

## A Link in U. S.-Japan Eugenics Connections

— Roswell Hill Johnson —

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### Introduction

The late nineteenth century saw a change in the way people thought about human life and society. Influenced by British theologian and economist, Thomas Malthus, and his ideas on population growth and natural selection, Charles Darwin proposed his theory of evolution in 1859, with its “fight for survival.” These ideas, in turn, spawned others, like Herbert Spencer’s “survival of the fittest.” Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton, also coined a new word—“eugenics,” which he defined as “the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage.”<sup>1)</sup> As a new century began, such ideas were behind attempts to improve society.

Many of these ideas also found their way to Japan. They were introduced by translations of books, by Japanese returning from overseas study and international meetings, and by foreigners coming to Japan. For example, Darwin’s *The Foundations of the Origin of Species* was translated as 『種の起原の基礎』 in 1915. The translation of Sir Ernest Barker’s *Political Thought in England from Herbert Spencer to the Present Day* (『輓近英国政治思想論』) was done in 1924. Professors at Imperial Universities such as Nagai Hisomu (永井潜) and Yamanouchi Shigeo

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1) Francis Galton, “Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 10:1 (July, 1904) <<http://galton.org/>> (accessed 2009/11/28).

(山内茂雄) were among those who studied in the United States. Others, including Oka Asajirō (丘浅次郎) and Ikeda Shigenori (池田林儀), studied in Germany.<sup>2)</sup> Among the foreigners who came to Japan are American eugenicists, David Starr Jordan in 1911 and Margaret Sanger in 1922.

Eugenics and its influence on society is a research topic of growing interest. One of the earliest works on eugenics in the United States was Mark Haller's *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought*. That work was followed by Kenneth Ludmerer's *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal* and Donald Pickens' *Eugenics and Progressives*.<sup>3)</sup> More recent works focus on various aspects of eugenics policies and regions.<sup>4)</sup>

Another area of eugenics research is the comparative treatment of eugenics in different countries. Daniel Kevles in his 1985 book *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* gives a historical account of the eugenics movements in Britain and the United States and their influence on society. In his 1994 *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* Stefan Kühl brings to light the role American eugenics played in the development and execution of eugenics in Nazi Germany.<sup>5)</sup>

The development of eugenics in Japan is presented by Suzuki Zenji in his book

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2) I have used the Japanese order for names—surname first followed by the given name.

3) Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963); Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1972); Donald K. Pickens, *Eugenics and Progressives* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998).

4) For information on sterilization see Philip R. Reilly, *The Surgical Solution: A History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991) and Harry Brunius, *Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006). Regional studies include Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996) and Nancy Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters: The Eugenic Project in the Green Mountain State* (Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England, 1999).

on the thought and history of the eugenic movement. The ties of Japanese eugenics with fascism are found in Fujino Yutaka's book on Japanese fascism and eugenic thought published in 1998. The timelines of Professor Hirata Katsumasa and Professor Katō Shūichi provide helpful overviews of Japanese eugenics and bibliographic sources. Sumiko Otsubo Sitcawich has examined Japanese eugenics and the role of Yamanouchi Shigeo in her 1998 Ph.D. dissertation.<sup>6)</sup>

There is still much to be researched in the relationships between eugenics in Japan and its connections to other countries. The purpose of this paper is to examine some connections of American and Japanese eugenics through the person of Roswell Hill Johnson. His letters to Charles Davenport and Ezra Gosney, his dissertation on eugenics, and articles from Japanese and American journals provide information about his contact with and influence on eugenics in Japan.

## I . Roswell Hill Johnson

Roswell Hill Johnson (1877-1967) began his undergraduate study at Brown

5) Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985). Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

6) 鈴木善次 (Suzuki, Zenji) 『日本の優生学 — その思想と運動の歴史 — 』 (*Nihon no yūseigaku: Sono shisō to undō no rekishi*) Tokyo: Sankyō Shuppan, 1983; “Geneticists and Eugenics Movement in Japan and America: A Comparative Study.” Proceedings of the XIVth International Congress of the History of Science 3 (Tokyo, 1974): 68-70; “Geneticists and the Eugenics Movement in Japan,” *Japanese Studies in the History of Science* 14(1975): 157-164. 藤野豊 (Fujino, Yutaka) 『日本ファシズムと優生思想』 (Kyoto: Kamogawa Shuppan, 1998). 加藤秀一 (Katō Shūichi) “Gender and Eugenics” <<http://www.meijigakuin.ac.jp/~katos/Eugenics.htm>> <<http://www.meijigakuin.ac.jp/~katos/Eugenics2.htm>> <<http://www.meijigakuin.ac.jp/~katos/Eugenics3.htm>> Sitcawich, Sumiko Otsubo, “Eugenics in Imperial Japan: Some Ironies of Modernity, 1883-1945,” Ph. D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1998; “Between Two Worlds: Yamanouchi Shigeo and Eugenics in Early Twentieth Century Japan” *Annals of Science* 62:2 (April 2005): 205-231.

University and continued it under biologist and eugenicist Charles B. Davenport at Harvard and then at the University of Chicago, graduating in 1900. He received his Master's degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1903. After working as a high school biology teacher, he acquired a position, under Davenport again, as a researcher at the New York Cold Spring Harbor Station for Experimental Evolution (1905-1908). During this stint Johnson also did study in geology, following his father's career in the oil business.<sup>7)</sup>

In 1906 he became a member of the American Breeders Association's eugenics committee and attended the First International Eugenics Congress in London (1912). After working as a consulting geologist in Oklahoma, he went to the University of Pittsburgh, School of Mines in 1912 where he taught geology from 1916 to 1933. In addition to his geology lectures, he organized one of America's first eugenics and social hygiene courses, in which he dealt with the "range of characteristics of such a nature as to require restricted reproduction, various methods of control, possible improvement of the action of sexual solution; the production of an increased birth rate from the superior." The course description also indicates that Johnson's students considered "the eugenic aspect of various reform movements, such as prohibition, women's rights, socialism, immigration, rehabilitation, vocational guidance, mother's pensions, etc."<sup>8)</sup>

Johnson played a significant role in various eugenics related organizations. For

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7) For more information on Johnson see Ruth C. Engs, *The Eugenics Movement: An Encyclopedia* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 185-187; J. McKeen Cattell and Dean R. Brimhall, ed., *American Men of Science: a biographical directory*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Garrison, N. Y.: The Science Press, 1933), 585; *Who Was Who Among North American Authors, 1921-1930*, Vol.1 (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1976), 785; Edward Slavishak, "From Nation to Family: Two Careers in the Recasting of Eugenics," *Journal of Family History: Studies in Family, Kinship and Demography*, 34:1 (January 2009), 89-115.

8) "Courses in Eugenics, University of Pittsburgh 1918;" <[http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/view\\_image.pl?id=494](http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/view_image.pl?id=494)> (Accessed 2009/11/29) American Philosophical Society, Dav, B: D27, Ser 2, CSH-ERO

the American Breeders Association eugenics section, he was a regular contributor to the *Journal of Heredity*, authoring a regular column on legislation. He was a founding member of the American Eugenics Society (AES), where he served as its second president from 1926 to 1927, secretary and treasurer, director for several years, and member of the editorial board of the society's periodical *Eugenics*. He was a member of the committee on eugenic legislation, the committee on selective immigration chaired by Madison Grant (1924-1928). Johnson also served under Davenport as chairman on the joint editorial committee for the *Eugenical News*, a publication of the Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, New York and was active in the Eugenics Research Association. He was also among the participants in the Race Betterment Foundation conference in 1914, the First American Birth Control Conference in 1921 and later conferences, and presented a paper on "Mate Selection" at the Second International Congress of Eugenics held in New York in 1921. He was also in attendance at the Third International Congress of Eugenics in 1932.

### ***A. Applied Eugenics***

Johnson's contribution to eugenics extended beyond the circles of eugenics societies and conferences. He exerted a much broader influence. With Paul B. Popenoe, editor for the American Breeders Association's *Journal of Heredity*, Johnson coauthored a book entitled *Applied Eugenics*. Published in 1918, it was widely used as a text for American college eugenics classes as well as an introduction to eugenics for a popular audience. Although Johnson is a co-author, some sections are clearly authored by him. Popenoe notes in the foreword that the "Natural Selection" chapter is based on Johnson's "Human Evolution and its Control" which had been published in the *Popular Science Monthly* in 1910. The content of chapters 11 through 13 ("The Improvement of Sexual Selection," "Increasing the Marriage Rate of the Superior" and "Increase of the Birth-Rate of the Superior") is similar to articles written by Johnson.

Johnson's influence through *Applied Eugenics* was not limited to the United States. Translations were done in German, Russian, and Japanese. Through this book Johnson and his eugenic ideas were introduced in Japan several years before he came to Japan himself. It was selected for the Greater Japan Civilization Society's collection of foreign books, for which Terunuma Tetsunosuke did the 346-page translation into Japanese in 1922.<sup>9)</sup>

The Greater Japan Civilization Society<sup>10)</sup> was began under the leadership of Waseda University's president, Ōkuma Shigenobu (大隈重信) in 1908 after Japan's victory in Russo-Japanese War. The purpose of the society was to search for new knowledge, to provide educational nourishment for a new era, and to gauge the harmonious blending of Eastern and Western civilization. With the publication of some 200 books, the society was responsible for the introduction of many European and American scholars to Japan. Books were divided among members of the editorial committee who then made the selections. Ten thousand copies of each book were published and distributed to subscription members of the society. The content of the books were introduced by lectures, held not only in Tokyo, but also in various venues throughout Japan. The lectures were also published in the society's publications. Johnson's mentor and Eugenic Record Office director Charles B. Davenport's *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* had been selected for translation in 1913.

As eugenic policies were being contemplated in Japan, Johnson made some additions to the text of his book based on observations from his travel in Russia, China, and Japan. These were added in a new 620-page Japanese translation done by

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9) ポール・ポペノー，ロスウェル・ジョンソン共著，照沼哲之助訳『應用優生學』大日本文明協会，1922, Roswell Hill Johnson (RHJ) and Paul B. Popenoe, *Applied Eugenics* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1918).

10) Yokoyama Toshiaki (横山利明)『日本進化思想史(二)人間を探し求めた人々の記録』(東京:新水社, 2003), 10; Satō Yoshimaru (佐藤能丸)『志立の明治人(上巻)福沢諭吉・大隈重信』(東京:芙蓉書房, 2005).

Hara Sumitsugu in 1929. This edition also included 14 pages of illustrations. The January 1930 issue of *Eugenics* announced its publication and the receipt of several copies which were placed in the Library of Congress, the New York Library, the Pittsburgh Public Library, the Los Angeles Public Library, and the Library of the Eugenics Society of Great Britain. The new American edition was not published until 1933.<sup>11)</sup>

### **B. Roswell Johnson in Japan**

Before coming to Japan for a lecture tour in 1931, Johnson had been in Japan two times earlier. In 1928 he made a trip around the world, which included a stop in Japan. He described the trip in a letter to Charles B. Davenport as being “very successful.” A reference to this stop was also made in an interview for the Tokyo Asahi newspaper. Johnson stated that it was then his interest in Japan’s social problems began. Based on his study, he expressed confidence that eugenics offered a solution to these problems.

The second stopover was in 1929 and was made in conjunction with the American Eugenics Society. The March 1929 issue of *Eugenics* made mention of Johnson’s report to the society that “an imperial Commission had been organized in Japan for a study of eugenical principles and legislation with a view to setting up a eugenics program in that country.” Johnson, who was then serving as secretary of the society, was authorized to offer the society’s help and cooperation to the newly established commission. The Japanese *Ethnic National Hygiene* journal (『民族衛生』) described Johnson’s stay in Japan as stopover on a lecture trip to Russia for the purpose of promoting eugenics and an indication of his desire for a future trip to Japan. Leon Whitney, then president of the society, noted that “Johnson returned

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11) ポール・ポペノー, ロスウェル・ヒル・ジョンソン共著, 原澄次訳『応用優生学』万里閣書房, 1929; *Eugenics* 3:1 (January 1930), 29-30. RHJ and Paul B. Popenoe, *Applied Eugenics (AE)* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1933).

with the impression that the Japanese are as keenly alive to the subject as are the people of almost any other country... Sterilization and race betterment are indeed becoming ideas among all enlightened nations to-day.”<sup>12)</sup>

These two stopovers prepared the way for Roswell Johnson’s lecture trip to Japan in the summer of 1931 under the auspices of the AES and with funding provided by Pittsburgh philanthropist, Mrs. Francis J. Torrance. Details of this trip are given in a report published in November 1931 issue of *Eugenical News*. Johnson also wrote a more extensive report sent to Ezra S. Gosney of the Human Betterment Foundation via Paul Popenoe in October of 1934.<sup>13)</sup> It was entitled “Report of Eugenic Lecture-Conference trip of Roswell H. Johnson to Japan in 1931 with suggestions to any future lecturer.”

Johnson arrived at Yokohama in July 1931. During his stay, he delivered 29 lectures in 23 cities to some 1,190 persons. The organizers of Johnson’s lecture tour were Dr. Nobechi Keizo (野辺地慶三), the Assistant Chief of the Section of Health Conservation of the Public Health Division of the Home Office (内務省衛生局), and Kaneko Tadakazu (金子直一), a natural science teacher at the Tokyo First Higher School for Girls with connections to the Japan Eugenics Society. For the most part the lectures were arranged by the Imperial Division of Health Conservation

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12) Letter, September 25, 1928, Johnson, Roswell Hill, Folder 5, 1928-1936, Charles Davenport Papers, American Philosophical Society; “News and Notes,” *Eugenics* 2:3 (March 1929); 「優生学の応用で 人種改良を説く学者日本を講演旅行」東京朝日新聞 (日曜日)昭和6年7月19日, G3; Leon Whitney, *The Case for Sterilization* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1934), 139 <[http://openlibrary.org/b/OL7242963M/case\\_for\\_sterilization](http://openlibrary.org/b/OL7242963M/case_for_sterilization)> (accessed 2009/9/26); 「ジョンソン博士の来朝」『民族衛生』第一卷3号, 1931年8月, 152.

13) “A Eugenicist in Japan” *Eugenical News*, 16:11 (November 1931), 195. Although a byline is not given, the article comes directly from Johnson’s handwritten (which helps to understand the spelling errors) report which can be found in Johnson, Roswell Hill, Folder 5 1928-1936, Charles Davenport Papers, American Philosophical Society; Report to Gosney, Box 24, File 5, E. S. Gosney Papers And Records Of The Human Betterment Foundation, Archives, California Institute of Technology.



through the active interest of Dr. Nobechi. He was responsible for lectures in Sapporo, Asahikawa, Niigata, and Nagano, as well as all of the venues on the “south loop,” which included Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe, Hiroshima, Fukuoka, Kumamoto, and Nagasaki. Kaneko made arrangements for a lecture at the Kanda Y. M. C. A. in Tokyo and a lecture in Hirosaki. There was an additional impromptu lecture at a missionary home in Morioka. Johnson noted that lectures arranged by Dr. Nobechi were successful and well-attended. However, in Kyoto the reception was “not very helpful and courteous... more ‘American’ rather than with Japanese courtesy spirit.” Some of the venues not arranged by Nobechi were evidently not well organized and not well attended.

### C. Topics of Lectures

Available information indicates that Johnson’s lectures dealt with birth control and sterilization. Johnson told Gosney about the procedure he followed for his lectures. He provided copies of his lectures and translations of his lectures for Dr. Nobechi. These were then sent on in advance to the interpreters in each city for their preparation, but it can be presumed that the Home Office also wanted to check the content in advance.

#### 1) Birth Control

On the evening of July 20, Johnson gave a lecture at the Kanda Y. M. C. A. with some 100 people in attendance. The Tokyo *Asahi Sunday Newspaper* lists the title of the lecture as “The Problems of Birth Control from a Eugenics Perspective.” The report of the lecture in the Y. M. C. A. periodical indicates that the lecture was followed by a lively session of questions and answers and hints that Johnson was not welcomed in all circles and that the government kept an eye on his activities and the people who attended his lectures.<sup>14)</sup> Johnson himself indicated that Dr. Nobechi was

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14) 『東京青年』昭和6年8月号19頁

“timid” on the subject of birth control.

Birth control was a hot button topic in Japan. Margaret Sanger’s experience in Japan in 1922 illustrates some of the controversy associated with the topic both in the United States and in Japan. She had difficulty obtaining a visa from the Japanese consulate in San Francisco. After presenting her case to returning Japanese politicians who were her shipmates, she received permission to disembark, but her lecture activities were severely curtailed. One newspaper reporter remarked on her ability to lecture on birth control without once using the problematic word.<sup>15)</sup>

Johnson also found Sanger’s emphases and methods at times too controversial and not entirely eugenic. Although Johnson participated in meetings of the American Birth Control League under Sanger’s leadership, he often took care to distance himself from her. The text of Johnson’s address to the First American Birth Control Conference of 1921 was published in *The Birth Control Review*. Some excerpts from that speech provide insight into Johnson’s position on birth control.

Our most pressing problem is to increase the birth rate from the superior and to decrease from the inferior. . . . The reasons which impel the women to clamor for information on birth control are poor health, insufficient time for proper recovery since birth of last child, and above all, the financial inability to support the additional children. . . . Birth control is not birth repression, but truly birth control—that is more births from superior and less from inferior.<sup>16)</sup>

In a letter dated December 2, 1921 to Charles Davenport, Johnson gives his rationale for attending the 1921 meeting in New York. “One of the reasons why I have been

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15) Quoted in 天竺啓祐著『優生操作の悪夢——医療による生と死の支配——』社会評論社, 1996, 103. See also Takeda Hiroko, *The Political Economy of Reproduction in Japan: Between Nation-State and Everyday Life* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 50-62.

16) RHJ, “Eugenic Aspect of Birth Control,” *The Proceedings of the First American Birth Control Conference* (New York: The Birth Control Review, 1921) <[http://www.archive.org/stream/birth\\_controlwha00unkngoog/birthcontrolwha00unkngoog\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/birth_controlwha00unkngoog/birthcontrolwha00unkngoog_djvu.txt)> (accessed 2009/9/24).

active in the birth control movement has been to fight individualistic tendencies and to try to keep this movement as eugenic as possible.” Enclosed in the letter was a copy of the resolution he succeeded in passing:

Resolved: While desiring a decrease of the world birth rate in general, the Conference is well aware that this should take place on the part of individuals whose progeny would least contribute to a better race and that indeed on the part of many persons of unusual racial value that their birth rate is now too low. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we advocate a larger racial contribution from those who are of unusual racial value.<sup>17)</sup>

The resolution reflects the desire of eugenicists to ensure that undesirable elements of society would be reduced and desirable elements would be increased.

An article in the March 1930 issue of *Eugenics* indicated a similar idea of birth control in Japan. The London *Birth Control News* quoted a report in the *Japan Times* in May 1929 which said that the Japanese Medical Association (日本医師会) had submitted a “recommendation for the enactment of laws encouraging birth control . . . for the object of weeding out the mentally and physically undesirable men and women from our population.” The article presented a letter of clarification written December 17, 1929 by the Director of St. Luke’s Hospital in Tokyo, Dr. R. B. Teusler. He acknowledged that there had been an attempt on the part of Mr. Shirakami, an assistant mayor of Tokyo City, to pass such legislation. Although Professor Abe Isoo supported him, this move was opposed by the medical association, social workers, public health workers, as well as the Japanese government. Further attempts to garner support among doctors involved in welfare work resulted in warnings from the police and the Department of Interior to cease and desist.<sup>18)</sup>

Included in the file containing Johnson’s report to Gosney is a sheet of Japanese

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17) Johnson, Roswell Hill, Folder 4 1921-1927, Charles Davenport Papers, American Philosophical Society.

ruled paper, listing the names of persons connected with the Japan Birth Control League (日本産児調節連盟). Listed as honorary chairman is retired Waseda University professor and Parliament member, Abe Isoo (安部磯雄). Even though Dr. Abe was ill with amoebic dysentery and confined to his home, he received Johnson two different times. Johnson designated him as one of the people anyone connected with eugenics should surely meet and notes that an interpreter is not necessary. Nor is one needed to talk with the chairperson of the Japan Birth Control League, Baroness Ishimoto Shizue (石本シヅエ).<sup>19)</sup>

The board of directors included social activists in the labor and women's movement like Akamatsu Akiko (赤松明子), Hiratsuka Raicho (平塚らいちょう), and Kaneko Shigeri (金子しげり) who retook her maiden name after divorce – Yamataka 山高), Christian social worker Namae Takayuki (生江孝之), writer and translator of children's literature and social commentator Muraoka Hanako (村岡花子), history professor at Japan Women's College and women's movement activist Kawasaki Natsu (河崎なつ), Osaka medical doctor Matsu Shizuko (町静子), and Tokyo medical doctor Majima Yutaka (間島備) as chairman of the board. Of Majima Johnson remarked that he had done some sterilization surgery in private practice and had a large birth control practice. After talking with him without having to use a translator, Johnson called him the “best informed man on the birth control situation.”<sup>20)</sup>

## 2) Sterilization

A second topic of Johnson's lectures was sterilization. According to the miscellaneous news column in the *Psychiatry Journal* (『神經學雜誌』) of August 1931, Johnson lectured about the legal aspects of sterilization to 30 members of the

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18) Louise Steven Bryant, “Birth Control in Japan,” *Eugenics: A Journal for Race Betterment*, 3:3, 116.

19) Baroness Ishimoto Shizue is later known as Katō Shizue (加藤シズエ) after her divorce from Baron Ishimoto Eikichi and marriage with Katō Kanjū (加藤勘十), labor union activist.

20) RHJ, Report to Gosney.

Japanese Society of Mental Hygiene (日本精神衛生協會). Kaneko and Tokyo Imperial University professors Miyake (三宅鑛一) and Kure (呉秀三) were among those who participated in the exchange of opinions which followed the lecture.<sup>21)</sup> Sterilization was presented as one way of limiting the reproduction of those considered “unfit.”

Johnson was not the first eugenicist visiting Japan to address the perceived need for eugenical sterilization. Margaret Sanger had also mentioned sterilization during her 1922 trip to Japan. She declared that the only answer to increasing the birth rate of the intelligentsia was to demand the removal of the burden of mental patients and the feeble-minded, and that sterilization was the means to achieve it.<sup>22)</sup>

Johnson’s stance on sterilization can be gathered from his articles. In a column in *Eugenics* Johnson outlined four methods for decreasing the offspring of “defective” elements of society. These included segregation, contraception, restriction of marriage licensing, and eugenic sterilization. He maintained that the latter is not to be “considered a substitute” for any of the other methods. He finds the method of sterilization best suited for cases where the person can basically take care of his or her own needs and institutionalization is not necessary or where the number of available beds for patients is limited and sterilization might make the release of some patients possible without posing the danger of their reproduction.<sup>23)</sup>

## II. Eugenics in Japan

### A. Eugenics Organizations in Japan

Johnson’s trip to Japan was in connection with two eugenics organizations—the Japanese Society of Racial Hygiene and the Eugenical Society of Japan. His contacts

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21) 「ジョンソン博士歓迎會」『神經學雜誌』33:6 (昭和6年8月), 440.

22) <<http://mamo.huu.cc/bd00530.htm>> (accessed 2009/11/11).

23) RHJ, “Sterilization: Its Legality, Need,” *Eugenics* 3:5, 180.

were largely with the former. His comments about the two organizations explain why and give an evaluation of their activities.

### 1) Japanese Society of Ethnic National Hygiene (日本民族衛生学会<sup>24)</sup>)

Johnson described this organization as “the dignified high brow one made up mainly of academic people,” saying that it corresponded more closely to the Eugenics Research Association (ERA) in America. He stressed that “...in Japan where ‘front’ is so important—this society is the first to contact.”<sup>25)</sup> Like the ERA, its main activities were the publication of a journal of research articles and the presentation of members’ scientific papers. Founded in Tokyo in 1930 by geneticist Abe Ayao (阿部文夫) and Tokyo Imperial University professor of physiology, Nagai Hisomu, the society was an attempt to meet the criteria for joining the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations. Nagai served as president of the society and editor of its journal.

Johnson noted the dearth of female members of the society and also criticized it for being “as yet unduly biological and inadequately sociological.” He did make allowance for the relative youth of the society and acknowledged the difficulties of keeping the journal in publication amidst the “great severity of the depression and the distraction of the Manchurian adventure.” He also found in the connections of society members with the Imperial Commission on Population and the Family an enviable possibility of influencing legislation. He identified their primary area of interest to be sterilization and institutionalization of the feeble-minded and insane.<sup>26)</sup>

### 2) Eugenical Society of Japan (日本優生学会)

Johnson mistakenly identified this society as the younger of the two. The Eugenical Society of Japan was founded by Gotō Ryūkichi (後藤龍吉) in 1924 in

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24) After the society gained foundation status in 1935 the official name was changed to “association” (日本衛生協会). Sitcawich dissertation, 272.

25) RHJ, Report to Gosney.

26) RHJ, *International Eugenics*, Pittsburgh University Ph. D. Thesis, 1934, 189-190.

Osaka. Johnson appears to have had no contact with the founder, who seems to have become less active after 1930.<sup>27)</sup> Unlike the former society, the Eugenic Society of Japan was a more popular group which involved non-academics as well as school-related persons. Rather than influencing legislation or government policy, this group sought to influence public opinion. It, too, published a journal, entitled *Eugenics*.<sup>28)</sup> Gotō used articles from American eugenicists like Davenport and Harry Laughlin and wrote many himself using various pen names. Although he had sympathizers among academics, he received only token support from them and was forced to sell advertising to keep the journal in print. Like the Japanese Society of Ethnic National Hygiene, the Eugenic Society of Japan, was interested in sterilization.

Johnson's main contact from the society was Kaneko Tadakazu, whom Johnson described as "Christian minister," "adult-educator," and "executive secretary" of the society.<sup>29)</sup> He was a high school teacher of natural science at Ichikawa Genzō's school for girls (東京府立第一高等女学校).<sup>30)</sup> He contributed articles to the society's journal.<sup>31)</sup> His interest in eugenics was long standing. He was one of the co-founders of the short-lived Greater Japan Eugenics Society (大日本優生会) in 1917, along with Yamanouchi Shigeo, Abe Ayao, and Ichikawa Genzō.<sup>32)</sup> Kaneko met Johnson in Yokohama on his arrival and served as his guide and translator for some of the time. He was on Margaret Sanger's mailing list and participated in the Third International Congress of Eugenics in 1932.

27) Sitcawich dissertation, 262.

28) The journal started as 『ユーゼニックス』, but the title was changed the following year to 『優生学』.

29) RHJ, Report to Gosney.

30) 桐山直人「医療と教育」史上の人々

<<http://members.jcom.home.ne.jp/kiri-n/KANEKONAOITI.htm>> (accessed 11/13/2009)

31) 金子直一「優生学の起源」『優生学』(October 1926) 15-19; 「断酒十年」37 (March 1937) 46-48; 「ゴルトン以後の優生学」32 (October 1927) 13-27.

32) Sitcawich dissertation, 219.

## **B. Institutions**

Johnson gained first-hand information about the state of eugenics in Japan from visits to various institutions. In his report for E. S. Gosney, Johnson explained that Nobechi wanted to show him various places. Although his list does not always include details, it is possible to surmise some of the places he visited during his time in Japan.

### **1) Leprosarium near Tokyo and the Imperial Leprosarium on the Inland Sea**

Johnson particularly recommended any eugenicist coming to Japan to visit the Tokyo leprosarium. This is certainly a reference to the Joint Prefectural Sanatorium<sup>33)</sup> (連合府県立療養所) established in 1909 in Tokyo's Higashi Murayama for Hansen's disease patients. The facility was built to serve patients in Kantō, Niigata, Shizuoka, Yamagata, Yamanashi, and Nagano prefectures. The Imperial Leprosarium on the Inland Sea, later called National Sanatorium Nagashima Aiseien (国立らい療養所；国立療養所長島愛生園), was inaugurated in 1930.

Japanese doctors attended an international leprosy conference in Berlin in 1897 where opinions about the contagion and the efficacy of quarantine were divided, but the conclusion was that separating patients was the best policy. Hansen's disease was considered by many to be incurable, infectious, and hereditary. Policies pertaining to Hansen's disease patients were put into law with the 1907 Leprosy Prevention Act which stipulated that all patients who had no one to care for them be treated in public leprosaria. Those with care givers were to be cared for at home. Regional leprosaria were established and segregation was put into practice.

Mitsuda Kensuke (光田健輔) served as the director of the Tama Zenshouen Sanatorium from 1914 to 1931 and the National Sanatorium Nagashima Aiseien from 1931-1957. When he carried out a voluntary vasectomy on a male patient in 1915 so that he could be with his spouse, the home office was silent on the issue. To

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33) 「国立療養所多磨全生園」〈<http://www.hosp.go.jp/~zenshoen/syoukai.html>〉 (accessed 12/6/2009)



prevent passing the disease on to progeny, Mitsuda carried out sterilization surgeries and abortions—at first on a voluntary basis, but later patients said they were not given a choice.

1929 saw the implementation of a leprosy-free campaign in Aichi prefecture. Nagashima Aiseien was the first national leprosarium. In 1931 legislation was passed for the compulsory segregation of all Hansen’s disease patients.<sup>34)</sup>

Johnson’s report to Gosney included a confidential appendix which was not included in the archive files. His comments in his dissertation show that he was not convinced that Hansen’s disease was hereditary: “While there is no convincing evidence of the inheritance of a leprosy diathesis, it is probable that the incidence of leprosy is greater where there is greater crowding and less cleanliness.”<sup>35)</sup> He did not oppose the segregation or sterilization of Hansen’s disease patients because of “germinal inferiority.” However, his comments show that he considered the segregation and sterilization of feeble-minded, insane, and alcoholics to be of greater value for the improvement of society.

## 2) Penitentiary and Reformatory

This reference is more difficult to identify. Johnson described it as the “new model one.” One possible facility is the Fuchū Prison, whose layout was much different than that others but which at the time of Johnson’s visit would have still been under construction. The 1923 Tokyo earthquake destroyed the Sugamo Prison near Ikebukuro, and the facility was moved to Fuchū. The official opening was not until June of 1935. Johnson’s only identification of the reformatory is that it was for imbeciles and feeble-minded.

Johnson had words of praise for Japan’s nationalized police system and for the classification of criminals. The separation of the “more likely germinal” criminals

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34) 栗原彬「ハンセン病と水俣病－共生を求め」〈[www.jsds.org/jsds/2008/2008\\_shiryos/s\\_kurihara\\_shiryos.doc](http://www.jsds.org/jsds/2008/2008_shiryos/s_kurihara_shiryos.doc)〉 (accessed 11/26/2009)

35) RHJ dissertation, 191.

from others was perceived as an effective means of keeping them from “reproducing their kind.” He found a need for improved methods of testing criminals to determine their class—intelligence tests and well as personality tests.<sup>36)</sup>

### 3) Mental Hospital

Here again there is no defining description except that it is for imbeciles and feeble-minded. Two of the people who attended Johnson’s lecture to the Japanese Society of Mental Hygiene were Tokyo Imperial University Professors of Psychiatry Kure Shūzo (呉秀三) and Miyake Kōichi (三宅鑛一), both of whom served as hospital director of the Tokyo Metropolitan Matsuzawa Hospital (東京府立松沢病院)—Professor Kure from 1901 and Professor Miyake at the time of Johnson’s visit to Japan. This hospital is a probable candidate for Johnson’s visit.

It was founded in 1872 as a “lunatic asylum” (東京府癲狂院) after the civil strife following the formation of the Meiji government. The abolition of clans and the establishment of prefectures caused a good amount of confusion which unsettled many people. The original purpose of the facility was to take in vagrants and others who had no place to go. Later some of the wards were found to be feeble-minded and placed under hospital care.<sup>37)</sup>

### 4) Kawada’s School for Feeble-minded (private) on island of Ōshima.

This is one stop that Johnson did not highly recommend—not because of the school itself, but because of the difficulty of transportation. He writes; “...the boat is too small and too much danger of sea sickness and danger in disembarking (no pier).” Founded on Christian principles in 1919, the Ōshima Colony School for the Feeble-minded was also called Fujikura School. Kawada Takujiro (川田貞治郎) conceived a therapy called “Mind Training” (「心練」) which included educational therapy and hot spring therapy to help the children spend each day with a purpose and to become as independent as they were able.<sup>38)</sup>

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36) RHJ, Report to Gosney.

37) 長岡和著『爆弾精神科医』情報センター出版局, 2008, 136.

Concerning eugenic policies for persons with mental disability, Johnson asserted that not enough was being done to limit the number of defectives through segregation and sterilization. He lamented the fact that a majority of patients were cared for in private facilities where policies were more difficult to put into practice. He found the biggest objection based on ancestor worship: “there is an adverse effect for the feeling that the family must go on.” Johnson expected opposition on the basis of “unnaturalness” or “mutilation,” but before coming to the Orient had never experienced opposition because of the need to carry on the family line. But he also noticed the tendency to send “defectives or psychopathic members in the family” to institutions far away from the family and offer some other explanation for their absence. Such action could reduce the adverse effect on the marriage possibilities of other family members.<sup>39)</sup>

### III. Implementation of Eugenic Policy

#### A. Birth Control

A birth control movement in Japan was already in place when Johnson came to Japan and the Japan Birth Control League was set up in Tokyo in 1931. Socialists viewed birth control as a way for women to be freed from unwanted and ill-timed pregnancy and childcare. Social reformers like Abe Isoo supported it as a way to bring the population and food supply into balance. Professor Nagai and Tokyo Imperial University psychiatry professor Miyake Kōichi were among the members of the Imperial Commission on Population Problems established in 1927. Their 1929 report set out the need for making birth control consultation available.<sup>40)</sup> While the government was urging procreation in its 富国強兵 policy (raise strong soldiers for a

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38) 「法人概要」〈<http://www.fujikuragakuen.or.jp/about.html>〉 (accessed 11/20/2009)

39) RHJ dissertation, 108-109, 191.

40) Takeda, 62.

strong state), for women the image of a “good mother” was one who was in charge of her acts of childbirth and one who was fit to be a mother. In 1928 the commission held its fourth meeting to decide on a policy of population regulation. Some of the issues discussed were the unequal mortality rates of young women and men, the need for women’s sports, maternal welfare, medical consultation, and contraceptive devices. Professor Nagai insisted on need for the enforcement of a marriage prohibition law and sterilization, but these were not included in the final draft.<sup>41)</sup>

An article in the *Yomiuri* newspaper dated July 22, 1931 reported the establishment of a consultation center in the Ikebukuro area of Tokyo for love life (sex life), sex education, marriage mediation, and performance education. Its opening was directly related to Johnson’s visit.<sup>42)</sup> Among the consultants were Abe Isoo and Majima Yutaka.

In 1935 the Japanese Association of National Hygiene established the Eugenics Marriage Popularization Society (EMPS) in a department store in the Nihonbashi area of Tokyo. Unlike the earlier one in 1931, almost all of the others involved were women. Professor Nagai was the president, and his wife was one of the vice-presidents. Professor Nagai did not limit his teaching to the men at Tokyo Imperial University, he also taught at Japan Women’s College and Tokyo Medical College for Women. This movement not only provided women needed information about marriage, it helped open the door for women’s involvement in social issues. Johnson had commented about the lack of women in public life: “The great restriction on a Japanese woman’s activity and the exaggerated degree to which intellectual groups meet without women, as at scientific meetings, is deplorable. It probably will soon pass” (*AE*, 368). Indeed, the passing had begun.

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41) <<http://www.meijigakuin.ac.jp/~katos/Eugenics2.htm>>

42) 「日本優生学協会相談開設」読売新聞, 1931年(昭和6年)7月22日朝刊9面

## B. Sterilization

Professors Abe and Nagai were active in trying to get a sterilization law passed. After Johnson's visit, contact was established with E. S. Gosney of the Human Betterment Foundation in Pasadena, California. In 1934 the Japan Society of Ethnic National Hygiene held a special society meeting on the subject of sterilization with the presented papers in a special issue of their journal dedicated to Gosney.<sup>43)</sup> Titles of the articles reflect their efforts to pass legislation and the opposition they faced: "Counter-replies against Objections to Sterilization Law" (Nagai), "Motive and Object of Sterilization" (Saito), "Psychiatrical Indication of Eugenic Sterilization" (Yoshimatsu), "Opinions upon Sterilization Law in Nazi State" (Tateishi).

Abe traveled to California in 1936 and saw how sterilization was being carried out in institutions for the feeble-minded. He wrote about his visit in the journal *The Purity*.<sup>44)</sup> He observed young men and women of limited mental ability being sterilized with their parents' permission and even at their request. In this way beautiful, but easily seduced, young women could avoid unwanted pregnancies and spare their parents and the country grief. Laws allowing such surgeries had been passed in 6 countries and he concluded that Japan, too, should consider such legislation.

Correspondence between Abe and Gosney reflects the difficulties in passing a sterilization bill. In December of 1936 Gosney wrote Abe in regards to an article which had appeared in a California newspaper reporting: "The Japanese Government plans to submit to the next meeting of parliament a bill for sterilization of the insane, epileptics, confirmed alcoholics, and persons of known criminal tendencies..." He inquired as to the status of the bill and expressed his desire to see its passage: "Such a law in Japan, conservatively and humanly administered would do much for the

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43) 『民族衛生』断種問題特輯號 第3回學術大會講演抄録 日本民族衛生學會 (June 1934)

44) 安部磯雄「國民生活と人口問題 (米國白痴院に於ける実行)」『廓清』26:5, 3-4.

betterment of the human family not only in Japan but in all civilized countries.” Abe’s reply did not come until August of the following year. Abe reported that after 10 years in Parliament, his party saw rapid growth in the last election—a trend that, if continued, would give them a majority. He mentions the nearly 50,000 lepers in Japan as a group to be targeted by the bill. Gosney’s reply indicates that he sent information about the bill which listed “epileptic, insane, etc.” as the intended recipients of sterilization. He inquires whether this includes the “feeble-minded” and stresses that California’s widest support for sterilization was for this group of people. The next correspondence from Gosney to Abe in February 1939 again seeks confirmation of a newspaper report of the passage of a sterilization bill for hereditary defectives. Abe’s April response is once again negative. The bill had been introduced, but was not passed and would likely require several more years for its passage. Some of the opposition questioned whether Hansen’s disease was indeed hereditary or whether it was caused by infection. He maintained that prejudice and misunderstanding concerning sterilization abounded, but that intellectuals were coming to see the need for such legislation.<sup>45)</sup>

It was 1940 before the National Eugenic Bill was passed by the Diet. It limited compulsory sterilization to patients with hereditary diseases. Included were mental deficiency, physical deformities, and even criminal tendencies. Unlike California where many patients considered to have mental deficiencies were institutionalized, most of the targeted audience was out of the law’s reach. Matsubara Yōko gives the Ministry of Health and Welfare’s estimate of sterilization operations under the National Eugenics Law as 740 in 1941, but the actual number was only 94. That trend continued during the next four years with a total of 454.<sup>46)</sup>

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45) Box 8, File 3 Japan Korea, E. S. Gosney Papers And Records Of The Human Betterment Foundation, Archives, California Institute of Technology.

46) Matsubara, Yōko, “The Enactment of Japan’s Sterilization Laws in the 1940s: A Prelude to Postwar Eugenic Policy,” *Historia Scientiarum*, The History of Science Society of Japan 8:2 (December 1998), 187-201.

### C. Marriage and Family

One area of concern for the Japanese family was promiscuity, particularly with prostitutes and concubines. Some of Professor Abe's activities were also directed toward the abolition of licensed prostitution. Johnson's observation of this social problem was in relation to the professional woman entertainer, the *geisha*, and led him to the conclusion that it was a consequence of arranged marriages. He suggested that the "art of being attractive should not be a specialty but should be taught, to a reasonable degree, to all young people. The *geisha* girl would be best abolished by taking the best of her arts and making them the common property of all Japanese women." He maintained that if a man could find attraction in his wife that he would not need to look elsewhere. In order to replace the *geisha*, he felt it was necessary that women be given more "freedom and individuality," which would, in turn, increase their charm. (*AE*, 368) Even if romantic marriage did not have a place in Japanese culture, Johnson was convinced that an arranged marriage needed some romance.

During his stay in Tokyo, Johnson met with Tokyo Imperial University professor of jurisprudence, Hozumi Shigeto (穂積重遠), who was chairman of the Imperial Commission on Family Law. The commission was working on a new marriage law, but was finding opposition from the conservative faction. Johnson shared his perceptions of Japan's customs. He was impressed with Japan's high marriage rate and birth rate. The scarcity of bachelors and the fact that "career, vanity, or cowardice" was seldom given as a reason for limiting children to one or two was, in his estimation, laudable. But as a eugenicist and a sociologist he had concerns about the Japanese marriage and divorce procedures. In the new version of *Applied Eugenics* he expresses this concern: "There is no provision for a marriage license to be issued before the ceremony, nor is there sufficient legal and social pressure to cause the go-between to whom is left the registration, to attend to this formality conscientiously. The result is that marriage is too casual... and that mate selection

is not as careful as it should be. . . . Without registration the marriage has no standing in law, not even that of a common-law marriage.” Separate education of males and females contributed to the need for the parents or a broker to initiate a union. Nor did he feel that it was appropriate that parents have the veto power over marriage until the age of 30. Going against parental opposition resulted in non-recognized marriages and illegitimate children. (367) He gave his suggestions concerning divorce: “The ideal solution seems to be. . . the granting of divorces by an expert marriage counsellor [sic] who after consultation in his own office without reporters or public present, with the partners separately and such witnesses as they wish to introduce, makes his decision without being bound by specific grounds.”<sup>47)</sup> Few of Johnson’s suggestions were implemented immediately. Change takes time.

## Conclusion

Roswell Johnson brought his sociological view of eugenics to Japan. Rather than emphasizing genetics and medicine, he pushed for practical policies which would, in his way of thinking, improve society. Unlike American eugenicists who purported racial superiority, Johnson found much to be admired in the Japanese and considered them to be “superior” in many aspects. In an article written after his Japan trip, he lamented the immigration restriction law which effectively shut out all Japanese. He suggested that had a law been passed on the basis of individual merit rather than on the merits or demerits of a racial group, it would have permitted “very much more friendly relations with other nations and avoid the animosities which we have around—one very unfortunate one being that of the sensitive Japanese.”<sup>48)</sup>

Johnson predicted that “the eugenic movement will proceed faster in Japan than elsewhere in the Orient” because of its “strong government, a strong social spirit that

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47) RHJ, “Divorce,” *Eugenics* 3:10 (October 1930), 385.

48) RHJ, “Population Control by Immigration,” *Birth Control Review* (February 1932), 157.



is less individualistic than in the West, lack of any serious obstacle from either equalitarian or religious ideals and the existence of strong racial pride.”<sup>49)</sup> He also predicted that “Japan within the next generation or two will be one of the world’s leaders in the promotion of a eugenic population policy.” (*AE*, 369) Japan’s eugenic policies in many areas continued long past those of the United States and Germany and, in some instances, were stronger after World War II.

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49) RHJ dissertation, 193.