

## CHAPTER

## I

# Introduction: Putting and Keeping Japan in Anthropology

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## ANCESTORS, LEGACIES, AND ADUMBRATIONS

Thirty-five years ago, John Bennett (1970) remarked that social research on Japan “has not yet made significant contributions to social and cultural theory.” Although Bennett’s remark remains relevant, it is not quite accurate. The wartime ethnographies by Japan anthropology ancestors John Embree and Ruth Benedict entered the mainstream of (American) anthropology where “Japan” became a proving ground for debates about the pros and cons of National Character Studies and of the Culture and Personality school (Benedict 1946; Embree 1945).<sup>1</sup> Actually, Embree’s earlier monograph, *Suye Mura: A Japanese Village* (1939), the progenitor of ethnographies of Japan, was part of a global series of comparative field studies on literate communities or villages – and the first on types of East Asian societies – orchestrated by social anthropologists (affiliated with Harvard University and the University of Chicago) Fay-Cooper Cole, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Robert Redfield, and Lloyd Warner (Embree 1939:ix–x, xvi–xvii).

Thus, as I have argued elsewhere, it was in the 1940s that “Japan” entered mainstream (Anglophone) anthropological debates (Robertson 1998). And, Japan – often paired with Turkey – was also very much part of the anthropological discourse of modernization theory in the 1950s and early 1960s (Bellah 1957; Ward and Rustow 1964).<sup>2</sup> Since the 1960s, and in keeping with Bennett’s observation, “Japan” seems to have passed out of, and to have been passed over by, the anthropological mainstream. What happened? Could it be that only as, simultaneously, a militaristic imperial power – a threat to the United States and western Europe – and a nation of villages (epitomized by Suye) – a quintessential anthropological subject – did Japan attract the intellectual interests of anthropologists? Where is “Japan” in anthropological discourse today, and what are the “significant contributions to social and

cultural theory” that Japan anthropologists have made since 1970, and are making today?

These questions address both the efforts made by Japan anthropologists to engage with social and cultural, and more recently critical, theories, and also the apparent disinterest in and ignorance of Japan of many anthropologists who, suffice it to say at this moment, should know better.<sup>3</sup>

It would appear that anthropologists in general do not regard Japan as a geographical “prestige zone”; that is, that – unlike Bali or Morocco or the Andes, or Oaxaca, Mexico – they do not regard Japan as a cultural area of choice and theoretical cachet. The existence of prestige zones has partly to do with the distance of anthropological theorizing from current affairs, and partly to do with the colonial history of Euro-American anthropology and the canonical emphasis since the 19th century on the cultures of peoples of color with a history of domination by “the West.” (For largely the same reason western Europe – the “Old Europe” – and North America are still under-represented in anthropology.) Japan confounds the simple binarism informing the construction of anthropology’s Other: it was never a colony of “the West,” and in the first half of the 20th century Japan occupied the ambivalent position of an anti-colonial colonizer, although its ambiguity in this regard was overshadowed in the United States first by its status as absolute enemy and later by its unconditional surrender in 1945. Moreover, the discipline of anthropology in Japan was itself facilitated, if not motivated, by Japanese colonialism in Asian and Pacific Rim countries (see chapter 2 in this volume). The rhetorical question thus arises: Is Japan, like western Europe and the United States, somehow perceived as too much like “us” to be recognized and appreciated as a worthwhile subject of anthropological inquiry?

At this juncture, I would like to insert, in two parts, an excerpt from a review I wrote in 1995 (but which was published in 1998) about the place of Japan in American anthropology.<sup>4</sup> The excerpt compares the intellectual engagements and legacies of Japan anthropology’s two renowned – especially in the United States – ancestors, Ruth Benedict and John Embree, and constitutes one response to the rhetorical question I raised at the end the previous paragraph.

[*Gyokusai* was a] wartime expression coined by military ideologues to beautify self-sacrifice and mass deaths in combat. . . . *Gyokusai* literally means “jewel smashed.” It was precisely such baroque expressions and drastic acts that occasioned the Office of War Information to commission Ruth Benedict to write *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, in which she attempted to “understand Japanese habits of thought and emotion and the patterns into which these habits fell. . . . The Japanese were the most alien enemy the United States had ever fought in an all-out struggle. In no other war with a major foe had it been necessary to take into account such exceedingly different habits of acting and thinking. . . . We had to understand their behavior in order to cope with it” (Benedict 1946:4, 1).

Earlier, in 1943 . . . Embree published *The Japanese* as part of the Smithsonian’s War Background Studies series. This was followed by *The Japanese Nation* in 1945. Benedict cites the latter along with Embree’s more well known ethnography, *Suye Mura, A Japanese Village*, published in 1939, but Embree himself is conspicuously absent from her acknowledgments in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Embree too directed his wartime studies toward better understanding and determining Japanese attitudes and

behavior, but whereas Benedict sought to explain “the Japanese” in terms of a timeless cultural profile fabricated from fragments of data, Embree, in *The Japanese Nation*, focused on providing a socio-historical and ethnographic “context for the interpretation of the behavior of Japanese and some basis for an understanding of future developments in Japan.”

In a nutshell, Benedict’s intellectual project was one of selective incorporation and containment, and Embree’s one of linear unfolding. She collapsed past and present, and fused shreds and patches of data in formulating a unique and timeless janusian core (aka the “chrysanthemum” and the “sword”) that was “the Japanese” cultural personality. He, on the other hand, acknowledged the effects of historical transformations and political ideologies in shaping particular configurations of individual and collective behavior without denying altogether the continuity of certain cultural patterns. Writing against national character studies, Embree historicized his portrayal of Japan and questioned the validity of using culture patterns which determine individual behavior within a social group as an “explanation” for national and international socio-economic-political developments. . . . [A] summary (even when accurate) of a nation’s citizens’ behavior traits . . . does not provide a magic explanation for a nation’s aggressive warfare whether it be Japanese, British, American, or Russian (1950: 443).

I do not wish to simply cast Benedict as the “bad guy” and Embree as the “good guy” – the methods of both are equally problematic, although Benedict’s work has occupied more mnemonic space in American anthropology. Rather, I have invoked Ancestors Benedict and Embree for two basic reasons. First, their work, but especially Benedict’s, might usefully be regarded as constituting the historical – perhaps even obsessive – memory shaping the practice of Japan anthropology in the United States since the end of World War Two. Second, it is through their efforts that Japan first entered the mainstream of American anthropology as a contested discourse on, simultaneously, Japanese culture, ethnographic representation, and anthropological theory. . . . Japanese imperialist designs in Asia and the Pacific, and the attack on Pearl Harbor; the Axis Alliance; the internment of Japanese Americans; and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki followed by the largely American occupation of Japan, were all events which helped to overdetermine the salience of Japan as a particularly rich and controversial site of and for anthropological inquiry in the 1940s. (Robertson 1998:300–301)

Let me reiterate the question: is Japan, like western Europe and the United States, somehow perceived as too much like “us” to be recognized and appreciated as a worthwhile subject of anthropological inquiry? In mulling over this question in 1995, I ventured the following response (the second part of the excerpt).

[I]t occurred to me that perhaps some – or many – people believe that there is nothing left to learn about Japan, or nothing really new and interesting – apart from gee-whiz factoids about rampant consumerism, such as the price in square centimeters of Ginza real estate, or the number of \$500 musk melons sold at the Takano Fruit Parlor during the two annual gift-giving periods. Perhaps they believe that Ruth Benedict said it all: Namely, that despite their hi-tech veneer, the Japanese are a people unified in their confidence in hierarchy, whose public acts are regulated by shame, and who put a premium on cleanliness, education, and self-discipline. Ironically, Benedict never went to Japan nor did she know the language. Yet, she proceeded to construct “cultural regularities” from fragmentary data, including novels, movies, interviews with interned Japanese Americans, and the small and “lacking” (Embree 1947) – described by Benedict as “vast” – corpus of existing scholarly literature on Japan 1946: 6).<sup>5</sup> I do not wish

to diminish Benedict's formidable anthropological skills and scholarly legacy, but by the same token, neither do I want to diminish the consequences of her work. In a sense, Benedict made getting to know Japan look too easy, and the Japan she profiled seemed all too knowable; once inscrutable, the Japanese were suddenly crystal clear.

Embree did not attempt to encapsulate Japanese cultural history within a formula, although he acknowledged the persistence of certain cultural practices and attitudes, and his books are certainly very formulaic in terms of their organization.<sup>6</sup> Although both Benedict and Embree constitute the braided memory of Japan anthropology, Benedict's bold bricolage has been far more influential in shaping people's image of Japan than has been either Embree's rather dry, methodical ethnography or his sharp critiques of national character studies.<sup>7</sup>

I believe that the easy and monolithic knowability of Japan construed from *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* is fundamentally related to the double agenda of that book. A didactic book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* was as much an attempt to explain a hitherto inscrutable Japan to a hostile American audience as it was an effort to evince and highlight American national character against the foil of Japan. Benedict's humane objective with her double agenda was to encourage Americans, dizzy from propaganda proclaiming the Japanese a "most alien enemy," to see Japanese as human too. To this end she positioned each people as the mirror image of the other. Benedict declared that "[t]he arc of life in Japan is plotted in opposite fashion to that in the United States": whereas Americans increase their freedom of choice during the course of their lives, "the Japanese rely on maximizing the restraints upon [them]" (1946:253–4, 254). In Benedict's mirror, the Japanese reliance on hierarchy is reflected back as the American faith in freedom (1946:43). Whereas "sensitivity about trifles" is virtuous behavior in Japan, it is recognized as "neurotic" and "adolescent" in the United States (1946:108). If the Japanese "play up suicide," Americans "play up crime" (1946:167). And whereas in Japan performance deteriorates under competition, in the United States competition stimulates performance, yielding socially desirable results (1946:153). These are but a few of the oppositional representations of "the Japanese" and "the Americans" developed by Benedict, who concluded that in Japanese life, "the contradictions, as they seem to us, are as deeply based in their view of life as our uniformities are in ours" (1946:197).

Like her colleague Clyde Kluckhohn, author of *Mirror for Man* (1949), Benedict used anthropology as a mirror held before us to allow and encourage a better understanding of ourselves through the study of others. But a mirror is not an inert device and can be deployed as an agent in the resolution of difference and opposition. In the bamboo mirror held before Americans, Japanese national character was rendered intelligible as American national character the other way around. The potential for solipsism should be obvious; the apparent wholeness of the mirrored image can deflect recognition of the need to learn more about Japan on terms relevant to the dynamic and intertwined histories of localities and subjective cultural formations and practices within that country. As Embree noted in his 1947 review of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, the only way to begin to really know the Japanese people, "is to accumulate comparative data on the basis of a series of field studies in different areas of the culture. . . . So far these are lacking for Japan" (1947:246).

Today, ethnographies based on fieldwork in Japan are certainly more plentiful than in 1947, but I will argue that anthropologists since then have in one way or another, continued to work both through and against a conventionalized conception of Japan as a mirror image of, or enantiomorphic with, the United States [and, more generically] . . . "the West." The ever growing anthropological literature on "the Japanese self," for example, both works to locate "indigenous" constructions of selfhood and to distinguish the Japanese from the American (or Western) self.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, and not

surprisingly, “mirror” and “mask” are popular words in titles of books on Japan, and the objective of revealing, unmasking, or unwrapping the “real” Japan has motivated many a Japan scholar.<sup>9</sup>

One last factor to consider with respect to Benedict’s central role in facilitating the knowability of “the Japanese” concerns the influence of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* in Japan, where it was published in translation in 1948. In their 1953 review of the critical reception of the book among Japanese scholars, John Bennett and Michio Nagai point out that,

[i]t should be understood that the translation of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* has appeared in Japan during a period of intense national self-examination – a period during which Japanese intellectuals and writers have been studying the sources and meaning of Japanese history and character, in one of their perennial attempts to determine the most desirable course of Japan’s development (1953: 404).

In more recent years, the Japanese social critic and philosopher Tamotsu Aoki (1991 [1990]) has suggested that *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* “helped invent a new tradition for postwar Japan” (see also Doak 1996). Benedict’s homogenizing and timeless portrait of “the Japanese” added momentum to the growing interest in “ethnic nationalism” in Japan, evident in the hundreds of ethnocentric *nihonjinron* – treatises on Japaneseness – published since the postwar period.<sup>10</sup> As I have argued elsewhere (Robertson 1997, 1998), the obsession today in Japan with cultural distinction mirrors a similar obsession with internationalization; in fact, the two obsessions can be understood as enantiomorphic: that is, the same impulse the other way around.<sup>11</sup>

My point in this digression on the reception in Japan of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* is to suggest that despite criticisms of Benedict’s failure to discriminate among historical developments and “differing institutional contexts of data” (Bennett and Nagai 1953:408), Japanese culture critics were especially interested in her attempt to portray the whole or total structure (*zentai kōzō*) of Japanese culture – a goal which, Bennett and Nagai note, had been “common enough in certain branches of Japanese humanistic studies” (1953:406). In short, Benedict’s bricolage – her totalizing ensemble of fragments – reinforced and was reinforced by similar efforts on the part of her Japanese counterparts, for whom the widest and thickest line of difference has been drawn between a unique Japan and the rest of the world (basically, “the West”) as if both entities were internally coherent (cf. Tamotsu 1991 [1990]:31–32). Thus, ongoing Japanese attempts to locate cultural uniqueness mirror the attempts of non-Japanese anthropologists, among others, to unmask, unwrap, and to otherwise reveal the presumptive authentic core or essence of Japanese society. (Robertson 1998:304)

## BRICOLAGE REDUX

Benedict’s ahistorical and homogenizing portrait of “the Japanese” has been complicated over the past two decades by the proliferation in the number of both dominant and marginal sites, situations, and actors (including the ethnographer), in part due to theoretical attention in anthropology to such matters of late. Consequently, the archetypal peasant of Embree’s *Suye Mura* is now many ethnographic subjects, including weekday white-collar worker and weekend farmer; local tourist attraction and custodian of the landscape of nostalgia; youth idol; migrant worker; dispensable day laborer in the automotive and nuclear energy industries; religious cultist; political

activist; ethnic or sexual minority and resident “Other”; and victim of industrial pollution, to name some of the more conspicuous ones (Robertson 1998:310).

Nevertheless, some scholars have argued that Benedict’s unitary if Janus-faced – in the sense of mutually antagonistic – portrait of “the Japanese” remains the backdrop in front of which these new actors have debuted and back into which they are reabsorbed. This was a charge which motivated the publication in 1988, and an expanded edition in 1997, of a volume titled *The Other Japan*, identified as a book “about the other side of the story”; a book about “the unresolved conflicts beneath the smooth surface of managed capitalism in Japan today” (Tsurumi 1988:3; Moore 1997).<sup>12</sup> The title of and rationale for this book alerts us to the Catch-22 confounding the matter of representation in Japan anthropology: it seems that cultural portraits contrary to the tenaciously normative template constructed by Benedict and subsequently reproduced can only always be “alternative” or “other” as opposed to unacknowledged facets of the complex, composite, and integrated whole of “Japanese culture.” This crisis of representation, as it were, has as much to do with the dominant mythos *in* Japan of a homogenous society as it does with the perception *of* Japan as knowable in opposition to “the West,” and more specifically, the United States (Robertson 1998:310–311).

One way to resolve this crisis is, figuratively speaking, to refabricate<sup>13</sup> the received and homogenous (and homogenizing) portrait of “the Japanese” in the multifaceted mode of a 100-headed Kannon (Bodhisattva of Compassion). This move is already evident, in part influenced by the newly and loudly audible voices of Koreans, Ainu, Okinawans, and all those who may have been, and in some cases continue to be, constructed as “other.” They reside not below the “smooth surface” of Japan today but rather comprise an integral part of that surface, which in reality is exquisitely – and phenotypically and culturally – textured. All of Kannon’s heads are different and differentiated, yet they all belong to the same body and collectively make up its integral, organic identity. In a similar sense, the 29 essays comprising this volume, introduced below, all contribute “talking heads” to the Japanese body (*kokutai*), and, moreover, each represents a different “talking head” of that academic body, Japan anthropology.

Ironically, especially in light of my earlier analysis, it is Benedict the Bricoleur who offers sage and useful advice on the method of refrabrication by way of her two-sided, albeit one-dimensional, portrait of “the Japanese.” Although she used data drawn from a broad range of sources, from archives to interviews, her inability to read or speak Japanese, together with the fact that she had never been to Japan, coupled with her restrictively schematic theoretical framework, drastically circumscribed and delimited her ethnographic portrait of Japan and the peoples living and working there. Today, the majority of (professional) non-Japanese ethnographers of Japan are fluent in Japanese and have spent a number of years living and working in that country. However, to avoid creating a paint-by-numbers portrait of Japan – even if the paints and outline are of Japanese manufacture – we need to pay attention to and address and redress, as opposed to simply conform to, current issues and developments in anthropology, the discipline, and to thicken, layer, texture, and complicate our representations of Japan and Japanese peoples (Robertson 1998:316).

The reading and speaking fluency of most Japan anthropologists in Japanese is best applied toward utilizing information from a diverse number of individuals and groups

(who are not presumed *a priori* to represent “the Japanese” voice), as well as from a broad and deep range of Japanese texts. The relative dearth and narrow scope of the Japanese-language materials utilized in a significant proportion of ethnographies on Japan is dismaying, especially given the high premium placed in Japan, past and present, on writing and the generation of documents on every conceivable subject. Without sufficient efforts to broaden the range and scope of the Japanese-language materials utilized, patterns of Japanese culture canonized in the Anglophone literature can be accorded, almost by default, the status of truisms which are then reproduced by successive generations of Japan anthropologists. It is not that these patterns and truisms are wrong or misleading *per se*, but that they should be subjected now and then to what is known colloquially as a “reality check.”

If there is one gatekeeping concept that is unequivocally appropriate for Japan scholars to employ it ought to be “bibliophilia”: the long cultural history of literacy and range and diversity of textual production in Japan are reasons compelling enough to demand (greater) attention to bibliography. In the context of bibliography, one type of “reality check” would involve exploring the multifarious ways in which topical issue, say organ transplantation, has been debated among sundry constituencies, as opposed to presenting unproblematically “the Japanese” position (Robertson 1998:307).<sup>14</sup> The merits of bricolage – less as a type of “cultural logic” (Lévi-Strauss 1962a, 1962b), and more as a method of tapping a heterogeneous repertoire of cultural resources – should be evident. Bricolage is both a demanding method and a method demanding a supple intellect, as one must draw and synthesize (fabricate) from the visual and the textual, the historical and the “now moment,” the voiced and the silent (and silenced), the present and the absent (and disappeared), the ubiquitous and the scarce, the polemical and the nuanced, the actual and the potential, the animate and inanimate, and so on.

As I see it, bricolage, as simultaneously a theory of cultural resources and a method for tapping them, is a variant of the process of “condensation” developed by that consummate (if not recognized as such) ethnographer, Gertrude Stein. Stein scrutinized her (human) subjects until, over time, there emerged for her a repeating pattern to their words and actions. Her literary portraits (e.g., Stein 1959) were condensations of her subject’s repeatings, an ethnographic technique quite the opposite of the “social scientific” process of ideal typing (Robertson 1994 [1991]:1). What I wrote in 1991 with respect to “condensation” versus “ideal typing” remains – from my observations traveling through the fields of anthropology – quite viable today.

[Robert] Nisbet has likened ideal typing to sculpting. Like sculptors, social scientists, figuratively speaking, chip away at a block of marble in order to expose the Michelangel-esque sculpture within. This method involves *a priori* knowledge of both the presence and the exact form of the ideal-type figure trapped inside: “the object, whether structure or personage, [is] stripped, so to speak, of all that is merely superficial and ephemeral, with only what is central and unifying left” (Nisbet 1977:71). Contrarily, the wholeness of Stein’s subjects bespeaks the acquisitive – as opposed to reductive – nature of her mode of portraiture. She did not presume to know beforehand what was superficial and what was central. These are arbitrary criteria not isolable in any one individual or group.<sup>15</sup> Those features labeled either “superficial” or “central” exist in a flux of words and actions differently repeated over time and space by individuals or groups. (Robertson 1994 [1991]:1–2)

In her novels and essays on writing, Stein identifies what I perceive as the salient features of the ethnographic process: it is personal; it requires time and patience, for knowledge and understanding are acquired gradually; and it involves a struggle to convey critically that knowledge and understanding about a pluralistic world in flux through the relatively static medium of (English) words (Dubrick 1984:93; Robertson 1994 [1991]:2; see also Agar 1986:x).

By the same token, our attention must also be directed toward a sustained analysis of the history of intersections, past and present, of Japanese and Euro-American strategies of cultural critique. Knowledge of the socio-historical constructedness of cultural practices does not preclude either understanding or appreciating them or working within their parameters (cf. Bourdieu 1986:2, 4; Dubrick 1984:26). This practical knowledge, moreover, is crucial if an ethnographer is to avoid the reifications and spurious homogeneity that ideal typologizing . . . can promote (Robertson 1994 [1991]:2).

So, for example, instead of (or, at the very least, in addition to) clamping a “Freudian” interpretive framework onto current Japanese sexual and gendered practices, one might fruitfully look at the history of sexology in Japan, or at the history of Freudian theory in Japan, and its adaptations, transformations, and critiques there as well as in Europe and the United States. Many of us (Japan anthropologists) work to minimize or avoid the fallacious tendency of forcing Japanese cultural practices into “Western” analytical categories. But we must also strive to distinguish those practices from the dominant ideology operating in Japan at different historical moments.

Locating and historicizing theory in this way would help to temper and moderate a tendency I have observed in certain recent monographs on Japan (and in critiques of Japanese Studies) to use theory, sometimes in lieu of sufficient Japanese and other archival and empirical material, as a totalizing explanation, rather than as a reasonable conjecture resonant with specific historical circumstances, or as a guide for further investigations. Obviously, the mere invocation of, say, a theory of practice or of subjectivity is not a viable substitute for exploring and recording the everyday practices of actual subjects and their collective activities in particular geographical places and historical times. It is useful to remember that theories can only be developed and modified by engaging with an ever-expanding body of tangible, empirical information lest they lose their value as theories and become frozen as formulaic explanations (Vance 1985:18; Robertson 2001 [1998]:24).

Other factors instrumental in generating research that works to complicate the “received” portrait of Japan include extended periods of residence in Japan and regular long and short return visits. A familiarity with history, the product and process, is very important, and one must be constantly attentive to distinguishing it from “tradition.” Also, attention to the historical vicissitudes of social and cultural formations is crucial, along with, ideally, a familiarity with a wide range of idea-generating literatures outside the purview of Japanese Studies.

I must also note in this context something that seems obvious to me, and that is that to be or to become a good bricoleur or a good ethnographer or anthropologist is unconnected to, and quite a separate matter from, one’s ethnicity or nationality. I further distinguish in this regard between phenotypic Japaneseness and cultural Japaneseness; the two are not the same thing although they can overlap. The former refers to ancestry expressed as outward features stereotypically marked as “Japanese”



regardless of one's culture [or] socialization; the latter to socialization and enculturation within a culture not necessarily connected to one's ancestry. Recently, phenotype has been privileged as a marker of "positionality," a "ready-to-wear" product of an identity politics that has been especially endemic to American universities.<sup>16</sup> Ironically, phenotype may not reveal but instead may actually camouflage and obscure one's unique and complex genetic, personal, and family history, even as it imparts, within a rigidly constructed identity politics, an illusion of self-conscious identity formation (Robertson 2002:788).<sup>17</sup> One of my points here is that confidence and effectiveness in exercising one's authorial "voice" ought not to lie in phenotype or genealogical claims or a childhood in Japan, but in the assiduous fieldwork and archival research necessary to generate historically resonant, thick descriptions and subtly evocative interpretations of people's lives in all their messy complexity. However, as someone who was raised in Japan, I would be the last person to dismiss the advantages to an ethnographer of the profound familiarity that long-term residence and socializing (and socialization) in a place can afford. In my experience, though, such familiarity is most effectively conveyed not by superficial claims to "insider" status and, by extension, to arcane insights, but in the thoughtful choice of an ethnographic subject and the caliber, subtlety, and resilience of research undertaken to elucidate it.

## CONTENTS AND CONFIGURATIONS

In a way, this book is a study in bricolage even if the individual authors neither utilize that method nor claim to be bricoleurs. Over two years ago, when I was invited to organize and edit this volume, my idea was to treat the book as a whole as a nexus of intersecting forces, ideas, things, and events represented by the vectors formed from the thematic units and constituent chapters. As I wrote in my original proposal to Blackwell, the

forces, ideas, things, and events accounted [in this volume] for are those that I perceive to be especially salient to Japan yet general enough to be the basis for both comparative research and contributions to anthropological theorizing. In addition to essays that demonstrate the salience of Japan as a place to undertake and generate innovative and exciting scholarship, the *Companion* also aims to make "Japan" in its many guises and dimensions more easily accessible to scholars unfamiliar with that country but interested in comparative research and information.

That said, the resultant edited volume is less a product of my ideas about Japan anthropology and more a portrait of Japan and the Japanese peoples, whose "repeatings" in a variety of historicized contexts are apprehended by and understood through a mix of theoretical and methodological approaches employed by the diverse and international group of contributors. I am very grateful to my colleagues who accepted the challenge of writing a concise yet comprehensive essay on their subject or area of expertise. Not everyone invited was able to contribute or to complete an essay for one reason or another. Nevertheless, the 29 essays comprising this volume represent the application of a heterogeneous repertoire of theories and methodologies to the study of Japan, the country, cultures, and peoples. The subjects explored, summarized below, are equally heterogeneous.

I have divided the chapters into six thematic units. I. Introduction; II. Cultures, Histories, and Identities; III. Geography and Boundaries, Spaces and Sentiments; IV. Socialization, Assimilation, and Identification; V. Body, Blood, Self, and Nation; and VI. Religion and Science, Beliefs and Bioethics. The first unit contains my introduction, in which I chart the legacies of Ruth Benedict and John Embree and propose ways in which to both critique and build on their work.<sup>18</sup> The subjects explored in the second unit critically examine the processes of history- and culture-making along with identity formation, majority and minority alike. Essays address the relationship between Japanese imperialism and colonialism and the development of anthropology in Japan (Katsumi Nakao); archaeology, ideology and the management of cultural properties (Walter Edwards); the ubiquity, in feminist and other texts, of timelines as a mode of history-making (Tomomi Yamaguchi); the construction and reproduction of majority culture (Roger Goodman); the formation and transformations of “insider” and “outsider” minorities (Joshua Hotaka Roth and Sonia Ryang); vicissitudes of class and status (Glenda Roberts); myths and realities of corporate culture (Tomoko Hamada); the sartorial fashioning of cultural identity (Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni); and the influence of nexuses of sex, gender, and sexualities on both Japan anthropology and Japanese national identity (Sabine Frühstück).

The third unit explores the different degrees and configurations of the geographic and sentimental boundaries delineating Japaneseness. The four constituent essays include a stereotype-bending analysis of the historical transformations of “nature” as a social construct (D. P. Martinez); a critical examination of the contradictory images and expectations of rural Japan (Scott Schnell); a discerning review of four newly built urban landscapes in Tokyo (Roman Cybriwsky); and a meditation on the celebration of Japanese manufactured foreignness, from restaurants to theme parks (Joy Hendry).

Institutions, in the broadest sense, that both enable and inhibit personal and cultural agency are introduced in the fourth unit. The five authors report on a broad range of interrelated subjects, including the role and rationale of the state in structuring preschools (Eyal Ben-Ari); the legacy of imperialism on post-compulsory education (Brian McVeigh); the place of sports and recreation in Japanese cultural history (Elise Edwards); the vicissitudes of popular musical entertainment and patterns of consumption (Shuhei Hosokawa); and the exercise of cultural authority and subject formation through popular nonfiction books and magazines (Laura Miller).

Unit V highlights the confluence of the body, politics of “blood” – as a metaphor for kinship and nationality – social reproduction, and nation-building. The constituent essays explore the history of eugenics as one way in which scientific concepts and methods were applied to the joint project of culture-making and nation-building (Jennifer Robertson); the regional varieties of Japanese households and their global context (Emiko Ochiai); the construction of personhood through the embodied medium of a terminal illness (Susan Orpett Long); the historical formation and operations of a “Japanese” cinema that reveals and contests “glocalization” (Aaron Gerow); and the historical beginnings and contemporary features of a national cuisine (Katarzyna Cwiertka).

Comprising the sixth unit are essays that critically review scholarly and everyday practices with respect to religion, science, and biotechnology. The four authors

perceptively investigate the tremendous variety of religious practices in Japan and importance of scholarship on Japanese religions as a corrective to Euro-American derived theories (Ian Reader); the most salient issues today in folk religion research, including terminology and gender ideologies (Noriko Kawahashi); the structure of scientific research through the optic of gender (Sumiko Otsubo); and the process through which social ethics and values of moral worth are shaped by, and shape, new biomedical technologies (Margaret Lock).

We, the contributors to this edited volume, neither claim to offer exhaustive coverage of things Japanese nor to promote our essays as the most determinative to date on a particular subject.<sup>19</sup> For scholars and readers unfamiliar with Japan as a country but interested in comparative research and information, our collective intent is to make empirical and interpretive information about “Japan” past and present (more) easily accessible. For anthropologists of Japan and elsewhere, our essays represent a nexus of theories, methodologies, and modes of cultural interpretation that not only yield a prismatic view of Japan and Japanese peoples, but also provide plenty of material for comparative scholarship. And, for ourselves and all our readers, we aim to complicate the understanding and appreciation of Japanese cultures, institutions, and social practices and their layered histories and complex genealogies.

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## NOTES

- 1 See Lowie (1945) for a portrait of German national character.
- 2 See also the five-volume series, *Studies in the Modernization of Japan*, published between 1965 and 1971 by Princeton University Press. For a critique of modernization as ideology, see Latham (2000).
- 3 Even those whose geographical areas of specialty were profoundly impacted by Japanese (cultural) imperialism have tended to overlook or ignore that history. Others, in conversations, have categorically dismissed Japan as “uninteresting,” often exhibiting a disturbing tendency to invoke uninformed stereotypes about “the Japanese” as a rationale.

- 4 I feel that it is especially appropriate to draw at length from my 1998 publication on the place of Japan in American anthropology not only because what I wrote there remains relevant, but also because the very high price of the hardcover edited volume in which it appears seems to have precluded its wide circulation. I use "American" in reference to an institutional nexus rather than as an isolable thing or unique characteristic.
- 5 Embree described the state of the field somewhat differently in *Suye Mura*: "No social studies of Japanese village life have been published in English and very few in Japanese" (1939:xvii n.3).
- 6 It is instructive in this connection to compare the matter-of-fact table of contents in Embree's *The Japanese Nation: Historical Background, Modern Economic Bases, Government Structure, Social Class System, Family and Household, Religion, etc.*, with Benedict's more evocative and psychological headings in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Taking One's Proper Station, Repaying One-In-Thousandth, Clearing One's Name, The Dilemma of Virtue, Self-Discipline, The Child Learns, etc.*
- 7 *The Women of Suye Mura*, published by Robert J. Smith and Ella Lury Wiswell (the widow of John Embree) based on Wiswell's field notes of 1935–6, adds flesh to Embree's somewhat skeletal account of everyday life in *Suye-mura* (Wiswell and Smith [1982]).
- 8 In this connection, William W. Kelly has remarked that "Selfhood is a field of argument among multiple, competing, and shifting cultural representations, and the best of these recent studies underscore this. Where they have stressed the ideological construction and institutional nexus of self-expression, they succeed in problematizing the relation between cultural construct and social praxis. Where they remain cast in broad and ahistorical terms, they are dangerously essentialist and suspiciously Orientalist" (Kelly 1991:403).
- 9 Ian Buruma has capitalized on the salience of both tropes: his 1984 book *Japanese Mirror* was republished a year later under the title *Behind the Mask*. Joy Hendry (1993) writes of Japan as the epitome of "wrapping," which she describes as a "veritable cultural template" and a "cultural design."
- 10 For a thorough analysis of *nihonjinron*, see Befu (1993) and Goodman (chapter 5 in this volume). A recent dissertation on the fetishization of "women's language" in *nihonjinron* is Fair (1996).
- 11 See also Sonia Ryang's impassioned critique of Benedict's legacy (2004).
- 12 The journal *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* (BCAS), recently retitled *Critical Asian Studies*, is an excellent source for articles "that challenge the accepted formulas for understanding Asia, the world, and ourselves," as noted on the inside cover of every issue. *Ampo* and *positions: east asia cultures critique* are similarly oriented if differently conceptualized. Generally speaking, the former, along with BCAS/*Critical Asian Studies*, tends to deal more directly, empirically, and analytically with practices and policies of social, economic, and political consequence, while the latter tends to offer articles of a more "current" literary and critical theoretical bent.
- 13 "Fabricate" in the sense of a making that unites many parts into a whole.
- 14 In this connection, see Margaret Lock and Susan Long (chapters 29 and 23, respectively, in this volume). See also Hardacre (1994), Lock and Honde (1990), Lock (2002), and Ohnuki-Tierney (1994).
- 15 This sentence effectively dispatches superficial similarities between Benedict's bricolage and Stein's condensation.
- 16 Over the past two or three decades, persons representing a hitherto under-represented sex, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, and so forth, collectively and steadily have complicated, thankfully and for the better, the social texture of American institutions. Recently, however, buffeted by market forces, those same identity categories have been packaged as "ready-to-wear" consumables guaranteed to

- clarify one's location or position within the undulating academic landscape (Robertson 2002:788).
- 17 See Robertson (2002) for the complete context and nuances of my argument. See Tirosh (2004) for a similar argument from a legal perspective.
  - 18 It goes without saying that both Benedict and Embree, but especially Benedict, exerted an influence on Japan anthropology far outside the boundaries of the American university. In fact, the perceived dominance of American scholars, institutions, and publishers in the field of Japan anthropology has been a recurring topic of "discussion" at the annual, European-based Japan Anthropology Workshop (JAWS) meetings.
  - 19 The constituent essays were submitted over period of two years and thus the most recent publications in a given field may not be acknowledged.

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