

THE NEW ENGLAND EXPERIENCE OF
NINETEENTH CENTURY JAPANESE
STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS*

by
Otis CARY

It is a singular honor to stand here and make a presentation to this Society, probably more of an honor than could come to most of you, for the term *mago-deshi* applies to me *here* in a singular way. As a child in Hokkaido I can remember the complete set of the Transactions going back to Series One (in those days of no easy copying devices) one of the most valuable and respected items in my father's library. After I had returned to the United States for high school and college my father was given the honor of addressing you. Some of you may even remember his presentation on the unsuccessful voyage of the *Morrison*, unarmed, in an attempt to repatriate Japanese castaways turned Christian. Indeed, you were willing to print this, and preparations were under way to do so. My father's *Morrison* sank, a victim of World War II, and I have the unfinished manuscript in my study which hopefully will be floated again. I wish he were here to float it for you tonight. Those of you who know my father will be glad to hear that he is well and active, trying his hand at pastoring in Western Massachusetts at the tender age of 78 and dabbling in politics as the Town Clerk.

But I said *mago-deshi*, for not only is my father a life member of this Society, but so also was his father for whom I am named, and some of you may remember him, even. If I am not mistaken he was a very early member and it is through him and my father that I now have that same complete set of the Transactions. I hasten to say that they are *not* in a memorable place in my study where my callers can see, admire and borrow them, but in a most honored place on the low shelves; when removing a volume periodically, the low posture I must assume to take one in hand bespeaks three generations of appreciation, concern and respect for your record and efforts. For some years now my "old Japan" friend Dr. Rabinowitz has been telling me that I should have something to present you, and for as long I have demurred out of some

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kind of innate ancestral awe. And now I am filling the difficult first spot of the season when I supposedly had the whole summer to prepare for you. Alas, I wish it could have been so !

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For almost 20 years I have been fortunate to be a member of the Amherst College faculty on semi-isolated and semi-permanent assignment to Kyoto and Doshisha University and it is a direct result of this experience which I hope to present to you this evening, for it was inevitable that a tenth generation New Englander transplanted to Japan and Hokkaido like myself with a grandfather and father who were students of history and graduates of Amherst College before me,—it was inevitable that I would try to justify my position and so be cast in the role of institutional historian for Amherst College's influence in Japan. Much of what I will say will be familiar, in degrees, to all of you ; all of what I say will be familiar to some of you in greater depth than I will present or, indeed, than I know.

Amherst College is a small New England liberal arts college dating back to 1821, built on the foundations of one of those old New England academies and beholden to the people of the surrounding towns and villages of the mid-Connecticut Valley for its establishment. While men like Noah Webster (who did much of the work on his dictionary in that very village) and Sam Dickinson (whose grand-daughter Emily wrote her *haiku*-like poems secluded in that very village) were responsible for much of the mechanics of Amherst's establishment, it was the people of those surrounding villages and towns who were intent on having an intellectually respectable, if pious, ministry who made great sacrifices to found a college which would express the orthodox trinitarian Congregationalism of New England from which unitarian Harvard had already strayed. This is far afield, you may say, from the legitimate concerns of the Asiatic Society, but perhaps if you will let me trace *backwards* my concern during the last quarter century I can make this a legitimate approach to bring before you.

As Japan ground out her inexorable fate of heightened nationalism and militarism resulting in her tragedy of 1945, many of you were doubtless giving thought to the elements *within* which were uncomfortable with this direction and which were trying to stroke against the tide. As an incipient student of Japan, entrusted with intelligence and interpreting duties, I began to wonder if there could be a *resistance* within Japan and seriously doubted whether an effort so total could brook any expression of opposition. And I speak as a product of Japanese *shōgakkō*, albeit in a period just before the taking over of

Manchuria. Some of you were highly trained observers and interpreters of the political maneuvers and machinations which went into the truly miraculous about-face of August, 1945, which has been so capably recounted in that able and amazing work of Dr. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*. With hindsight and some study I should have realized that the Japanese would never leave themselves without some quarter to fall back on, and from which to recover.

But what really fascinated me was whether, after almost a century of modernization, or, if we must, Westernization, there was any actual voice of protest, an expression of conscience possible within so tightly structured and compact a society; and whether this could arise from any other roots than from methods of thought acquired from non-Japanese, or, if we must, Western, sources. I wish I could say that I was going to give you a definitive answer to this; alas, I cannot. But if you will allow me to proceed, perhaps I can outline some suggestions, together with some tentative ideas based again on observations and some study from my particular vantage point.

The kind of resistance of intellect and conscience I am interested in leads past that of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the particularistic organization of Omoto-kyō, impressive though their records are. I found that the cases which interested me were those of such men as the late President Yanaihara Tadao, President Nambara Shigeru, Professor Takagi Yasaka, Professor Tanaka Kōtarō, all of University of Tokyo and the Honorable Maeda Tamon. You will recognize that they were all members from their student days of a most select *kenkyūkai* sponsored, directed and tightly run by that prophetic and unpredictable Uchimura Kanzo, who has become a subject of serious study here in Japan, and among your members, and whose many works are still published in multi-volume sets and widely read.

Uchimura was a prophet and a patriot and a Christian, not necessarily in that order. He was by any measure an unusual man, fiercely independent in thought, devoted to those he taught, well-read and well-studied; he had started out as a government scientist in the 1880s after graduating from the Sapporo Agricultural College in its second class among whom were numbered Ota Inazō (better known to us as Nitobe Inazo) and another outstanding scientist of distinction Miyabe Kingo. Before he went to Hokkaido he had already become embroiled with Christianity and had been "hazed" into signing the since famous "Covenant of Believers in Jesus" by the first class after arrival in Sapporo. Although he was central in establishing an independent Japanese church in Sapporo the manner in which he accepted Christianity was to be a "cross" for him all his life. But I must not "flashback" too much for fear

of losing my thread and your attention.

Among many ways in which Uchimura influenced the unusually select group of students I have mentioned was by infecting them with the uniquely judgmental concepts of the Judeo-Christian heritage and its view of history, so that often in spite of themselves they were never again able to accept simply causal or cyclical views of history. He did this, of course, through close study with them of the Old Testament as well as the New. But always with the most careful consideration of the sources in the original and against the scientists' trained understanding of the dynamic of unfolding natural scientific truth.

Of course, as an Amherst man in the employ of Amherst I knew he too had graduated from Amherst College in 1887. And I began to wonder where he had acquired this comprehensive view of history and truth. Obviously, I would like to say that it was at Amherst and this is both directly and indirectly true, but by circuitous means—whereby hangs more of a tale which makes delving into personal history a pleasure.

I found that the direct initiative for going to Amherst College was upon the elder-brotherly insistence of a *sempai*, one Nijjima, Jo whom you will all recognize as the stowaway and eventual founder of The Doshisha!

In the hot summer of 1885 Joseph Hardy Neesima was retracing old footsteps in the Eastern seaboard of the United States. He had visited Washington and then Baltimore where Ota, later Nitobe, was studying and preparing his thesis at the relatively new, but first, graduate university in America, Johns Hopkins. Neesima had founded his "Amherst in Japan," The Doshisha, ten years earlier and had worked so assiduously that his health was in danger and he had been encouraged to take a year off and travel round the world. Starting out around the ports he had gotten as far as Switzerland where, as always, he was indefatigable in experiencing what the particular locale had to offer and felt robust enough to proceed on foot over Gothard Pass. He found himself at some height and so short of breath that he thought the end was near; that night he wrote his last will and testament—only to revive and eventually to continue on his travels. In time, he crossed the Atlantic and was energetically occupied in retracing steps he had taken a dozen years before when he had been one of the invaluable interpreters of the Iwakura Mission. Again I must not flashback too far, for I fear you already can begin to anticipate me.

Neesima was guided about the Hopkins by Nitobe where he attended divine service and was able to see Professor Adams "germinal" class room, at least. Of course, Nitobe was working on his trail-blazing (for all of us) study of

“Intercourse Between the United States and Japan.” Nitobe reported that his Sapporo classmate Uchimura was very desolate working in a hospital for feeble-minded children just outside Philadelphia and appealed to Neesima to see him and talk to him. Neesima immediately wired him and they got together at the Vendome Hotel. Seeing how close Uchimura was to nervous exhaustion Neesima immediately told him that here was only one place for him to go and arranged for him to be accepted at Amherst College in the fall.

This was not the first Japanese that Neesima had introduced to Amherst, for the president of the College by then was the beloved Julius H. Seelye who had been the befriender of Neesima in his undergraduate days almost 20 years previously and who had told Neesima that Amherst would always have a place for a few Japanese students whom he might recommend. Seelye was the acknowledged leader of a surprisingly wide-ranging faculty. As Professor of Moral Philosophy he not only had the respect of the students and faculty but was very much the father figure in the best sense of all that the term implies.

Neesima was doubtless correct in his intuitive response to Uchimura's benighted condition, but it took several weeks of soul-searching on Uchimura's part finally to bring himself to make the decision to go to Amherst. Neesima had known Uchimura back in Japan—indeed they came from the same locale—and, always on the lookout for talent to strengthen The Doshisha, had hoped Uchimura would join him in Kyoto, as implied in their correspondence.^①

This was not to be, however, for on return to Japan Uchimura who had been ahead of his time in his anti-foreign reaction, cemented himself into this position in short order. Neesima, the cooperater with foreign missionaries and mission boards, and The Doshisha turned into one of his many targets. He did sign on for several months in his initial attempt, on return to Japan, with a school of Christian inspiration, the Hokuetsu Gakkwan in Niigata, which he made sure was of Japanese sponsorship—although he may have been lulled into slight complacency by the fact that the Reverend Horatio Newell, an Amherst *sempai* of his, was one of the teachers and a major factor in the establishment of the school.

However, after breaking with this Hokuetsu Gakkwan Uchimura became a teacher in the Daiichi Kōtō Chūgakkō and it is here that Uchimura comes to national prominence in the famous *fukei jiken* (the *lése majesté* affair). In 1890, on the now-controversial *Kigensetsu*, it was the fortune of the Daiichi Kōtō-chūgakkō to have bestowed upon it perhaps the first formal issuance of the Rescript on Education, the *Kyōiku Chokugō*. Since the mid-80s the anti-foreign feeling had been developing and this rescript was destined to be the cornerstone of national thought as interpreted through the educational system. It

was deemed a proper sign of respect for each member of the faculty to indicate his allegiance to these Confucian and Imperial principles by bowing before this "gift." While Uchimura meant no disrespect he could not bring himself to bow before this copy of the rescript when it came his turn. It is often misstated that he refused to bow before a portrait of the Emperor, a practice which only later became universal in Japan. In any case, this sudden hesitation of conscience was enough to start a wild controversy and the supposed harm had been done. It became a national affair and Uchimura, at a time when personal tragedy and bad health were plaguing him, became a national symbol. It is sometimes referred to as the modern birth of a Japanese conscience, and indeed it was a phenomenon in modern Japanese intellectual history of prime importance.

After hearing some of the excerpts of Uchimura's tortured soul I think you would be quick to recognize this as merely an indication of much else that was in the make-up of this very complicated and sophisticated Japanese of samurai origin. If I had time to read you more of Uchimura's experiences at Amherst I think you might be willing to consider more of the soil in New England which nurtured this kind of conscience.

I would like to cut back now to Neesima again and his period of almost ten years study in New England to which I have made passing allusions, for I think we may find here a similar indication of conscience—perhaps indeed an earlier *fukei jiken*.

The story of Neesima's wanting to go to the West to see for himself, finding his way to Hakodate, biding his time to stowaway aboard an American frigate in spite of the well-known example of Yoshida Shōin who had had to pay for this with his life, needs little retelling. It is less well-known that while considerable of Neesima's motivation was with the moral quality of Western civilization centering in Christianity he was propelled into the heart of what was still left of the New England tradition. Alpheus Hardy, the owner of more than a dozen clipperships plying the Middle and Far East trade, was a leading Boston merchant who took his making of money and his stewardship of it seriously. Hardy owned the *Wild Rover* which landed Neesima in Boston in 1865—indeed the first "news" from shore received was of Lincoln's assassination. Hardy's view of his stewardship meant that he was not only the presiding officer of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Congregational Mission Board arm and the oldest of the Protestant Mission Boards, he was also a trustee many times over of such stalwart orthodox Congregational institutions as Phillips Academy, Andover, Amherst College and Andover Seminary. Once Neesima's story became known to him it was an easy

step for him to "adopt" him and set Neesima's feet on the bottom rung of the orthodox ladder of higher education—New England higher education, of course.

Neesima proved a diligent student in the true Japanese manner, even though his health was not always robust, graduating from Amherst College with the class of 1870 with the first degree that I have been able to discover earned by a Japanese in the West. Continuing in his studies at Andover Seminary he became friendly with the young Chargé Mori Arinori accompanying him on a visit of a few days at Amherst and showing him the young and new Morrill Act land-grant college at the north end of town, Massachusetts Agricultural College, guided by that dashing young Amherst College professor, William S. Clark, who had commanded the Amherst student company in the Civil War and who had been elected to the General Court in Boston where he promptly agitated for a land-grant college for Massachusetts. Mori must have been thoroughly impressed with the military training (ROTC) obligations of the students while they specialized in the scientific solution of agricultural problems.

When the Iwakura Mission arrived in Washington in the spring of 1871 it was only natural that Mori should invite Neesima down to help guide and interpret for the ambassadors. And it is here that I would ask you to note two highly important reactions in Neesima's determinative experience with the Iwakura Mission. Neesima refused to be "ordered" to perform interpreting functions, but was glad to interpret on a contractual basis for compensation in order to maintain his freedom, and his loyalty to higher power. Furthermore, he was most reluctant to bow to the ambassadors, noting with pride and a smile the 60° and 70° bows he received from them. He wrote to the Hardys: "I stood at a corner keeping myself behind the rest, standing erect and not bowing, desiring to keep my right. I am glad to say I kept my right and my right was granted to me. I wish you would rejoice with me at this triumphant hour, for I am a free man in Christ. I could not help thanking you through whose aid and means I have attained this liberty."²⁰ While this defiance of the important act of bowing did not become a *cause celebre* such as Uchimura's 18 years later still it required the same kind of courage and could be termed an earlier *fukei jiken*.

Neesima proved an invaluable and indefatigable interpreter, both linguistic and cultural, with the contacts he could make through his Amherst and Hardy connections; so much so that he was implored to accompany the Mission to Europe. He compiled the 15 volumes of report on educational institutions which proved to be the basis for the American-oriented educational policy

of the Meiji Government through the 1870s. Tanaka Fujimaro was the commissioner directly responsible for this sector under Kido's guidance and both of them had ample chance to come to appreciate the integrity of Neesima's character and his considerable abilities, so much so that they encouraged him time and again to return with them and join the Meiji Government. The 30-year old Neesima could not be budged from his dream of founding an "Amherst in Japan," however, and he parted from the Mission in Europe, returning to complete his graduate studies at Andover.

You will begin to divine again the thread of my search, but I must include another chapter before I try to pull this together for you. As the Iwakura Mission returned to Japan and began to sort out the great harvest of reports, experiences and conclusions was it any more than natural that, faced with the vast problem of settling Hokkaido and solidifying the frontier to the north, the American land-grant college with its dual emphasis on military training and scientific agricultural techniques should have commended itself to them? Actually Kuroda Kiyotaka had been in Washington inspecting conditions just previous to the Iwakura Mission and had engaged General Capron the Agriculture Commissioner. His recommendations were beginning to come in, but it was not until the Sapporo Agricultural College was put on its feet that matters began to move. By pressing the line of my argument further you will see that the only logical candidate to give the required emphasis to the systematic specialized training called for in the taming of Hokkaido was hardly the head of some vast Middle Western or Far Western Agricultural and Mining institution but the dynamic president of a New England college of agriculture where the terrain and attitudes were more familiar and similar.

You all know that William S. Clark was this man, who left us with those words which Japanese school boys, seemingly in perpetuity, will not be allowed to forget. Actually Clark came on a one-year contract in 1876-77 and was in Hokkaido for only eight months. The quotation was, "Boys, be ambitious!" and well he might have added, "like this old man." And I would like to dwell here on the reason for this, for it says much about the condition of education in the Connecticut Valley and Amherst.

The Connecticut River traverses the whole length from north to south of western New England from Canada to Long Island Sound. It was settled in the seventeenth century from the south by Puritans from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Beginning with Yale in 1701 in the south and Dartmouth in the north it was to reflect that basic concern of the New Englander for education in its many academies and colleges dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, until the advent of superhighways in recent years the highway

most often taken north was known for decades as the "college highway." One way or another most of these institutions owed their inception to the moral and spiritual concern of the inhabitants along orthodox Calvinistic lines. Together with this, however, went a healthy appreciation for the natural environment, so that in institutions such as Yale and Amherst the mounting controversies of mid-nineteenth century Darwinism were not fatal to a decent dialogue between religion and science, or the spiritual versus the material.

In Amherst's example, its third and outstanding president just before the mid-way point in the century, Edward Hitchcock, was an accomplished scientist of wide-ranging abilities who had credentials also as a divine. His reputation was international. He discovered the outlines of a pre-ice age "lake" in the central Connecticut Valley which still carries his name for the geologists. Driving up the Valley even today the sharp observer can find impressive dinosaur footprints marked by the side of the highway and there is even a thriving business in selling them.

With this kind of open-air laboratory at hand it came naturally for students in natural philosophy and natural science to roam the hills for specimens and to learn and discover for themselves, within the confines of a classical but liberal curriculum. The winds of change and specialization, of course, blew on Amherst after the Civil War and in the 70s and 80s, yet it was the boast of one of the able professors who actually was a well-known botanist, that during this period he could teach every course in the catalogue. It was to this kind of an institution, thoroughly devoted to liberal education, that both Neesima and Uchimura came. Perhaps it is enough to say as a measure of the institution that neither of them felt any particular dichotomy between the spiritual and material emphases, held together by men such as Seelye. Indeed, the beginnings of the social sciences were well thought of, too, with men such as Burgess (later to turn Columbia College into a university) and Morse on the faculty. It was with pride at Amherst that Seelye himself was sent off to Washington for a term in the House of Representatives as an Independent just before he took over the presidency of the college, and there he distinguished himself with progressive representations for Indian and conservationist legislation.

W. S. Clark was a graduate of Amherst College in 1848 and soon went to Gottingen to be the first American to earn a Ph.D. there in the sciences and to return to Amherst and teach for a decade before the Civil War.

Now back to Sapporo where, in eight months, Clark taught the whole curriculum. It is better known to you perhaps that he insisted on a moral basis for what he taught, the necessity of starting the day with appropriate respect

paid to a unifying principle and entity which for this scientist meant turning to the Bible. His unwillingness to proceed from Yokohama without 30 Bibles and his show-down with Minister Kuroda have been documented better than his tireless tramping of the hills with his students opening their eyes to every facet of geology, botany, biology, chemistry and husbandry. The very energy of this youthful 50-year old professor of all subjects thoroughly impressed that first class at the Sapporo Agricultural College and for the first time gave the stumbling school a broad curriculum and a basis on which to proceed. And it was small wonder that they would remember his words as they finally parted from him several miles outside of Sapporo, "seeing him off" in the typical and courteous gesture of Japanese sending off someone they hold in respect. "Like this old man" is the more telling part of the phrase he is purported to have uttered. Or is it that a different emphasis was superimposed later, an ambition to suit the entrepreneurial needs of later times? The methods Clark showed them of learning from their environment whether in New England or in Hokkaido certainly rang true for that first class and those who followed.

If I may descend to the personal, being a very latterday extension of the Connecticut Valley, I hope you will allow me to try to draw this body of material together with a thought that still needs further documentation. We hear much of intercultural interchange today and without doubt it is a most valuable function which we now plan, administer, often try to control, and hopefully are delighted with the results of! But is not even the best of intellectual interchange often dependent on a peculiar cell-like function?

I have already mentioned Professor Herbert Adams, another Amherst man and contemporary of Neesima's, who came up with a new and daring "germ" theory of history tracing the genius of democracy from the New England town meeting and organization through the English "model" back to the German forest. This was a startling theory at the time.

I can hardly expect to come forth with anything like this, but I would like to suggest a "cell" theory of intercultural interchange. I think all of us engaged in one way or another with concourse between two cultures, across language barriers, are more dependent than we know on our initial contacts and the first group of friends to whom we are admitted or by whom we are accepted. It is that first cell group that gives us the *entrée* to the culture, and we are dependent on it for what further ingress we make and what further success we have in our objectives. We may proceed beyond its pall, but in some way our views and attitudes are always conditioned by it. This a necessary and desirable function, going on all about us all the time, often unrealized,

sometimes unappreciated. Now in this day of ultra-communications and over-liaison it is likely to be more organized and institutionalized. Still the function is an important one and highly desirable.

I have tried to trace backwards for you one such "cell" experience—Amherst in New England to which even I, in a latter-day way, am beholden. I did not have the time to go into other examples or experiences as the contribution of one of your early members, Dr. Kanda Naibu, whose great contribution to English studies in Japan is a chapter in itself. He learned his English over a decade as a schoolboy in the town of Amherst and then as a student at Amherst College. Yet, I think there is room for some kind of "cell" theory of intercultural interchange to which we all should pay our due.

Let me illustrate, by now going forward chronologically. Here we have a Neesima who signs his name in his mature years Joseph Hardy NEESIMA. After the usual study of Dutch and navigation as well as the Chinese classics he ejects himself from the crumbling Tokugawa scene aboard clipperships to Boston where by coincidence a Hardy injects him into a mainstream of American experience through institutions such as Phillips Andover, Amherst and Andover Seminary to the place where he, by chance again, is called upon to be a major interpreter and reporter for an Iwakura Mission, calling attention to liberal education at its best, as well as to an unusual phenomenon such as an Agricultural college with specialized and defense overtones, so that, in turn, this is allowed to make its own contribution in Hokkaido through a Clark whose contribution is appreciated in depth by an Uchimura and a Nitobe; to the place where again the original cell-like complex of an Amherst, and what it stands for, has a chance to re-impregnate an Uchimura so that he eventually spends a lifetime influencing younger and able minds of courage and independence and conscience who keep alive a most valuable element in the make-up of any culture or nation.

Some of you may be uncomfortable with an over-emphasis on coincidence. Actually, what I had hoped to do was to trace this back along an exciting path of real roots in Tokugawa thought which made a Neesima possible. Perhaps the thought I would most like to leave you with is that we are all products of ideas from our past, more than we know, with marvelous coincidences possible along the line from our daily contacts—all of which can have unforeseen possibilities for the future. I fear that this is much too romantic and unscientific a conclusion to draw for as distinguished and serious a society as *The Asiatic Society of Japan* and I thank you for your indulgence and the chance to be allowed to make this sentimental journey with you in such a random way through 100 years of fascinating history and, for me, up along the Tokaido.

as a very junior *magi-deshi*. Thank you.

- ① See "Uchimura, Neesima and Amherst—Recently Discovered Correspondence" by Otis Cary in JAPAN QUARTERLY, October-December 1965, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 439-459.
- ② *A Maker of New Japan: Rev. Joseph Hardy Neesima* by J. D. Davis, New York, 1894, pp. 33-4.
- ③ *Life and Letters of Joseph Hardy Neesima*, by A. S. Hardy, Cambridge, 1892, pp. 121-2.