

Kanda was a kind and approachable person, eager to make friends and serve his profession. The case can be made that he could team up with other scholars for decades. For almost half a century, he was a member and officer of the Tōyō Bunko, a noted Japanese research institute. He had a long affiliation with Tōhō Gakkai and was president (1993–99). Of equal importance to him was the research group of Manchu history, which he once served in the capacity of President. His Association for Asian Studies membership lasted until 1990.

TAKUSHU IHARA

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THOMAS C. SMITH

(November 29, 1916—April 3, 2004)

Thomas C. Smith, Ford Professor of History Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, died in his sleep on April 3, 2004, in Danville, California. He was eighty-seven years old.

Smith was the most distinguished historian of early modern and modern Japan in the West in the last half century. In four major books, *Political Change and Industrial Development: Government Enterprise, 1868–1880* (1955), *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan* (1959), *Nakabara: Family Farming and Population in a Japanese Village, 1717–1830* (1977), and *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization, 1750–1920* (1988), Smith changed our understanding of the trajectory of Japanese economic development and social change in the early modern and modern eras. His conclusions were often quite striking, as he argued against what had become the accepted wisdom. In *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, for example, he ascribed a major role in the shaping of Japan's modernization to the gradual evolution of the Tokugawa agrarian economy (1600–1868), the change in the village from subsistence production to production for the market, and the transformation of family farming. As Professor Kenneth B. Pyle of the University of Washington, a former student of Smith's, writes: "His research and writing are critical to our understanding of how it was that the Japanese became the first non-Western people to achieve an industrial society." What was often crucial to Smith's historiography was his willingness to write as a comparative historian; often, in fact, his explorations in Japanese history suggested the necessity of reexamining the assumed universality of the western process of modern industrialization.

Smith's books and articles ranged over a wide area of Japanese history, from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, and his analytical contributions spanned an extraordinarily diverse set of problems in Japan's social and economic history: a microstudy of the techniques of population limitation and sex-selective infanticide in a single village in the Tokugawa period, an examination of the seeming paradox in which the samurai aristocratic caste led a revolution to oust itself from power, and a look at the apparent historical anomaly in which early modern economic development in Japan took place in the countryside rather than in urban areas (the assumed site of development in most studies of the Western historical experience). His rare skills as a historical craftsman were well described in R. P. Dore's review of *The Agrarian*

Origins of Modern Japan: “Only those who know the fragmentary, ambiguous nature of the original materials and the perversity with which previous historians have tried to force them into preconceived patterns can appreciate the high qualities of Professor Smith’s achievement.” Osamu Saitō, Professor at the University of Tokyo, best captured Smith’s distinctiveness as a historian, remarking on those qualities that Smith himself believed to be the hallmark of good historical writing: “He is a rare historian who has skills in both finding facts and bringing the covert workings to light, without leaning towards either the general theorist or the particularist approach.”

Born in Windsor, Colorado, Smith was raised in Santa Barbara, California, from the age of twelve. He graduated from Santa Barbara State College and received his master’s degree in French history from the University of California, Berkeley. He began pursuing a doctoral degree in French history at Berkeley, but when World War II broke out he enrolled in the U.S. Navy language school in Boulder, Colorado.

After a year at the language school, Smith was assigned to serve as a Japanese-language officer with the Fourth Marine Division. He, with a dozen or so other graduates of the school, interviewed prisoners, translated maps and enemy documents, and collected codebooks that Japanese troops had left behind.

With the end of the war, Smith refused an immediate return to the United States and lobbied for an assignment in the occupation. He later would write that his curiosity about Japan, his “generally humane view of the enemy, as compared to most of the rest of the population at the time,” was partly because of his year-long study of Japanese: “Successful study of a foreign language,” he wrote, “requires some sympathy for the people and culture it represents.” An additional factor entered into his decision to seek an opportunity to go to Japan. “After some months at Boulder it occurred to me that I might improve my postwar employment chances, as well as my qualifications as an historian, by taking up the comparative historical study of a problem linking Japan and either France or the United States. I had no concrete idea of what I would compare and slight appreciation of the intellectual problems I would encounter.”

Ultimately, Smith wrote, “I had the incredible good luck to be assigned to the headquarters of the Sixth Army in Kyoto.” His duties were minimal and with the permission of his commanding officer he had the opportunity for the next several months to wander the streets, visiting shrines, temples, and gardens; taking in the sights of Kyoto; and talking to Japanese: “I was wonderfully happy and imagined that I might stay in Kyoto permanently.”

“Then,” Smith wrote, “things changed unexpectedly.” He was asked to be an interpreter for two officers from the Navy Department in Washington who had arrived to oversee the dismantling of the cyclotron at Kyoto University, and (however inadvertently) aided in the confiscation of professor of physics Arakatsu Bunsaku’s notes on the use of the cyclotron. This invasion of the scholarly activities of Arakatsu so disturbed Smith that his joy in remaining in Kyoto dimmed. Several months later, he requested a return to the United States, where he was quickly demobilized from Marine service.

Returning from Japan with a determination to study Japanese history, Smith transferred his studies from U.C. Berkeley to Harvard University, which offered a Japanese history doctorate. Upon completion of his doctoral thesis in 1947, he accepted an appointment as an assistant professor at Stanford University, where he remained until his appointment at Berkeley as Ford Professor of Comparative History in 1970. Smith retired in 1987.

Thomas C. Smith received, among other grants, a Guggenheim Fellowship; Ford, Fulbright, Japan Foundation, and Social Science Research Council Fellowships; and was honored with the election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He also was one of the few Westerners to be selected for membership in the Japan Academy.

Smith is survived by his wife, Jeanne, two children, Zachary Smith of Loomis, California, and Rachel Smith of San Diego, California, and four grandchildren.

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