

Obituary

William Wirt Lockwood

1906–1978

William Wirt Lockwood, President of the Association for Asian Studies 1963–64 and Professor of Politics and International Affairs, Emeritus, at Princeton University, died 30 December 1978. The profession has lost a pioneer American student of contemporary East Asia, a pioneer in the study of Japanese economic history, and an architect of postwar East Asian studies.

Lockwood's birth in 1906 in Shanghai, where his father was General Secretary of the YMCA, and his education in the Shanghai American School, gave him charter membership in early twentieth century China hand society. Although his best scholarly work dealt with Japan and not with China, his China childhood and youth, and his China experience in the Fourteenth Air Force during World War II, were extremely important to him. Lockwood graduated Phi Beta Kappa from De Pauw University in his native Indiana in 1927, determined to continue his studies in economics with a view to teaching about, and probably in, China. He satisfied the Harvard residence requirements in economics and received his MA in 1929, selecting as his thesis topic Japan's foreign trade since 1886. This was the genesis of the subject—long deferred by teaching at Bowdoin, service for the Institute of Pacific Relations, and wartime Office of Strategic Services and Army Air Force duty—that later became his Harvard dissertation and, in 1954, his classic work, *The Economic Development of Japan*.

Lockwood's service for the Institute of Pacific Relations (1935–41, when he served as Secretary for the American Council) provided him with a congenial role for the stimulation and development of American interest in problems of the contemporary Far East. It was a mission he continued at Princeton after the war as Assistant Director of the Woodrow Wilson School (1946–57) and as Professor of Politics and International Affairs, from which he retired in 1971. His courses in the contemporary politics of East Asia served as the principal gateway to East Asia for hundreds of Princeton undergraduates. Those who caught his enthusiasm found him interested and helpful long after their classroom contact came to an end, as he often made available some of the wide network of contacts and friends he had developed in the course of a lifetime of concern with and travel in Asia. No one took more delight in the "conversion" to an Asian field of undergraduates sponsored for periods of work and study abroad by the Princeton in Asia foundation, which he also served as Director and Vice President.

On the national scene, Lockwood pursued these same interests through his participation in the Council on Foreign Relations, the Japan Society (which he also served as Director), the Asia Society, and many other organizations. His own love affair with Asia was constantly refreshed through travel, and no one near him could fail to feel the strength of that attachment.

Lockwood was a man of breadth as well as enthusiasm. Everything in his experience equipped him for concern with a broad, rather than a narrow field. His Asia stretched from India to Japan, and he knew most of it at first hand. He began his scholarship at a time when it was still possible to cover Asia broadly, and his teaching and writing were almost always comparative in nature. In his AAS presidential address, he re-presented Adam Smith with Asia in mind; in his *Economic Development*, he examined Japan's experience to see what it might suggest about other countries; in articles for *Foreign Affairs*, he measured China against India and Japan.

That same breadth made Lockwood ideally suited to participate in the planning and development of postwar Asian studies in the United States. His versatility, his lack of interest in developing a private or an institutional empire, and especially his judgment, made him an obvious consultant for government agencies and foundations working out ways to strengthen American preparedness to deal with a new world order. Lockwood served as consultant for the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, and the State Department. Any future research on the history of East Asian Studies in the United States will find him part of an inner core that was constantly occupied with the planning and building of those studies. No member of that core gave more generously of his time.

Impartiality, judgment, and a disciplined and elegant mind also made Lockwood an ideal participant in substantive as well as planning conferences. He regularly took part in University Seminars at Columbia, in many SSRC-sponsored conferences, and in all the seminars of the Conference on Modern Japan. One such seminar on Japanese economic development (the results of which Lockwood edited: *The State and Economic Enterprise in Japan*, 1965), was a model of what a scholarly conference can be. The wide variety of viewpoints produced sharp controversies, but Lockwood's personal and intellectual style prevented this from ever becoming divisive. Instead, he sought for points of agreement, moderating with good humor, expressing quizzical and respectful doubt, and providing the summation that established the gains and insights scored by the participants.

Lockwood's scholarship and writing are distinguished by those same qualities: measure, cool analysis, judgment. His major work, *The Economic Development of Japan*, is a landmark in Japanese studies. It was the first comprehensive economic history of modern Japan in a Western language, and in it his usual qualities—immense good sense, balance, and literary grace—were evident. Lockwood took exception to previous generalizations about "state capitalism" and armament-oriented growth. He warned that it was easy to exaggerate the role of the state because it was so visible. As he put it, "Big and dramatic innovations like railways and great banks and holding companies" might provide the scaffolding. But, "the structure itself was built, brick by brick, by myriads of individuals and experiments and commitments." In his typically understated manner, he managed to dispose of most of the oversimplified theories concerning Japan's economic success, and drew instead a much more complex and realistic picture that was short on slogans and long on truth. Most students of the subject will begin with this book, and if they remain concerned with Japan they will go back to it again and again. It is not too much to say that the book articulated the intellectual framework within which most subsequent Japanese economic history in the Western world has been developed.

His legacy of balance, breadth, and integrity, and his qualities of civility, generosity, and diffidence guarantee Bill Lockwood a place in the affections of his colleagues for many years to come.

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