman J. Gardiner discussed the value of W. Dening's work as follows in 1908: "The Meiji statesmen, from the *Genro* group downwards, had all been trained and moulded in the Chinese ethical

schools with which these papers helped to make us acquainted"[18]. At the beginning of his presentation of 'Ancestral Worship in Japan', R. Kirby explained the motivation for his research: "So much is being said just now about the patriotism and bravery of the Japanese that I propose to give you an insight into the Ancestral Worship of this country by translation from the lectures of Hirata Atsutane the great exponent of the National Religion of this Empire"[19]. Essays like these were springboards for other members to write on schools of thought such as Buddhism, and a general increase in topics related to philosophy is clearly visible.

CONCLUSION

As the above analysis illustrates, the Sino-Japanese War cannot be said to have had a major influence on the activities of the ASJ, although the members were to some extent influenced in their choice of subject matter by contemporary events. Apart from a few papers on Korea and Taiwan, there is little mention of the conflict in the Transactions. The number of papers published in the Transactions decreased both during and after the war. However, there is no evidence that this was a direct consequence of the historical event. The Russo-Japanese War on the contrary did have a significant impact on the ASJ. Although the fluctuation in membership (membership declined during the war and rose again afterwards) does not appear to have been directly related to the war, and the general activities of the ASJ were not affected greatly, the shift in subject matter shows clearly an influence on ASJ scholarship. Research on Japanese philosophy and ethics, which began during the Sino-Japanese War with E. Clement's research, received added stimulus from the Russo-Japanese War, which resulted in papers from A. Lloyd, W. Dening and R. Kirby immediately after the conflict. From this time onwards, philosophy became increasingly important in scholarship on Japanese history and culture.

NOTES

1) The Transactions of the ASJ (TASJ) can be divided into two parts: the papers and the minutes of meetings. The minutes of meetings consisted of reports of general and annual gatherings noted by the recording secretary. These minutes contained official communications from the Council and (parts of) discussions by members about presented papers. Some volumes included copies of the constitution and by-laws, mostly printed after the minutes of an annual meeting. When analysing the Transactions it is important to consider the remarks on different aspects of Japan by the members of the ASJ, which were given both during the presentations and in

the discussions that followed them. During the presentations, the scholars generally concentrated on their own area of specialisation and did not include personal observations. Hence, although some personal observations can be found, usually in the introduction, they are absent in the majority of the papers. The minutes of meetings provide a richer source of personal observations. However, these are not contained in every volume of the Transactions.

2) Moore, Douglas Kenrick, *A Century of Western Studies of Japan: the First Hundred Years of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 1872-1972., p. 58
3) TASJ Vol. 23, xlii
4) Ibidem
5) TASJ Vol. 23, xxvi
6) TASJ Vol. 24, p. 112
7) TASJ Vol. 24, xxiii
8) TASJ Vol. 25, p. 1-2
9) TASJ Vol. 25, p. 2
10) Moore, Douglas Kenrick, *op. cit.*, p. 115
11) Kirby's '(Jun) Dazai on Bubi'
12) On Gotō see, Kitaoka, Shinichi, *Gotō Shinpei: Gaikō to vijon*, Chūkōshinsho, 1988, p. 94 - 103
13) TASJ Vol. 34, Part 1, p. 49
14) TASJ Vol. 34, Part 3, p. 85
15) TASJ Vol. 35, Part 1, p. 9
16) TASJ Vol. 35, Part 2, p. 225
17) TASJ Vol. 34, Part 4, p. 2
18) TASJ Vol. 36, p. 95
19) TASJ Vol. 38, Part 4, p. 233

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<Key Words> Early Japanology, Asiatic Society of Japan

日本アジア協会と明治期における国際紛争
——初期日本学の新たな局面——

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日本アジア協会は、日本における西洋人による日本関係の学会組織としては、最も早く設立されたものであり、協会は今なお存続している。その定期刊行物が、『日本アジア協会誌』であり、日本学の分野において価値ある情報源の一つとなっている。

本稿では、明治期の『日本アジア協会誌』に見られる研究動向に当時の国際紛争、即ち日清・日露戦争が及ぼした影響の有無について紛争前後の論文内容を考察することにより明らかにした。掲載論文は、日本、あるいはアジア諸国に関連するものでなければならず、また研究主題として、政治、宗教、抽象的な科学論などをさけることは暗黙の了解であった。実際、明治期の『日本アジア協会誌』を精査し分類すると、確かに日清戦争以前は歴史、言語、文学、そして地理学的記述（中心は旅行記）がそのほとんどであった。

同時代の事象が研究項目の選択に関して、会員にある程度影響を及ぼしたことは容易に推測できるが、日清戦争に関していえば、協会の活動に大きな影響を与えたとは論証できない。韓国や台湾に関連した二、三の論文は別として、日清戦争への論及はほとんど見られないからである。

一方、日露戦争は協会に少なからず影響を与えたようである。会員数には大きな変動はなく、また協会の一般的活動にも影響を与えた痕跡は認められないが、研究項目の変移はその影響を如実に示していると思われる。

日露戦争後、特に日本の哲学や倫理に関する研究が目立ってあらわれてきた。いくつかの掲載論文の序文に見られるとおり、ロシアに勝利した日本人の思想性を明らかにしようとした意図は明確である。このときから、日本の歴史文化への研究において哲学・倫理は重要な位置を占めるようになった。まさに初期日本学は新たな局面を迎えるのである。