A Historical Sketch of Overseas Study of the Japanese People

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abstract

In this essay I give a brief description and summary of historical background of overseas study of the Japanese people. Starting with the year 1900, the first section focuses on two historically prominent figures of the time, Ume Tsuda and Soseki Natsume. The second section deals with various records of study abroad from ancient times to the Meiji Restoration Period. The third section is a discussion of recent tendencies in overseas study by Japanese people. The growing phenomena of study-abroad involves issues that are broad and complex, no doubt influenced by recent waves of globalisation and privatisation of education.

key word: study abroad, issues of foreign study, history of overseas study

1. The year 1900 in Japan - Ume Tsuda and Soseki Natsume

In October 2000 in Tokyo, I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the centennial celebrations marking the anniversary of Tsuda Women's College as one of its alumnae. One hundred years before, in September 1900, this college was founded as one of the first Japanese private women's colleges. The founder, Ume Tsuda (1864-1929), had been one of the first five Japanese women to study abroad about thirty years earlier (1871). That had been in the fourth year of the Meiji Restoration Era (1868-1912), when the new government decided to send a mission to the USA and Europe in order to investigate western culture and technology. Five girls were included in the mission, among whom Ume was the youngest (six years old at that time). Ume went to Washington D.C., and was educated there for eleven years. Documents prove that Ume was a bright girl, and was well looked after by her American host parents, Mr and Mrs Lanman (Yoshikawa, 1956; Yamazaki, 1972). However, when she returned to Japan in 1882, it is said that she was no longer fluent in Japanese. From this point, Ume strove to fulfill what she perceived as the purpose of her years of study in the US: to improve the status and circumstances of Japanese women through education. The culmination of this eighteen year mission with the opening of the women's college made the year 1900 a truly epoch making event in the history of women's higher education in Japan; one of the more obvious consequences of Ume Tsuda's time in the US.

In her letter to her American host mother, Mrs. Lanman, who looked after Ume so well for a long time, she writes:

"You keep asking if my father and mother are satisfied with my education and training. I do not know, and how can they tell anyway? My mother can not talk to me to ask - how and what I studied are mysteries to her. .... And both Father and Mother know that Japanese ways are new to me, and so they don't criticize me, but excuse. ... He (Father) knows you have been kind to me, and he would like to thank you very much for all you did for me in so many ways that I tell him about. Don't worry yourself about what they think and the government thinks of my education. Know that my education, even if I had never studied mathematics, sciences, and any high branch, would be far above Japanese women, who only read and write, make poetry, and work. I mean the women educated in the old way. ...Of course I value my education and am glad at having gone to America, whatever I may say, and I am glad too, to
teach and work and help if I can, and live, and wait - which is harder. And I don't expect the future to be all unclouded, because it will not be; still I like Japan, and I shall be very happy and I am perfectly satisfied now.

So remember that, Mrs. Lanman, I am entirely content. (dated April 11th 1883) (Furuki, et al, ed. 1991, p.59)

So, Ume’s problem was a returnee’s one. Finding a gap between what one learned abroad and the situation of a home country rediscovered, the returnee often encounters more or less serious problems relating to a job or future plans. Ume deliberately chose to be a single woman for her life, went back to study at Bryn Mawr College again, and gradually brought her plan to fruition with help from friends both in Japan and in the U.S.A. Throughout the eighteen years she continued to seek every possible opportunity to utilise her experience abroad for the sake of her country in general, and its women in particular.

Without having had this opportunity to study abroad, neither Ume's mission nor this 100th anniversary college celebration would have been possible. During its first hundred years, Tsuda College has educated more than 23,000 women who have made contributions in many fields both in and outside Japan, including education, politics, business, social work, art, journalism and international relations. These have included three female government ministers. (Tsuda Alumni, ed. 2000).

It appears to be just a matter of pure coincidence that in May 1900, Kin'nosuke Natsume (now known as Soseki, 1867-1916) left a harbour in Yokohama for England, having also been given an opportunity to study abroad by the Meiji Government. He was then a teacher of English language and literature at Kumamoto (Imperial Fifth) High School. Like Ume Tsuda, Soseki was offered a stipend by the Meiji government (180 yen a year), though he stayed in London for a shorter period of two years (1900-1902). He was at that time thirty-three years old and had a wife and one-year-old daughter, whom he had left in Japan. As is underlined by the fact that Soseki Natsume's image appears on the Japanese one thousand-yen note, he was later considered an important figure in the country's cultural development at the same period of 'Japanese modernisation'. After coming back to Japan, he was appointed to the post of professor of English at Tokyo University. But four years later, he changed his profession to be a novelist. Soseki's achievement was not only that he produced a number of masterpieces of novels, but also that, through his works and lectures, he himself confronted the dilemmas that occur in the interaction between societies and individual morality, between western culture and eastern thinking, between traditional and contemporary approaches to human issues.

Soseki encountered an array of problems during his stay in London, though these were of a different nature to those experienced by Ume Tsuda, and were largely concerned with more individual and personal matters. Throughout his stay in London for two years, he continuously mentioned financial problems. This was not because of a failure to adequately finance his stay on the part of the government's budget, but rather because, as he reported in letters to friends and family, he was trying to buy as many books as possible with a limited amount of time and money. (Kadono, 1982) This nevertheless may also have constituted an indirect complaint of regarding the amount of money granted by the government. In any case, Soseki spent most of his money on purchasing books leaving little for living expenses. He attended lectures on English Literature at University College only for the first term, but stopped soon afterwards. He decided to read and study alone, except for attending a weekly private tutorial given by Dr. Craig, a scholar of Shakespeare. Soseki ceased to attend this too, after less than a year. He also changed his residence five times during his stay in London. Soseki left a detailed account of his experience in the form of correspondence with his wife and friends by cards and letters, as well as his voluminous notebooks and diaries. However, towards the end of his stay, when he was concentrating on his own study of literature and attempting to construct his own theory of literature, he scarcely wrote his diaries, and it appeared that he nearly suffered a nervous breakdown. Whether the cause of this mental distress was due to overwork, the isolation of living and working alone in a foreign land, or due to his own nature or personality (he suffered similar symptoms several times in his later life), is not a simple question. However, lack of money, social isolation, slow progress in study, and psychological pressure and anxiety resulting from uncertainties regarding the future back home are not unusual problems for residents in a foreign country.

The problems Soseki encountered during his stay in
London are thus not especially unique. Students studying in foreign countries frequently face similar problems and difficulties. The difference lies rather in the level of suffering and their capacity to endure it. The seriousness of such difficulties also does not seem to reflect the student’s level of English, nor degree of motivation or academic achievement. In fact, the opposite can be the case, and as Suzuki (2000: p.49) observes “(d)issatisfaction (or adjustment disorder) from study abroad experiences may come from unexpected cross-cultural experiences doubled by higher motivation prior to actual studies abroad”. In Soseki’s case, the goal he attempted to achieve was particularly ambitious, and may in turn have contributed to his seeming breakdown. In this sense, studying abroad may be regarded as an experience, which supports the maxim “No pain, no gain”: the slogan used by one of the respondents in my pilot study, which will be discussed in the later section.

Ume Tsuda and Soseki Natsume are obviously outstanding figures whose experiences represented significant landmarks in the history of Japanese study-abroad history, both coincidentally in 1900. However, they were not the first Japanese students to seek education abroad, and shared the experience with many contemporaries, as well as hundreds and thousands of successors. In the following section, I will provide a brief overview of this historical trend before the year 1900.

2. Before 1900 in Japan - foreign study promoted and prohibited.

Japan has long been a net sender rather than a recipient of overseas students. This was the case in each of the fifteen centuries leading up to the end of the 19th century. This tendency was greatly influenced by the Japan’s position as an island nation situated, like Great Britain, near a continental landmass which had developed its own dominant civilization from prehistoric days. The growth and spread of Buddhism were important in reinforcing this tendency, and had a significant influence on many aspects of cultural exchange. Buddhism was first transmitted to Japan in the early 6th century (ca. 538). And it was for the purpose of absorbing Buddhism that students were first sent overseas to study.

The first person to implement a systematic overseas study programme was Shotoku Taishi (574-622), whose image, incidentally, appeared on an earlier 1,000-yen note. He became Prince Regent Empress Suiko (554-628) in 593, and was ordered to send potential scholars to China, which was then unified as Zui 呈 581) 618. Students parties were sent 6 times, though only four of these journeys were recorded in official Japanese documents, in 606, 607, 608, and 614. The students were referred to as Kenzushi (delegates to Zui). The programme continued under the Toh (朝廷) government (618-907) with students referred to as Kentoshishi (delegates to Toh). Kentoshishi were sent between 16 and 20 times, risking enormous dangers from the weather and merciless pirates. The dangers are amply illustrated by the fact that only a little more than half such voyages returned (Ishino, 1996).

Although historical records show specific names of individuals who went to China for study, and refer to the spiritual and physical value of their experience, in this brief historical sketch, it is not possible to mention their personal experiences in details. What is more significant in the Japanese historical context is that this policy continued uninterrupted for about three centuries before being abolished by Michizane Sugawara (845-908) in 894.

The abolition of Kentoshishi may be indicative of a diminishing need for scholarly Buddhist influence from outside, as a result of the growth of indigenous Buddhist scholarship, and may also have reflected a growing cultural self-confidence. On a more practical level, the danger of voyages and the political instability of the Toh regime in the continent may also have prompted the Heian Period (794-1191) to reconsider the practice. In any event, the decision was implemented ironically on the recommendation of Michizane Sugawara who was himself a great scholar and was to be posthumously deified as a protector of learning (Suzuki, 2000). From this point, a period of almost 1000 years passed before such contacts had to be resumed by the declining Tokugawa feudal government. The policy of Sakoku (鎖国 national seclusion) which was promoted prior to this collapse was to a degree pursued for strategic reasons in order to protect Japan’s relatively weak military position and its primitive navigation techniques. Later in the 16th and 17th centuries, when the western world had more advanced navigation skills, Japan was struggling to overcome internal wars among feudal clans and warrior troops. Between 1633 and 1639 the Tokugawa Feudal Government announced
official regulations to prohibit foreign travel and exchange of thoughts with countries abroad in response to these perceived dangers. Their primary purpose was to protect the country from the influence of Christianity, which they thought would be a threat to the government’s superior power.

Whereas learning more about Buddhism was a main motive for promoting foreign study in ancient Japan (7th - 9th centuries), rejecting Christianity was the main motive for the policy of national seclusion in the later period. From the middle to the early modern age in Japan people were prohibited from going abroad to study. If the decree was broken, the penalty was as severe as death or exile. When the Tokugawa Government (1601-1868) had to open the country (in 1854, Japan-US Amity Treaty was ratified forced by the power of some powerful western nations) people who were aware of the outside world began seeking opportunities to go abroad. However, it was the government rather than individuals who led the drive to obtain advanced knowledge and techniques from western countries in order to strengthen the nation financially and militarily.

In his well-documented book, Ishizuki(1992) counted as many as 148 Japanese people who went abroad to study during the six years from 1862 to 1867; coinciding with a tumultuous period of decline for the Tokugawa feudal government. Among these students were 63 who were sponsored officially, and about the same number (62) who were sent by local progressive clans, including twenty-nine from the Satsuma clan, based in present-day Kagoshima prefecture, and twelve from Choshu in what is now Yamaguchi prefecture. A further eight students were self-funded. The countries they went to included England (58), USA (47), France (34), Holland (18). Detailed information is available on about fourteen of these students, who were sent to England by the Bakufu (feudal government) in 1866 (Miyama, 1994). Unfortunately, they had to return to Japan because of political upheaval associated with the so-called Meiji Ishin (明治維新, the Restoration of Meiji Emperor’s reign) in 1868. The youngest member of this party, named Dairoku Kikuchi (at the age of 12, then named Mitsukuri), was said to be a very bright boy, and he went back to England years later to study at UCL and in Cambridge. He left an outstanding record of achievement in his studies, especially in Mathematics, at UCL and St. Johns College, Cambridge. And he became a professor of Mathematics at Tokyo University, the Chancellor of Tokyo University, then the Minister of Education. (Koyama, 1999). Not only Kikuchi, but also many other people who went abroad to study during this period later became key figures in the new government. A surprisingly great number of other government officials including ambassadors, heads of new organisations, as well as professors had also studied abroad. (Ishizuki, 1992)

The same trend continued after the Meiji Restoration. In the fourth year of the Meiji Era, 1871, the huge Iwakura Mission (50 delegates and 60 students) was launched, which traveled the world for nearly two years, taking five girls, including Ume Tsuda to U.S.A. In 1872, however, mainly for financial reasons, the new government had to give up its policy of funding such students, and ordered the return to Japan of those who were studying abroad at the time. Fortunately, girls in U.S.A. were exempted. The following year (1873), however, funding was again available under a new regulation which constituted part of the Gakusei (学制 Education Act) and which allowed more than 3,000 students to study abroad between its implementation and the beginning of Showa era (1925), including Soseki himself (Okihara, 2000).

According to Ishizuki (1992), problems associated with the policy were, however, many and diverse. First of all, the costs of the programme soared, at one point accounting for more than ten per cent of the whole budget of the Ministry of Education. Secondly, the selection of candidates was not consistent. Some aristocrats, for example, were selected through personal influence. Not all students were sufficiently talented or motivated. As a result, the programme was often considered disappointing, as well as costly. The previous academic experience of some candidates was insufficient, as was the language instruction they had received. This was partly attributable to the absence of a Japanese education system, either at an elementary level, secondary or tertiary levels. Also, the selection process was partial, with students from certain areas gaining priority. Dominant clans would also be over-represented. As a result, Ishizuki (1992, p.212) observes that the "quantitative increase of students abroad caused a qualitative decline in study outcome".

However, it must also be acknowledged here that Japanese modernisation, especially in terms of the political
change from feudalism to constitutional government, was facilitated by this substantial flow of students to foreign countries, particularly in Europe and America, to learn advanced knowledge, techniques and social systems. The success of the programme during this period could not be understood in its full sense without looking at the Japanese political context and at how an individual student as a returnee played his (or all too rarely her) role in contributing to national development.

3. After 1900 in Japan - the growth in student numbers.

Between 1872, and throughout the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods, up until the World War II, the Japanese government’s attitude towards foreign study remained fairly unchanged, with numbers of students steadily increasing (Ishizuki, 1992). The numbers of students sent abroad by the government was limited to 22 in 1892, 35 in 1896, and 60 in 1897, but finally in 1899, the Ministry of Education, which had assumed control of the programme from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1872, finally removed controls on student numbers. It was in the following year (1900) that Soseki Natsume was nominated among others. However, by this time, the Ministry’s policy tended to put more emphasis on academic and educational achievement of the individuals, rather than expecting from returnees political or military contributions to further government aims. (Ishizuki, 1992)

There is no doubt that World War II, and its aftermath represented a complete break in this tendency towards a gradual increase. Here, again, the study abroad programme played a crucial role in Japan’s development. This was enhanced by a national policy, but not one of Japan’s own creation. It was rather the U.S.A., the winning side of the Pacific War, that established and implemented new programmes. In 1949 the first cohort of 50 Japanese students went to the U.S.A. to study, under a scheme funded by GARIOA (Government and Relief in Occupied Areas) Fund. Similar aid was provided by EROA (Economic Rehabilitation in Occupied Areas) Fund. Those who were selected were very eager to use the experience in order to contribute to recovery and development programmes at home (Inoue, 1996). GARIOA & EROA Funds the following year enabled 283 people to study in the U.S.A., 471 in 1951, and 293 in 1952, among whom 31 students were supported by Fulbright Scholarship. It should be noted here that J. W. Fulbright (1965-95), an American politician and scholar, was inspired to propose this world wide study-abroad programme after learning the tragic news of the atomic bombs, which devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 (Inoue, 1996). Since then, the Fulbright Scholarship Programme has enabled more than 6000 Japanese people to study in the U.S.A., who have subsequently, according to Inoue (1996), had an enormous influence on post-war political, economic and technological development. Also these programmes may account for the high ratio of Japanese students who choose the U.S.A. in preference to other recipient countries.

From 1960’s onward, the growth in student numbers taking advantage of these and other schemes, or making their own arrangements began to increase exponentially. No longer could the phenomenon be linked directly to central government policy. This trend in turn seems likely to continue as a result of globalisation. Another key feature of current trends is that the number of those who go abroad to study without official or public financial support has grown to such an extent that this group now represents the majority. This can in turn be regarded as part of a trend towards privatisation. In fact, globalisation and privatisation are keywords to understand features of contemporary trends in foreign study among Japanese students.

Statistics provided by the Judicial System and Research Department, Ministry of Justice, illustrate this growth quite vividly. The following table, adapted from figures available on Ministry’s web-site pages, shows that the number of individuals who were studying abroad for educational or training purposes or to learn technical skills was only 1,907 in 1965, whereas by 2000, this figure had increased more than a hundred-fold to 193,779.

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<td>Number of students abroad</td>
<td>1,907</td>
<td>4,859</td>
<td>10,036</td>
<td>14,279</td>
<td>25,880</td>
<td>121,646</td>
<td>185,257</td>
<td>193,779</td>
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Note: The number of individuals who are studying abroad for educational or training purposes or to learn technical skills. (Original yearly figures combined to provide data over five yearly periods) Source: Statistics on Japanese and non-Japanese Legal Migrants, 2000, The Judicial System and Research Department, Ministry's Secretariat, Ministry of Justice (Mar. 2001)
As for the destination of these students, the top country was the USA, as mentioned earlier. 87,157 people (45%) went to USA for various study purposes in 2000. Besides USA, four other countries received more than 10,000 Japanese students in 2000. They are the U.K. (26,297, 14%), China (14,072, 7%), Canada (12,430, 6%), and Australia (10,369, 5%). Except China, all other major hosting countries of Japanese students are English speaking countries, and the four English speaking countries account for 70% of all Japanese students going to study abroad (136,253 people). This seems to support the view that language learning, namely English, is one of the main motives for studying abroad. However, since the data was collected as people registered with immigration check-out on leaving the country, they do not account for the length of particular programmes of study, and a large proportion of these students may be participants in short-term arrangements such as home-stay programmes organised by schools and private organisations. Also the figure may include those returning to places of study after visits home during holidays. When this data is compared with statistics regarding the number of Japanese students actually enrolled for degrees in tertiary institutions in the UK, which this study aims to focus on in later chapters, the figure is not surprisingly, barely a fifth of this total.

One more feature that should be mentioned in this section in regard to the increasing popularity of studying abroad after 1990 is that Japan has also started to pay a great deal of attention to receiving foreign students. In 1983, the Prime Minister Nakasone’s Advisory Council acknowledged the importance of study abroad for the sake of internationalisation of education and therefore the importance of receiving more students from overseas. Hence it declared a goal to increase the number of overseas students in Japan to 100,000 by the year 2000 (Eubach, 1991). This ambition was not realised due to the subsequent economic recession, but the figure has steadily increased, a trend that seems likely to continue. This increase has also been accompanied by a growth in available data on overseas students in Japan, particularly during the 1980’s and 1990’s, allowing for parallels to be drawn between foreign students’ countries of origin and Japanese students’ countries of destination. The following table is also drawn from the official Website information, edited to show student numbers at two yearly intervals.

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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25,643</td>
<td>41,367</td>
<td>48,561</td>
<td>53,787</td>
<td>62,921</td>
<td>61,298</td>
<td>64,041</td>
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Note: Total number of foreign students who enter Japan with student visas to attend Japanese universities, graduate schools, junior colleges, technical colleges or vocational schools for educational purposes. Source: Student Exchange Division, Higher Education Bureau, Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (Dec. 6, 2000)

Figures point to consistent increases over the previous decades both in the number of students sent to and those received from other countries. The events of September 11, 2001, and the resulting political fallout seem likely to have only a temporary effect on this trend, and it appears quite reasonable to guess that, in the absence of even more dramatic political, economic or ecological change, this tendency will continue. In this context it is perhaps worth referring back to Ishizuki’s question and to consider whether quantitative increases in student numbers will lead to a qualitative decline in study outcomes. This may be a problem to sending organisations or countries in terms of the “value for money”, and to receiving institutions in terms of the quality of education. Altbach (1991), for instance, discusses this issue in terms of ‘costs and benefits’ as the emergence out of rapidly changing research agenda in 1980’s when several countries adopted ‘full cost fee’ policies. From the point of view of receiving institutions, Overseas Students Trust (1987) in the UK suggested that the ideal ratio of international students in an institution was between 10 to 15 %. If less than 5%, the institution becomes academically impoverished and above 25 %, then various problems are likely to emerge. (Kimura, 1991).

However, the problem of balance between quality and quantity of overseas students, or the issue of ‘costs and benefits’, can be looked at from a completely different perspective. The following, for instance, is the view of neither a sending country nor from a hosting institution,
but it is a view from an individual student.

To you who want to go abroad for study...

Owing to the decision to abolish the special support grant for overseas students taken by the Thatcher government 10 years ago, and to the semi-independent profit system of institutions, current British universities charge three times more tuition to overseas students than those from EU countries. Most British students receive scholarships, so the actual gap is much bigger. So, overseas students who readily pay money are very good customers. British universities or departments, indeed seek to have overseas students. Therefore, entering a university is much easier than you think. Some may not believe this, but my friend, N, for example, went to apply for a master's course in Urban Design at a London University at the end of August, and after meeting a teacher the following week, was offered a place. He explained that they did not have enough applicants for the new term. So, that is the situation. If you go to the British Council in Tokyo, the staff will try to brainwash you that studying abroad is very difficult, but don't worry. So long as you have money, courage and a little bit of English ability, you can go to the UK to study. Why not start your enquiry by requesting information by visiting university home pages? At the moment there are so many Japanese students abroad that eventually I think the value of having qualifications from studying abroad will diminish, and studying abroad will be equivalent to just a travelling abroad. Nevertheless I think studying abroad is fun and worthwhile. (My translation.)

This is taken from one of eighty four website home pages available on Yahoo Japan, under the headings of Education Study Abroad Various Programmes and Overseas Study (at the time of October, 2001). The title of this home page is "Who's afraid of study abroad?" The creator studied in Manchester for two years and finished a diploma and MA degree in Economics. His master thesis is also available from the same link. The majority of such pages, of course, carry information on studying in the USA. These anecdotal accounts provide quite up-to-date and widely accessed personal information about study abroad. "Who's afraid of study abroad?", for instance, has received only 90,776 hits since 1997 - not an especially big number compared to other sites.

The increase in overseas students from Japan at the end of the twentieth century raises issues regarding not only the balance between quality and quantity, but also many additional questions. In order to have a clearer view of problems encountered when studying abroad, it is necessary to shift this enquiry to another dimension. To conclude this brief historical sketch, it can be observed that government-backed programmes of the early twentieth century have largely given way to individual and private initiatives. "Who is afraid of study abroad?" is a restatement of "where there is a will, there is a way." (Inoue, 1996). Altbach (1991) also comments that "It is very important to keep in mind that the most important decisions concerning study abroad are made by individuals and families and only indirectly by governments, academic institutions and aid agencies because most foreign students are privately funded." And with the dramatic increase in student numbers, and their wide dispersal in diverse institutions and a variety of circumstances, the notion of studying abroad may need to be rethought in the new century. Crossing country borders may become much easier in the future. Human beings are currently experiencing a revolutionary change in information technology. Studying abroad also seems to be part of this process, and students frequently find themselves in less formal programmes of study, and engaged in encounters of a much more casual nature. In such circumstances, learning occurs quite elusively, and foreign study can provide something quite different from what people expect from formal education within their own countries. There are more than one and half million students studying abroad in the world now (UNESCO YEAR BOOK 1999). A lot more research into every possible aspect of that study is therefore of obvious importance.
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日本人による海外留学の歴史的素描

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Abstract
この小論文は、日本人による海外留学の歴史を簡略に素描したものである。1900年、津田梅子が米国留学から帰国後苦労して女子のための学校を作ったのと同じ年に、夏目漱石はロンドンに留学し、勉学と金銭問題の苦労を味わう事になった。この両者の苦労は今もなお最も中心的な留学の課題であるといえよう(第1節)。1900年以前のわが国の海外留学は、逃難者、遠征兵から親国はなんても夢の留学ブームに至る長い経済的であり(第2節)、20世紀に入ると、第2次世界大戦後のガリワーレロア基金、フルブライト留学基金以後、圧倒的多数を占めるようになった現在の私費留学までの流れをたどる事ができる(第3節)。現在、世界中の留学生数は150万人を超え(UNESCO年鑑、1999)、日本から海外へ留学する人の数も2000年には193,779人(法務省調べ)を記録している。留学生と留学問題に関する本格的な研究はまだまだこれが先の課題である。

キーワード: 留学、留学問題、海外留学史