

Outside of Tokyo

Nagoya: People and Koalas Broaden Local Horizons

In the heart of Tokyo is a famous bridge called Nihombashi (Japan Bridge). All roads leading "outside Tokyo" are traditionally considered to begin at this central point and radiate from it throughout the islands. In Japanese parlance, all roads going from Tokyo are said to be going "down," while those leading to Tokyo, from whatever direction, are considered the "up" roads. In this case, of course, "up" and "down" do not refer to geography. Rather, they are imbued with political significance. For the past 800 years, the most heavily-traveled road in Japan has been the scenic route between the newer "East Capital" (Tokyo) and the old capital of Kyoto.

Generally running along the more or less level land between (but sometimes over or through) the mountains and the Pacific coast, this trail is known as the "East Sea Road" (Tokaido). In the old days, there were 53 stages along this road between the two capitals where there were inns to cater to the needs of travelers. The 42nd stage was known as Miya and from this seaside stopping place, travelers either boarded or disembarked from a boat plying the northern fringe of the Ise Bay. Miya, located in the central area of Japan's main island, was the largest of the stations along the Tokaido and subsequently became a part of the present city of Nagoya, sometimes called the "Central Capital." The trip from Tokyo to Miya by palanquin took about 10 days, but on horseback could be made in some 40 hours. When I moved to the Nagoya area with my family over 30 years ago, we thought our five and a half hour ride on the "Swallow" (*Tsubame*) limited express was a fast one, but these days, one may travel at the speed of "Light" (*Hikari*), the super-express on the New Tokaido Line which takes just two hours to cover those 366 kilometers.

Miya is the common Japanese word for a Shinto shrine, but used by itself as a proper noun, it refers to the major shrine of this Owari District, Atsuta Jingu, in which the mythological "Grass-mowing Sword," one of the three sacred treasures of Japan, is reputedly enshrined. The origin of this venerable shrine is shrouded in the hazy mists of the nation's early history, but the central object of worship

is the sun goddess herself. Since 1907, the former town of Atsuta has been incorporated into Nagoya and today the shrine grounds provide a quiet, wooded oasis surrounded by the busy streets of a modern metropolis. Passing under the huge, wooden *torii* arch and shuffling along the gravel path to the main sanctuary, one finds oneself in a world apart from the rumble of the speeding vehicles and the cacophony of contemporary life just outside its precincts. Blending in with the peaceful beauty of nature is the simple architecture of the shrine buildings characteristic of old Japan. Traditional ceremonies performed here by classically robed priests and ritualistic dances by teams of pretty maidens reinforce the image of the long ago.

Outsiders are welcome

However, some of the traditional sacred music is now played on up-to-date audio equipment. English signs are seen in the shrine grounds and information booklets also are available in that language, indicating that Nagoya's traditional image as an oversized country town with an antipathy toward outsiders may be changing. During the first three days of 1985, over 2.5 million people jostled their way to the worship area, threw a coin into the coffer, clapped their hands and bowed before the inner shrine as part of their New Year festivities. Considering that the total population of Nagoya is just over 2.1 million, it is clear that the popularity of this *miya* reaches far and wide.

A couple of kilometers to the south of this shrine is found the Port of Nagoya, which was officially opened the same year that Atsuta became part of the city. This port has now become the third largest in Japan and the sixth largest international port in the world. Through that port are exported automobiles and other machinery produced on modern assembly lines along with chinaware produced in more traditional ways, for both Toyota, Japan's automobile city, and Seto, the traditional center of the chinaware (*setomono*) industry, are located on the outskirts of Nagoya.

Last year, a new 53 meter high symbol of the port area was added to Nagoya's skyline as seen from the sea. In the shape of an old-fashioned tall ship, with an observatory on top, this Port Building contains a modern maritime museum. In the five months from its opening in July to the end of the year, it was entered by some 500,000 fee-paying visitors. At present, a World Import Fair is being held in the International Exhibition Hall at the port. More than 40 countries are exhibiting products there ranging from helicopters to accessories. Craftsmen from various countries are exhibiting their

skills, and products are not only on display but may be purchased as well. The fair organizers have revised their estimates of expected visitors from one to almost two million.

While the Port Building will catch the eye of the seafarer, those entering Nagoya by land will be attracted by the more traditional sight of Nagoya Castle, originally built by Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1612 and topped by two golden dolphins with their tails held proudly aloft. Reduced to ashes during the war, a new castle, rebuilt in the original style, was completed in 1959. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of that event, a Nagoya Castle Exhibition was held for two months last year. The bulging-eyed, grinning(?) dolphins were lifted from their lofty perch by helicopter and deposited on the ground, where they were cleaned before being put on display in a pavilion erected for the purpose in the castle grounds. During their grounding, some two million people crossed the castle moat and entered through the huge, heavy, metal-plated wooden gate to view them.

Ancient and modern

The path to the Golden Dolphin Pavilion was lined with small shops, temporarily erected to resemble those of ages past, from which hawkers, dressed in traditional garb, sought to interest passers-by in their wares—both traditional and modern. On one side of the large pavilion was an open stage, from which blared the music of a modern band, while on another side, the rhythmic, booming sounds of old Japanese drums, played in classical fashion at a drum concert, could be heard. A second pavilion housed numerous robots performing various useful or merely interesting tasks to show the progress of industrial technology of this area, while in another section of the same pavilion, old, wooden, jointed puppets, operated by strings, which have entertained festival-goers over the centuries, were on display. A third pavilion housed life-size dolls representing historical personages or characters from traditional folk tales. Their colorful garb consisted of live chrysanthemums of various sizes, shapes and hues, which had been meticulously arranged and regularly cared for by skilled artisans. This combination of traditional and modern, old and new, may be considered a characteristic of Nagoya and of present-day Japan. The citizens of this citified country town with their conservative bent and increasingly modern tastes are reminiscent of the Roman god Janus, who had two faces, one looking forward and the other backward. So Nagoyans seem to have their faces turned in two opposite directions at

the same time—toward both the future and the past.

A qualitative leap toward internationalization was to have resulted from the expected choice of Nagoya as the home of the 1988 Summer Olympics. The rosy view from City Hall indicated that Nagoya's selection was almost a certainty. The city's mayor along with the governor of Aichi Prefecture traveled to Germany to hear personally the happy news of the International Olympic Committee's decision. Their shocked expressions of disbelief seen on television screens throughout the country contrasted with the ecstatic joy of the Korean delegation just behind them, when the announcement was made that Seoul had been chosen.

Undeniably, one of the factors contributing to this major disappointment of the administration was the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the people. Political and commercial interests were the main backers of Nagoya's candidacy, but the attitude of the general public was ambivalent. While outsiders may see the Japanese decision-making process as autocratic, with the judgments determined by the upper echelon meekly followed by those below, actually few effective decisions are made without a general consensus having been reached beforehand. In this case, the city's leaders may have gotten too far ahead of their followers, but the direction toward further internationalization has been set and, as a result of various initiatives toward that objective now in progress, the hoped-for consensus is continuing to develop.

Last October, Nagoya's highest building, the 26-story Nagoya International Center, was opened. It is aimed at attracting international conferences, increasing the international consciousness of the citizens, providing services for the 30,000 foreigners from some 50 countries residing in the area and furnishing a common meeting place for Japanese and foreigners. The first five floors of this building house an information service center, an overseas materials room, a video library, conference rooms, lounges, a "Circle Corner" and an "Exchange Salon." Special attention is paid to Nagoya's sister cities of Los Angeles, Mexico City and Sydney along with its friendship city of Nanjing. The octagonal multi-purpose hall in the annex is suitable for a variety of international gatherings. This new facility is now being used to foster an international spirit in the community.

Enter the koalas

Another boost for internationalism came last year in a more unusual way. The most popular, most eagerly anti-

cipated and most lavishly-accommodated guests of the city from abroad in 1984 were not royalty, renowned statesmen nor famous entertainers. Rather, they were a couple of koalas from Australia. Now renamed *korokoro* and *mokumoku*, they are considered permanent residents. Being finicky eaters, an ample and assured supply of their sole food, a certain kind of eucalyptus, had to be cultivated. A luxurious home for them in the Higashiyama Zoo, equipped with television cameras to record their every move and computer-controlled lighting and temperature, was erected at a cost of \$1.25 million. They were welcomed to the city with fanfare and on the first day of public viewing, 13,000 people paraded through the koala house. Their popularity continued into the New Year so that the number of visitors for the first five days surpassed that of the entire month of January last year.

Times have certainly changed since the first visit of our fair-haired family to that zoo over two decades ago when we attracted more attention than the creatures in the cages. Now, with the increased foreign population, we are subjected to much less staring. Nagoya's subway stations all have Romanized names on their platform signs and more and more Romanized names of streets are seen along with their Japanese counterparts on street corners. Some years ago, complaints were aired when all signs designating the new Central Park in downtown Nagoya were written only in English!

Three years ago, names were solicited for a new suspension bridge linking Central Park, with its television tower, with River Park, where commemorative objects from Nagoya's sister and friendship cities are found. Spanning the wide "Cherry Street" thoroughfare, this 83 meter long bridge, suspended from a 22 meter tall A-frame tower, may be considered a symbol of Nagoya's hope to be a bridge between people and cultures. The novel choice of the city authorities may also reflect the current situation. Neither an English nor a Romanized Japanese name was chosen. Rather, for the first time, a public bridge in Nagoya was given an official name in the *katakana* script used for transliterating foreign names instead of Japanese characters. However, the name given to this unusual central bridge was nothing other than *sentoraru-burijji*.

Nagoya has been making progress in providing facilities and opportunities for international contacts and encouraging an international outlook, but lasting progress in any effort to change the psychological atmosphere of a tradition-oriented people to a broader perspective, more flexible thinking and a more relaxed attitude in dealing with outsiders requires

an educational influence upon the younger generation. To that end, three foreign teachers, one each from the Philippines, Canada and the United States, have been employed by the Nagoya Board of Education to circulate among the public junior high schools, teaching classes and providing personal contact for both teachers and students with native speakers of English. The Nagoya International School, with U.S. regional accreditation, provides an English language education through high school. Both public and private universities in Nagoya employ foreign teachers and the number of English-teaching establishments are numerous.

As a Japanese proverb reminds us, however, a bonze cannot be made by merely dressing in the appropriate garments. So it is that genuine internationalization is not simply a matter of buildings and signboards, nor of language. A change in thinking is required. When Japan's doors to the West were forced open, the Japanese took as their motto: *Wakon-yosai* (Japanese spirit-Western learning). This has proven an effective policy, having brought Japan both benefits and troubles, but a truly international spirit requires honest reflection on one's own national character and the possible need for it also to change to become more harmonious with society as a whole.

In the struggle to harmonize a narrowly focused past with a broadening present looking toward a still more open future, Nagoya may be a reflection of Japan as a whole. The safest prediction regarding the progress of future developments toward internationalization would follow the common, typically ambiguous forecast of Japanese weathermen: Fair, partly cloudy, with scattered showers in some areas.

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Bookshelf

Business Japanese

Edited by the International Division
of Nissan Motor Co., Ltd.
Published by Bonjin Co., Ltd.
1984, Tokyo
293 pages; ¥2,900

Why should an automobile manufacturer come up with a Japanese language textbook?

As Nissan Motor's Taiji Hosokawa ex-