Famous Japanese Individuals to Visit Chicago in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries: From Unknown Students to Distinguished Prime Ministers

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FAMOUS JAPANESE INDIVIDUALS TO VISIT CHICAGO IN THE LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURIES: FROM UNKNOWN STUDENTS TO DISTINGUISHED PRIME MINISTERS*

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I am honored to speak at this lecture-meeting convened on the 150th anniversary of the opening of my country by brave Americans headed by Commodore Matthew Galbraith Perry in 1853. The more I inquire into this theme of the opening of the nation state, more specifically, the development of U.S.-Japan relations, the more I appreciate both the achievements of Americans in Japan and of Japanese in the United States. They are considerable. I am proud of this kind of ambitious, dramatic, and exciting history. Because of time limitations tonight, I shall limit my talk to the gifted Japanese men and women who came to Chicago in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These sojourners from Meiji and Taisho Japan who came to Chicago were tremendous characters and they benefited greatly from this city as well as from the United States of America.

[1] People Who Became Prime Ministers after Returning From Chicago: Ito Hirobumi, Kuroda Kiyotaka, and Takahashi Korekiyo

First I would like to introduce Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909), who came from Choshu Domain (now Yamaguchi Prefecture). He was a preeminent statesman of modern Japan. As Prime Minister, Ito served a total of four non-consecutive terms, and appointed the first cabinet in Japanese history. He guided Japan in its formative years to become a modern nation state. Ito originally came from a modest family but studied diligently from an early age and attended the Shoka Sonjuku, Yoshida Shoin’s School.

Soon he was selected from Choshu Domain to go study in England. He was a very busy man, particularly in the early 1870s during his early thirties. As a central figure in the Meiji government, he traveled multiple times to various countries in Europe and studied Western law and governance. Early in 1870, Ito was sent to the United States to study Western currency systems and worked in Washington, D.C. When he returned home in 1871, he was named director of the Tax Division and Minister of Public Works. In October 1871, he was named a member of the upcoming Iwakura Mission to Europe and the United States. The Iwakura Mission stayed in Washington, D.C. for about four months, by way of Chicago. During that period, Ito and Okubo Toshimichi, a Vice Minister of Finance who was also a member of the Mission, returned to Japan in haste to retrieve forgotten items and information, and then rejoined the Mission. More precisely, Ito and Okubo left Washington, D.C. to return to Tokyo on February 12, 1872, in order to obtain additional official documents from the Diet and arrived in Japan more than a

* This article is a revised version of a presentation delivered to the Chicago Historical Society on September 5, 2003, at the “U.S.-Japan Intercourse 150,” a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the opening of Japan by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853.
month later, on March 24. After discussing diplomatic matters with Japanese officials, they departed Yokohama on May 17 and arrived in Washington, D.C. on June 17. This was during the time when air travel did not yet exist, so much of the Mission’s time was spent traveling from one place to the next. During all of his travels, Mr. Ito eventually visited Chicago at least four times. In 1885, Ito became the nation’s first Prime Minister and founded the Cabinet system as already mentioned. From his great leadership, Japan developed into a country with a constitutionally based parliamentary government. In 1906 he was named Chosen Sotoku Chohan, resident general and governor of Korea, a position he held until he resigned in July of 1909. On October 26 of that year, Ito was assassinated in Harbin, Manchuria by a Korean nationalist, An Chung-Gun.

The next visitor, Kuroda Kiyotaka (1840-1900), was a man of great talent, born in Satsuma Domain (Kagoshima Prefecture). On January 23, 1870, he came to the United States with seven students, including a boy of nineteen named Yamakawa Kenjiro. Yamakawa later graduated from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and later became President of the Imperial University of Tokyo. It is interesting to note that seventy-two Japanese students studied at the University of Michigan during the Bakumatsu and Meiji periods.

This was Kuroda’s first trip to the United States. He was successful in getting an American expert, General Horace Capron, as a consultant to assist in the development of Hokkaido Prefecture. In addition, Kuroda asked the Meiji Government to make it possible for promising girls to study in the United States at the expense of the Commission of Colonization (開拓使 [kaitaku-shi]). At that time, as you can imagine, this suggestion was thought of as extremely crazy and useless. With Kuroda’s unusual vision, he confidently and eventually selected the following five girls to join approximately 55 boys as part of the Iwakura Mission:

Tsuda Ume: Just eight years old at the time, she later founded the Women’s English Institute (also known as Tsuda College) and greatly contributed to the education of girls in Japan. As an interesting side note, her sister was married to Abiko Kyutaro, publisher of The Japanese American (『日米』 The Nichi-Bei), a well-known Japanese newspaper in San Francisco since 1899.

Nagai Shige: Nine or ten years old at the time, she eventually became a teacher at Tokyo Music College and greatly contributed to the progress of Western music in Japan. She was married to Uryu Sotokichi, a high-rank army officer in the Russo-Japanese War.

Yamakawa Sutematsu: Twelve years old at the time, a sister of the previously mentioned Yamakawa Kenjiro. She later married Prince Oyama, the commander-in-chief of the Imperial Army in the Russo-Japanese War.

Ueda Sada and Yoshimasu Ryo: Both 15 years old at the time of the Mission.
Also a part of the Mission was Nijjima Jo (early first name Shimeta), who eventually founded Doshisha University in Kyoto. Nijjima stowed away from Hakodate port disguised as a carpenter in 1864 and arrived in the United States in July of the following year. Nijjima was highly instrumental to the Mission as a translator and interpreter.

Returning again to Kuroda, he traveled to the United States and Europe in June 1886 and returned to Japan in April of the following year. During this visit, Mr. Kuroda came to Chicago on March 25, 1887 via Niagara Falls. While in Chicago, he visited the Palmer Hotel, City Hall, the Mercantile Exchange and the Stockyard. He also met an agent of the Morimura-gumi Merchant Co. of New York City. In 1888, he wrote a book of his tour that comprises three volumes with a number of illustrations. Kuroda eventually became the Prime Minister of Japan (1888-1889) and formed the second Cabinet in Japanese history, after Mr. Ito.

The third visitor who became Prime Minister was Takahashi Korekiyo (1854-1936). He is another Japanese legend. Born in Edo (Tokyo), the son of an artist who served the Tokugawa Shogunate, Takahashi was adopted by a samurai of Sendai Domain (now Miyagi Prefecture). He began to learn English at age 11 while a servant in Yokohama. In 1867, his domain sent him to the United States to study. However, he was forced into slave labor for about one year on the West Coast and was unable to further his education.

After his return the next year from the United States, Takahashi served as a student houseboy (shosei = 書生) to Mori Arinori, and also as a low-ranking bureaucrat in various government ministries. (Mori eventually became the first Japanese ambassador to Washington, DC and the first Minister of Education. Mori was educated in England and his second marriage was to Iwakura’s fifth daughter.) From December 17 until December 19, 1885, Takahashi visited Chicago. In Chicago, he stayed at the Grand Pacific Hotel and visited the Mercantile Exchange and the Stockyard.

Later in 1887, Takahashi became the first chief of the Patent Office. Takahashi rose quickly in the banking industry and his economic and financial theories were respected worldwide, equal to those of the British economist, John Maynard Keynes. According to some scholars, Takahashi developed his unique and original economic theory before Keynes publicized his doctrine. While Keynes is considered the master of economic theory, Takahashi is said to be the master of financial and economic policy-making.

In 1921, Takahashi became the Prime Minister of Japan. After he was assassinated by some of his severest army critics (February 26 Accident of 1936), the government’s fiscal policy grew even more attuned to the military’s plans for a “national defense state.”
Asada Eiji (1865-1914) was born in May 1865, in the small town of Hanaoka in Yamaguchi Prefecture in the southern part of Japan, and was the eldest son of a samurai family. At age six, he was sent to a public school in Tokuyama, four miles from his birthplace, and graduated in July 1879. In June 1883, he graduated from Kyoto High School. The following spring, he entered the First Higher Middle College, Tokyo, and completed science courses in June 1887. After having spent one year in the Department of Mathematics at Tokyo Imperial University, Asada went to the United States in order to study theology and linguistics. In September 1888, he entered the Theological Seminary of Northwestern University in Evanston and graduated in May 1891 with the degree of D.B. While at the seminary, he became interested in Semitic studies and Old Testament studies. In 1891-92 he pursued the same studies in New York City at the Union Theological Seminary and at Columbia University. In October 1892, he entered the Graduate School of the University of Chicago, and undertook further studies in Semitics and the Old Testament. In June 1893, Asada received the first Ph.D. degree ever awarded at the University of Chicago. The title of his dissertation was The Hebrew Text of Zechariah 1-8, Compared with the Different Ancient Versions. Even today, June 26, the date on which the degree was awarded to Asada, is marked on the official University of Chicago calendar as “Asada Eiji Day.”

Upon returning to Japan and after having taught some theological classes in Tokyo, Asada worked to build the foundations of today’s Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, while also serving as a member of the faculty and a member of the Ministry of Education, furthering steps toward the development of teaching English in Japan. On July 15, 1899, he was appointed Head Teacher and Vice-President. He instructed his students with great zeal and ability and helped them even in their private affairs with the loving care of a father. He was never known to stay away from school except when official duty required his services elsewhere. He woke up at 5:30 every morning and studied diligently each evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. In addition to the professorship, Asada was also one of three official translators appointed by the Meiji Government, together with Kanda Naibu, and Inoue Jukichi. He was also the chief editor of the first English government textbook in Japanese history, the Monbusho’s English Readers: for Elementary Schools, published in 1908-1911 (3 volumes). In 1914, Asada became sick while studying in a library and died the following day at home, at the age of forty-nine.

When Asada was a resident in Chicago in the late nineteenth century, there were only a limited number of Japanese students. Among his friends in Chicago were Takasugi Takizo, Ichihara Morihiro, and Harada Tasuku.

Takasugi Takizo (1870-1943) lived in obscurity for a long time even in Japan. He was born in Aomori Prefecture and studied at Too Gijuku and attended Northwestern University. He completed his coursework there in 1892 and took a professorship in the Midwest region. After his return to Japan in 1902, he became an English teacher at the Tokyo Senmon Gakko (now Waseda University)
and was promoted to professor in 1907. Takasugi was an unforgettable mentor to Japanese baseball players and baseball fans. In 1907, he became the second Yakyu Bucho (Head) of Waseda University Baseball Team, succeeding its founder, Abe I soo. Takasugi served the Team for 30 years. Takasugi, Abe and other administrators of Waseda University agreed to exchange their players reciprocally between Waseda and the University of Chicago every five years, starting in 1910. This agreement continued successfully until 1930. The picture below is the Waseda Nine at Chicago in 1927.

Ichihara Morihiro (1858-1915) was born in Kumamoto Prefecture and raised as a Christian. After graduating from Doshisha University, Kyoto in 1889, he attended Yale University and received a Ph.D. in 1892. His dissertation was titled: The Silk Trade of Japan. He visited Evanston and Chicago several times in order to meet Asada. Ichihara was also an English teacher and school administrator in his early days. After his return from the United States in 1893, he served as a professor at Doshisha University. During 1903 – 1906, Ichihara was mayor of the City of Yokohama. However, in 1895 he entered the business world and eventually became the first governor of the Bank of Korea [銀行のちに朝鮮銀行と改称] that was established in October 1909. He died in Korea in 1915 and the Bank held his funeral service at the Seoul Youth Christian Hall because of his great contribution to the currency and financial system in colonial Korea.

While Harada Tasuku (1863-1940) attended the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1888, he also associated with Asada. Harada, born in Kumamoto Prefecture, was an excellent scholar, particularly in the history of Doshisha University and the University of Hawaii. He lived and studied in the United States and Europe until November 1896. In January 1907 he became the seventh president of
Doshisha University and continued in this position for 13 years. In 1920, Harada was invited to the University of Hawaii to establish its Department of Oriental Studies. He served as department head there until 1932. As the first-full time Japanese professor, Harada made a tremendous effort to develop the U.S.-Japan relationship in the storm of the anti-Japanese movement. In 1914, he wrote a book entitled *The Faith of Japan.*


Takamine Jokichi (1854-1922) was born in Takaoka, Etchu Province (now Toyama Prefecture). He initially studied applied chemistry but also became an unofficial ambassador and promoter of U.S.-Japan cultural exchange throughout his life. After graduating from the Kobu Daigakko (now University of Tokyo), Takamine went to England and studied there for three years, until 1883. Returning to Japan, he worked for the Agriculture and Commerce Ministry. Takamine made a business trip to New Orleans to attend the World Industrial Exposition in 1884 and met Caroline Hitch, whom he married in 1887. In 1890, he went
to Peoria, Illinois, where he invented several valuable medications including Taka-diastase (patented in 1894 in the U.S.). He received the degree of Doctor of Science in 1899 and Doctor of Pharmacy in 1906. In 1913, he became the first president of the Sankyo Seiyaku Pharmacy Company.

Takamine was very successful and owned two residences in New York, including Shofu-Den, a beautiful Japanese-style mansion styled after the Phoenix Hall in Kyoto. During his long stay in the United States, he contributed much to the development of cultural exchanges with Japan. Takamine was one of the strongest patrons and supporters who donated 3,000 cherry trees to be planted around the Tidal Basin and the Potomac River in Washington D.C. during President William Howard Taft’s term. The original idea to plant cherry trees came from Mrs. Taft and Ozaki Yukio, then the mayor of Tokyo. Takamine established the Nippon Club (Japan Club) in New York and served as its Vice President in 1905. He also established the Japanese Association of New York in 1907 (newly reorganized in 1914). He devoted himself to the publication of an English journal to promote Japanese-American co-operation entitled the Oriental Economic Review. The title was later changed to the Oriental Review.

Suzuki Daisetsu Teitaro (1870-1966) was born in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture. He introduced Japanese and Oriental thought and philosophy to the Western world in English. Suzuki entered the University of Tokyo and concurrently undertook Zen training at the temple Engakuji (円覚寺) in Kamakura under its abbot, Shaku Soen (釈宗演). In 1897, at the age of twenty-seven, he went, with Shaku Soen’s introduction, to LaSalle, Illinois, to assist Paul Carus of the Open Court Publishing Company with the translation of Oriental philosophical and religious works into English. Suzuki stayed there for eleven years, editing Carus’s magazines, Open Court and the Monist, and translating various works. Upon his return to Japan in 1909, he was appointed lecturer and later professor of English at the Peer’s School (now Gakushuin University). In 1911, he married Beatrice Lane, who was his close collaborator until her death in 1939.

After the Pacific War, Suzuki began to spend much time lecturing on Zen outside Japan. He was a visiting professor at Columbia University for several years, contributing firsthand to the growth of Western interest in Zen Buddhism. Suzuki’s collected works in Japanese number over forty volumes. His English works also number over thirty. Among his publications are: Essays in Zen Buddhism (1927) and Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture (1938).

The perception and interpretation of history is always changing and it is constantly being re-written and re-analyzed. This anniversary, however, proves the strong ties between the United States and Japan. Without question, American society has fostered many Japanese leaders and I believe that this will continue for many years to come. I hope you found this talk interesting. Thank you and have a nice evening.

References

2 構下村塾：Yoshida Shoin (1830-1859) was born in Hagi, Yamaguchi Prefecture. He established this small school in his house and gathered a group of young samurai such as Ito Hirobumi, who later played key roles in Meiji politics. Shoin was arrested and executed during the ANSEI Purge (1859).

3 The Iwakura Mission donated a $5,000 check to the City of Chicago during their stay as a relief fund for the Chicago big fire victims. See the following Chicago Tribune articles: “Iwakura and Company,” “Our Oriental visitors,” and “Our Oriental guests”; Feb.26, 27, and 28, 1872, respectively. 『特命全権大使米欧回覧実記』＜久米邦武編修・太政官記録掛・明治211(1878)年刊・巻冊体＞ページ参照。シカゴ大学図書館所蔵
[Translated in English in 2002 as The Iwakura Embassy, 1871-1873 : a true account of the Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary’s journey of observation through the United States of America and Europe. ISBN 4901617001(set)].

4 安重根 An Chung-Gun (1879-1910): Well known Korean nationalist, who was baptized at age 15 and engaged in Western studies in Shanghai. An Chung-Gun shot Ito in 1909 and was executed the following year.


6 Horace Capron (1804-1885). General Capron once marketed his cattle in the flourishing stockyards of Chicago and Kansas City. As an advisor for the Commission of Colonization, Capron suggested the establishment of the college in Hokkaido, which eventually became “Sapporo Agricultural College.” Before William S. Clark (1826-1886) went to Japan as the President of the College, Capron returned to his home country. While Clark is well-known, Capron’s great contributions as a father of the development of Hokkaido must also be recognized.

7 環遊日記（Kanyu Nikki）黑田清隆著 明治20（1887）全2巻・図版豊富]。シカゴに関する記述は下巻の286－287ページにあり。シカゴ大学図書館所蔵 [3 volume set including furoku with many illustrations and no colophon. For Chicago’s information and illustrations, see pp.286-287 in 2nd volume. Holdings of the University of Chicago Library]

8 高橋清翁八十年史 (Takahashi Korekiyo o hachiju-nen shi) 立憲政友会本部刊行・昭和 (1934) 頃・写真。シカゴ情報はページ参照。シカゴ大学図書館所蔵 [For Chicago related information, see p.63]

9 旧約聖書ゼカリヤ書の原点比較研究—シカゴ大学開学第一号博士論文』奥泉栄
10 The first president of the University of Chicago, William R. Harper, wrote in 1894, “It will never be forgotten that you are the first doctor of the University.” (Cited from his private letter to Asada dated February 13, 1894).

11 Kanda Naibu (1857-1923) from Tokyo was one of the Iwakura Mission students. Inoue Jukichi (1862-1929) from Tokushima Prefecture studied in England.

12 安部穣雄 Abe Isoo (1865-1949): Born in Fukuoka Prefecture, he graduated from Doshisha University, where under the influence of Niijima Jo, he became a Christian. He studied in the United States between 1891 and 1895. After returning to Japan, he became a professor of Waseda University. He also was an energetic promoter of baseball as a student sport, and became so-called a father of baseball in Japan. He was a man of wide interests from politics, social and labor matters, to education and journalism.

13 “University of Chicago Maroons Baseball Team Visits Japan” – Tokyo, Japan, 1930 (silent, B & W) was shown at the kick-off opening of the Anniversary in the auditorium of the Chicago Historical Society (Sept. 5, 2003). The Special Collection and Research Center of the University of Chicago Library provided archival photos of the Waseda Team to the Event exhibition.

14 This 200-page dissertation covers the silk industry in Japanese foreign trade from its beginning to future prospects.

15 This historical title came out in 1914 as part of a series of Hartford-Lamson lectures on the religions of the world. Most of the chapters were delivered at Hartford Theological Seminary in autumn 1910.

16 Though the account of Takamine’s visit to the United States is classified as QD in the LCSH scheme, Takamine represented himself as an unofficial diplomat in the Chicago and New York areas. See Jokichi Takamine: a record of his American achievements, by Kiyoshi Karl Kawakami (1875-1949) with a foreword by John H. Finley. (New York: W.E. Rudge, 1928). 73 pages with a formal portrait.

17 In November 1910 in New York, Takamine was involved in supporting and starting the publication of the Oriental Economic Review: a fortnightly summary of East Asian Affairs, which concerned affairs in Japan and the Far East in general that was disseminated in the United States and elsewhere. The journal changed its title to the Oriental Review in February 1911 and ceased publication in 1913. Eventually this journal fostered two distinguished journalists and one scholar: Zumoto Motosada (director and later president of the Japan Times Co.), Honda Masajiro (associate director and later a professor), and Baba Tsunego (associate director and later president of the Yomiuri Shinbun Co.)
Paul Carus (1852-1919) wrote prolifically with the assistance of Suzuki Daisetsu. Among his works is a book entitled *The Gospel of Buddha*, which was translated into Japanese by Suzuki and published in 1895 with the Japanese title 仏陀の福音 [Butsuda no fukuin].

This enlarged new *zenshu* was published between 1999 and 2003. Because a number of important documents and letters related to Suzuki were discovered in the Chicago area and are included in the new *zenshu*, it is expected that many researchers will receive irreplaceable benefit from this new edition.

Although the writer is responsible for the contents of this article, he would like to express his appreciation to Mr. Mitsuo Sakaba, General Consul of Japan at Chicago, who requested this presentation looking back on 150 years of U.S.-Japan relations. Finally, the writer wishes to add that he did not cover other major events during the Meiji Era because these were fully covered by Professor Alice Murata in her lecture entitled “Commodore Perry, Iwakura Mission, Columbian Exhibition, World Parliament of Religion and Early Japanese Settlement in Chicago.”