The follies of institutional wisdom:
Henri-Frederic Amiel and the Japan Chronicle
of Kobe, 1902-1940

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The follies of institutional wisdom: Henri-Frédéric Amiel and the *Japan Chronicle* of Kobe, 1902–1940

Peter O’Connor

In April 1998 I joined the newly-formed Faculty of Contemporary Society as an Associate Professor. It was an exciting time to enter our university. The new faculty, which was headed by the distinguished sociologist of education, Ushiogi Morikazu, set economic historians among psychologists of disaster, scholars of gender studies, the sociology of education, political science, literature, Buddhism, anthropology, economics and among them, the author, a historian of the media of Asia.

Professor Ushiogi sent teachers and students to plant trees in the Philippines and research birth control in Thailand. He set up a progressive language education programme, hiring scholars with a humanities speciality in addition to their language teaching experience. Ushiogi’s creative vision, personal warmth and commitment to our students were politely acknowledged, but he came to represent a road not taken. Without Professor
Ushiogi, and despite the best endeavours of his successor, Takemura Juichi, to lead and inspire this brave experiment, the Faculty of Contemporary Society lost momentum and direction and eventually closed its doors.

As a result, our university lost sight of the most precious capacity that a university can provide: the capacity to transform its students through learning. We may have become retrospectively wiser following this experience, but no future benefit was laid in store. From then on, our focus was on amassing educational hardware – a new campus, new buildings – but the software, the people with that transformative capacity, were either ignored or simply not hired – until very recently.

The Swiss moral philosopher Henri-Frédéric Amiel (1821–1881) was a great believer in collective rather than individual wisdom. As Amiel wrote,

> Each man’s experience starts again from the beginning. Only institutions grow wiser: they accumulate collective experience; and, owing to this experience and this wisdom, men subject to the same rules will not see their own nature changing, but their behaviour gradually transformed (Amiel, Henri-Frédéric, 1889).

Over time, many institutions have tried to apply Amiel’s thinking. However, many educational institutions have, by example, discounted it, which is surprising because of all institutions, one would expect schools and universities to be best positioned to cultivate institutional wisdom and so to transform their students’ understanding.

Like any other country, Japan has educational institutions that neither fail nor succeed but reach a plateau of relative competence in which the determinants of success are its position in the educational league tables (the ‘rankings’) and therefore the social capital of the institution rather than what Voltaire would call the cultivation of its garden.

In this essay, I shall discuss not an educational but a commercial institution, hoping thereby to illustrate the human challenges to the wisdom of all institutions, be they educational, commercial, governmental, military or even religious. Needless to say, any similarities between the institutional case study that follows and the experience of succeeding institutions are purely coincidental.

My subject is an English-language newspaper first published as a Weekly in 1902, and last published as part of the Japan Times in 1942, the Japan Chronicle of Kobe.

The Japan Chronicle was the best of Japan’s pre-war English-language newspapers. Its news reports were the most informative and its essays and opinion pieces represented the cream of Japanese and expatriate intellectual life and scholarship. Chronicle writers and editors demonstrated a sure grasp of contemporary events, and two of its three editors were, in their day, among the most perceptive writers on Japan anywhere.
Robert Young founded the *Japan Chronicle* and in thirty-one years made its reputation for fierce but scrupulous engagement with the politics and society of contemporary Japan. During his fourteen years as editor, Arthur Morgan Young built strongly on this foundation, and in 1936 was banned from re-entering Japan for his pains. In the last five years of the *Chronicle*, Young’s widow, Annie, who in 1925 had left Kobe for San Francisco and there married a businessman named Harloe. Ruling the paper from San Francisco until 1935, when she returned to Kobe for five years, the pragmatic Annie Harloe ensured that the *Japan Chronicle* became a media satellite of the Japanese Foreign Office, from 1938–1940 distributing propaganda to the world on Japan’s agenda in Asia and in December 1940 selling the entire newspaper to official interests.

Although undoubtedly a good companion and an excellent mother to Robert Young’s four children, Annie became the author of most of the *Chronicle’s* misfortunes after her husband’s death. As the widow of the founding editor and the owner of the newspaper, she was able to insist on the appointment of Douglas Young as Publisher, despite his terrible judgement, impetuous nature, alcoholism and general incompetence. Following the barring of Robert Young’s successor as editor, Arthur Morgan Young, from Japan in 1936, Annie insisted on the promotion of the capable but self-serving Assistant Editor, Edwin Allington Kennard, to the Editor’s chair.

Sometime between his appointment and his departure from Japan in December 1940, Kennard and a small group of administrators round him including the business editor Sam Fuller and the owner, Annie Harloe, began accepting semi-official subsidies in exchange for taking a less critical view of Japan and its agenda in East Asia, most notably in China, Korea and Formosa. From 1938, Kennard’s group were completely under the thumb of the Gaimushō propaganda bureau, the Gaimushō Jōhōbu. Annie Harloe was able to put the *Chronicle’s* hard-won credibility up for sale because, as widow of the founder, her word could not be challenged. Ultimately, Annie benefited considerably from the sale of the *Japan Chronicle* to its semi-official rival, the *Japan Times*, for a sum ‘considerably in excess’ of $300,000, a colossal figure for a newspaper with a circulation seldom higher than 3,000 copies but with a global credibility hugely out of proportion to its circulation, described by Bertrand Russell as “the best local newspaper in the world”. How were institutional nepotism, fear and favour allowed to triumph so completely at the *Japan Chronicle* of Kobe in the final years of the ‘devil’s decade’, the 1930s?

**Early days: Robert Young (1858–1922), founder, proprietor and Editor, 1891–1922**

Robert Young’s writings are easy to study in surviving issues of his newspaper but, as others have found, there is little biographical information on the man himself. Robert Young was born in Westminster, London, on 9 October 1858, one of four children, the others
being George, Andrew and Margaret. The Youngs, who were both Scottish, were not wealthy, but they had sufficient means to see their son into the ‘Westminster Training School’, and then a printer’s apprenticeship with the Bible publishers Spottiswoode. Robert Young took to his work and became a compositor and then Reader on the *Saturday Review*. The work was arduous, but it suited Young’s passion for accuracy.

Young’s parents were regular churchgoers, but both Robert and his brother George became interested in Positivism (before the term atheism was coined), and began attending lectures and courses at the South Place Religious Society (renamed the Ethical Society in 1887) in Moorgate, EC. Dr. Moncure Conway, the American anti-slavery campaigner and revolutioniser of religious thought, who presided over South Place from 1864–1897, became a huge inspiration to Young and his brother George, who would both name their future homes, and Robert his first son, ‘Conway’ in his memory. At South Place, Robert Young also came to know Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891), the first militant Atheist. A large portrait of Bradlaugh would later dominate the *Japan Chronicle* offices in Kōbe.

Early in life Young became one of that awkward brigade who mean what they say and act accordingly. Through lectures and study groups at South Place, and the influence of Conway and Bradlaugh, he developed an opposition to worship that would only harden with the death of two of his children in Japan, and would be observed in a clause of his Will directing that ‘no Christian religious ceremony or service be performed over my remains’. Trained to respect the fact, to ferret out cant and compromise and to distrust unthinking ceremony, Young’s make-up would have set him at odds with late Victorian England, let alone Japan as he found it and as it would develop.

Robert Young and his Japan-born but English wife, Annie (née Crockett) first came to Japan in 1888, following Young’s successful interview for a post as manager of the *Hiogo News* (1868–1898) of Kobe. In 1891, Young left the *Hiogo News* to establish, at the age of thirty-three, the *Kobe Chronicle*, with a starting capital of ¥1000. There were no assistants or reporters in the first three years, and Annie Young helped her husband with proof-reading and numerous other tasks. When business picked up, Mrs Young left to concentrate on family life.

The first issue of the *Kobe Chronicle* appeared on 2 October 1891. On 3 July 1897, Young began a weekly edition. In 1898, Young bought the *Hiogo News* from the Kobe syndicate that had previously employed him, ran it as a separate paper with its own editor, B.A. Hale, and hired staff from England for both papers. Just after the sale, a fire destroyed the entire *Hiogo News* plant and most of the files. Undaunted, Young found jobs at the *Kobe Chronicle* for the *Hiogo News* staff and ran the *Hiogo News* title under the *Chronicle* masthead. On 8 January 1902, the *Kobe Weekly Chronicle* became the *Japan Weekly Chronicle*. On 5 January 1905, Young renamed the daily edition of the *Kobe Chronicle* the *Japan Chronicle* and the paper grew from four to eight pages. In 1905, the new title marked the
Chronicle’s popularity, as the best-selling English-language newspaper in Japan, and reflected Young’s wish to gain a wider constituency for his paper, which ‘took the world as its province’.

Thus, within a few years of his arrival in Japan, Robert Young had established himself as a newspaperman in Japan and had become, if not a pillar of the Kobe community, an active participant. Here is Young as his sometime leader writer Lafcadio Hearn saw him in 1894: ‘Young is hearty and juvenile in appearance - serious face - dark beard - used to be a proof-reader on the Saturday Review, for which some culture is necessary. Is a straight thorough English radical. We are in perfect sympathy on all questions’.

Hearn’s last point goes some way towards explaining the ambivalence of Young’s position in Kobe and in Japan’s expatriate community. By temperament and upbringing, as a matter of principle (or disbelief), and above all because he felt that his work required it of him, Young’s outlook was invariably liberal, often radical and sometimes socialist. On labour relations, armaments and militarism, on the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, on communism, on Japan’s wartime plutocracy and on her political development Young’s approach was always liberal. Not only did Young advance his own leftist views, but he published a regular diet of notable foreign and Japanese commentators in the Chronicle: Bertrand Russell, Yoshino Sakuzo, Kagawa Toyohiko, Nitobe Inazō, Ōzaki Yukio, Sakatani Yoshiro and others.

Young and his newspaper soon gained a feisty reputation in Japan, largely through a series of clashes with Captain Francis Brinkley (1841–1912) and his newspaper, the Japan Weekly Mail. Like its junior contemporary, the Japan Times, the Mail was a semi-official organ, promoting and defending Japan to the English-speaking world and receiving subsidies and other benefits from the Japanese government in return. Brinkley’s Mail defended ‘squeeze’ among government officials and the sale of young girls into prostitution by their parents. Reports of Japanese atrocities in Korea were ‘iniquitous falsehoods’ drummed up by ‘the hostile orchestra’ of the Japan Herald, Japan Gazette, and Kobe Chronicle (‘the Kobe Quibbler’ to Mail readers). As a contemporary sniped, ‘It is impossible to conceive Captain Brinkley in a position antagonistic to the government. The training of long years will suffice to deliver him from that unenviable predicament’.

The Chronicle decried Brinkley’s indiscriminate promotion of Japanese causes. In 1922, Young’s obituary maintained that ‘none of Robert Young’s opinions was stronger than this, that paid advocacy is not a proper function of the Press’. But Young’s own record was not without blemish. In the early nineties, he accepted government funds to argue the case for ending extraterritoriality. It may have been in recognition of this campaign that in 1903 Young had an audience with the Meiji Emperor (an honour never granted to Brinkley, who was asked to wait outside the reception hall on the one occasion he came close to an audience).

Having little Japanese also made Young a less mellow observer than he might have been.
Frank Brinkley's excellent command of the language brought him close to Itō Hirobumi and the Meiji elite, and this intimacy helped him to appreciate the Japanese perspective. Brinkley's comfortable Meath squirearchy, Dungannon School and Trinity background and his position as a scion of the Protestant ascendancy helped set him at ease among the oligarchs. Coming from more ordinary stock did not prevent Young from being on good terms with leading Japanese politicians, among them Tokonami Takejirō and Hara Kei, but Young's closest Japanese associates were all radical journalists and intellectuals, and he felt little pressure to toe the official line.

The pro-Japanese tendency of Robert Young's campaign against extraterritoriality was balanced by a parallel effort to prevent the surrender of the private interests of foreign residents along with their extra-territorial privileges, most notably the 'perpetual' foreign leaseholders' exemption from the Japanese house-tax, a question eventually settled in the foreign residents' favour by the International Court at The Hague.11

Young's relationship with the Kōbe community was never cosy, given that their roots were almost entirely commercial, but the house tax campaign and another that Young and the British Association of Japan fought against the British Status of Aliens Act, forbidding British children of parents born abroad from taking British nationality, were both followed keenly both in Kobe and most British settlers in Japan, including Young's rival, Frank Brinkley, whose children benefited. In November 1922, in the week that Young died, his friend Gershon Stewart MP forced an amendment through the Commons and Young's initiative became British law.

In 1910, during an extended visit to England,12 Young was interviewed by the Daily News about the High Treason Incident (Taigyaku Jiken) of 1910, in which several hundred socialists and anarchists were arrested in Japan and twenty-six, including Kōtoku Shūsui, charged with plotting to assassinate the Emperor.13 Young described the press blackout in Japan and questioned the validity of the trial by the Court of Cassation as '...both unconstitutional and unprecedented. I understand that the Court of Cassation will try the twenty-six men and women in camera, so they are to have no public trial, and no chance of appeal, and we shall never know the facts'. In a letter to The Times Young described the trial as 'unjust in the extreme'.14

Japan engaged in some well-planned news management to prepare Western opinion for a severe decision in the High Treason trial, putting out notices through Reuters in September 1910 and giving advance notice of Chief Prosecutor Hiranuma Kiichirō's decision to the Jiji Shimpō and to the Tokyo correspondent of the North China Herald. An official press conference was held for foreign newsmen in Tokyo on 16 January 1911. Two days later, the Court of Cassation commuted twelve sentences to life imprisonment and handed the death sentence to Kōtoku Shūsui and eleven others.15

Robert Young was one among a very few informed opponents of this process and
these decisions. He acted as a radical gadfly, stinging not only the Japanese judiciary but also the conscience of the Japanese press, declaring in his letter to *The Times*, ‘the mouths of the accused have been shut, and any newspaper which dared give publicity to their defence would have been prosecuted under the law’. Kōtoku himself had been a journalist on the once-radical Yorozu Chōhō, and the silence of the Japanese papers over his fate marked a watershed in Japanese press history.

The High Treason Incident was one of a number of issues of national significance on which Japan’s independent English-language press ventured far sharper comment than the vernacular press. Writers like Robert Young, his successor (but not his relation) Morgan Young and Hugh Byas at the *Japan Advertiser* were not restrained by the same loyalties or hierarchies as Japanese newspapermen. As nationalist sentiment increasingly modified independent comment in Japan, the gap widened between the English-language press and the vernacular press reporting of major issues. In Robert Young’s heyday as editor, this divergence was most obvious in the two presses’ coverage of the High Treason Incident, the wars with China and Russia, the ‘White Rainbow’ incident (*hakkō jiken*),16 in which the Terauchi government came down heavily on the *Osaka Asahi Shinbun* during the Rice Riots of 1918, for hinting at a celestial portent of military government or assassination of a member of the Imperial family, the allied intervention in Siberia, the Korean independence movement of 1919–20, and in 1920–22, the question of the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Under Morgan Young, the gap widened further, especially after 1931.

An important element in the *Chronicle*’s criticism of Japanese attitudes to expatriates and foreign powers was its perception of a lack of reciprocity between the rights enjoyed by Japanese in America, Canada and Great Britain (although these did not include extraterritoriality), and the rights of expatriates in Japan. In frequent editorials, the *Chronicle* called for greater reciprocity. In 1911, Japan was attempting to renegotiate treaties made with Britain dealing with Conventional Tariffs. Reuters, in their reports, were advancing the Japanese view that the agreements reached in 1899 were ‘one-sided’. In a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, Young wrote, ‘There is, it is true, a lack of equity and reciprocity in the existing treaties with Japan, but it is not the Japanese who are entitled to complain’. To Young, the inequities were obvious: land ownership, the franchise, the exclusion of non-Japanese ships from Japan’s coastal trade, and the exclusion of British residents in Japan from holding shares in companies to which the Japanese government granted subsidies despite their paying both Imperial (British) and local taxes.17

Young’s beliefs kept him out of church, but as a lifelong Spencerian, he went out of his way ‘to teach the Christians Christianity’, notably the foreign missionaries protesting the harshness of Japan’s administration in Korea. As Young wrote in a late letter to Bertrand Russell, ‘The missionaries have always been puzzled that I should so stoutly defend the right of Christian missionaries in Korea to preach their doctrines without let or hindrance,
despite the fact that I am a notorious unbeliever and a keen critic of them and their beliefs. The idea that one can defend the right of others to teach what he does not himself believe permeates very slowly into their minds.\textsuperscript{18}

All three of his sons served in the 1914–18 war, but Young detested militarism, in Japan as in Britain and America. The \textit{Chronicle} was highly critical of Britain’s policy in South Africa before and during the Boer War, and of international intervention in Peking in the Boxer crisis. During Japan’s 1894–5 War with China, Young’s network of contacts in East Asia enabled the \textit{Chronicle} to enhance its reputation by the breadth and accuracy of its war news, and it gained a world scoop on the attack on Formosa. This report and forecasts of an overwhelming Japanese victory were taken as championing the Japanese cause, and during the war patriotic lantern processions would pause outside the \textit{Chronicle} offices to cheer Young and his staff. A decade later, when the \textit{Chronicle} refused to support Japan’s war with Russia, the lantern processions fell silent as they passed the \textit{Chronicle} building.\textsuperscript{19}

Young’s principles increasingly set him at odds with Japan’s foreign policy. As one obituary put it: ‘Subsequent developments - the administration and annexation of Korea, the securing of rights in Manchuria - were contrary to his political philosophy, and he viewed with dislike the whole drift of Japanese policy as inimical to the sound development of the country and the true happiness of the people’.\textsuperscript{20} The \textit{Chronicle}’s stand often attracted charges of being anti-Japanese. Responding, in November 1921 to one such article in \textit{Chūō Kōron}, Young maintained that he criticized Japan for the good of the Japanese: ‘…it is the Japanese people who have obtained advantage by the criticism of individual cases of injustice. Again, it is the Japanese people who will gain most from a decline in the power of the militarists who have exerted so much influence on the country’s foreign policy for the last thirty years…It is the Japanese people who would benefit and to describe criticism along these lines as anti-Japanese evinces a strange lack of perception’.\textsuperscript{21}

Even his obituary notice admits of Young, ‘Occasionally the amount of artillery, which he employed, gave the impression that his opponent was more formidable than was really the case’.\textsuperscript{22} Young’s close friend, the Kōbe businessman David James, also felt that Young went too far. ‘After the First World War,’ he wrote, ‘I saw more and more of Robert Young. By then, he was more a destructive critic of Japan than a constructive one. I felt that his work …and influence in Japanese progressive circles was being defeated by carping criticism’.

The summer of 1917 saw the first issue of the \textit{New East}, ‘a monthly review, in English and Japanese, of thought and achievement in the eastern and western worlds’, edited by J.W. Robertson-Scott. With Hugh Byas as Business Manager, Frank Ashton-Gwatkin, then a language trainee at the Yokohama consulate, helping out on a voluntary basis, and Nitobe Inazō translating and advising, Robertson-Scott had assembled a gifted team.

Some in Whitehall had dared to hope that in wartime even Robert Young would pull his punches for an enterprise designed to harmonize relations between the two allies in
the face of a determined enemy, but Young did the New East no favours. ‘Our own impression after perusal of the first number is that of a compound of Titbits and the Review of Reviews, with a dash of the Daily Mail’, he wrote in the Chronicle. In a later review, Young trashed a New East article by Lord Curzon on ‘The Common Ideals of Japan and Britain’, with telling references to Itō’s Commentaries to illustrate divergences between the ‘two island empires’. He lost no opportunity to harry the New East until its collapse in 1918.

Young and the Chronicle made few friends at the Foreign Office or at the Tokyo embassy. In December 1917, Sir Conyngham Greene, the British Ambassador, acknowledged that the editors of the “Japan Chronicle” are very capable and well-informed …their criticisms on passing events show a close acquaintance with the past history of this country and with the published writings and speeches as well as the acts, of public men not only in Japan but also, to some extent, in China …[However the Chronicle writers] …seem to suffer from an exaggerated critical faculty with regard to the actions and sayings of all their fellow men and especially those in official positions - an idiosyncrasy which, in the case of the various Japanese with whose words and deeds the “Chronicle” is naturally called upon to deal most frequently, leads to a disposition to dwell unduly upon every fault and to overlook the arguments or excuses which might be cited in favour of the persons criticised… Such a disposition, whilst apt to obscure the otherwise brilliant gifts of these writers, might nevertheless do little harm, since the Japanese recognize only the apparent ill-will of the paper and have ceased almost entirely, to pay attention to the views expressed by it; but, unfortunately, the opinions held and voiced by the British communities not only in the chief ports of Japan but also in the small mining camps of Corea, and especially in Kobe itself, are to a very great extent inspired by this journal, which thus, on the whole, exercises a detrimental influence on the relations between Japan and the British Empire.

Greene and Young were bound to see things differently. For Greene, Japan was an ally to be treated with care and respect, particularly in wartime. In Young’s sense of the function of an independent press, Japan and the Japanese were subject to the same unfaltering scrutiny as the rest of the world. Pleasing impressions of Japan that harmonized the Alliance were not the proper work of the Chronicle. Thus, by the early 1920s, Robert Young’s Japan Chronicle was celebrated as an uncompromisingly truthful reporter of Japanese life to the foreign community and the world at large, and deprecated as an unforgivably anti-Japanese paper that pampered the prejudices of the expatriate community and stained the image of Japan around the world. Both views attest to the influence of the Chronicle. By 1922, it had become that rare thing, a local newspaper with an international readership and influence. In addition to a solid subscription
list among English-speaking expatriates in Japan, Korea and China, the Chronicle was read in all the embassies of these countries, and by newspaper men and opinion leaders in Great Britain, Europe and the United States.

The beginning of the end: Arthur Morgan Young (1874–1942), Editor, 1922–1936

Robert Young died suddenly of a heart attack at his home in Kōbe on the night of 7 November 1922. He was sixty-four. The Youngs had five children: Arthur Conway, Douglas George, Eric Andrew, a daughter who died in childhood, and Ethel Margaret Young. The eldest boy, Arthur, had died on service in France in 1917. Douglas, the second son, had served in the Air Force as a Captain and had become a flying instructor in Kōbe after the war. The third son, Eric, had been a corporal dispatch rider on the Western Front before returning to manage the Chronicle presses. Ethel, the youngest child, had married Reginald Stewart-Scott RNR in Portsmouth, England, in March 1921, and in May 1922, a daughter was born.26

Robert Young’s estate including the Japan Chronicle business and property, was valued for probate at £749.11s.3d. Under his Will, ownership of the Chronicle passed to a trust, of which Robert’s youngest son Eric was the sole member.27 Eric now became managing director of the Japan Chronicle and the British journalist and writer on Japan, Arthur Morgan Young, who had been assistant editor since 1911, became editor.

In the summer of 1922, the new Mainichi Shinbun English edition had poached some of the Chronicle’s Japanese linotype print workers, defections which brought the paper to its knees, as new staff had to be found and trained up from the beginning. Robert Young bought two new printing machines and engaged new operators from England, but for a month, the daily paper came out in a smaller edition, and the Chronicle lost readers. Now, Eric Young had to meet the payroll of large advertising and printing departments, a team of translators and a sizeable editorial department (including his new editor at ¥1000 a month), cable and supplies costs, and find his own salary. These were daunting problems to someone with no financial training or management experience and in 1926, Eric Young went missing during an ocean cruise with his wife Violet, and suicide was assumed.28

It is difficult to find anyone with a good word for Douglas Young, who now, at the insistence of his mother and Robert Young’s widow, Annie Young, replaced Eric as managing director. The decision was to have far-reaching consequences for the institutional credibility and reputation of the Japan Chronicle and was made purely on the basis of Mrs Young’s relationship to the late editor and owner, her husband Robert Young. Douglas Young, Eric’s elder brother, was a heavy drinker and notoriously ill tempered. Tokyo Embassy officials described him as ‘a half-crazy misanthrope with a grudge against the Japanese and ourselves’, and as being ‘always against the government’.29 The historian of expatriate Japan, Harold Williams,
who knew him personally, wrote that Douglas Young ‘...was not a journalist, nor was he a person of any great ability nor business experience’.\(^3^0\) Even the Gaimushō described him as inexperienced (mukeiken), arrogant (gōgan) and bureaucratic (kanryōteki).\(^3^1\)

Morgan Young had been on good terms with Eric Young, but under his successor Douglas Young’s management the atmosphere became hard and unforgiving. In the spring of 1930, Morgan Young found that his salary had been docked ¥65 for ‘free advertisement’ because he had reprinted in the Chronicle an interesting American review of his book Japan in Recent Times.\(^3^2\) At the same time, the Chronicle’s financial situation continued to deteriorate. Desperate to cut costs, Douglas Young stopped paying the salary of a Japanese employee of the advertising department and fired two other advertising staff. In 1927, in a characteristically intemperate move, he closed down the advertising department altogether. In 1929, he stopped publishing the Japan Chronicle Year Book, then closed the Japan Chronicle Press and fired its staff of forty-five.

The Chronicle’s financial problems had not been irreversible in 1926, but by these sackings and closures, Douglas Young cut off useful revenue and made recovery entirely dependent on the fortunes of the newspaper. But the Chronicle was on its way out. Foreign news stopped coming in when cable bills went unpaid and the Chronicle began copying items from other papers and using translations of vernacular press reports as page-fillers. By the early 1930s, Morgan Young’s essays and opinion pieces were almost the only fresh items in the paper, and circulation had halved to a couple of thousand copies as readers moved to the blander pastures of the Japan Advertiser.

Unlike Robert Young, whose writing was concentrated on the Chronicle and correspondence for the Manchester Guardian, Morgan Young wrote extensively for other publications. He also published four books: Japan in Recent Times:1912–1926 (1929), Books on the Far East (1934), Imperial Japan: 1926–1938, (1938) and The Rise of a Pagan State: Japan’s Religious Background (1939)!\(^3^2\) Morgan Young was very close to his predecessor, even in his religious outlook. During his time as editor, the Chronicle’s focus changed little: Japan’s lack of reciprocity, the dangers of militarism, official attempts to control ‘thought’, the suppression of the socialist and labour movement, Japan’s sponsorship of the opium trade in China, and the errors of emperor worship, (nicely instanced by Morgan Young as ‘the folly of dying for an enlarged photograph’).\(^3^3\)

Conyngham Greene may have had reason to maintain that Robert Young’s Chronicle was ignored by the Japanese, but under Morgan Young it was taken very seriously indeed. Morgan, Douglas and Eric Young were under constant police observation, (Morgan Young liked to bamboozle the gendarmes by signing himself ‘Douglas Young’ in hotel registers), and the Chronicle was often marked for close inspection (sasatsu yō-chūi shi) by the Home Ministry (Naimushō). Between 1932–1937, thirty-five issues were prohibited from sale and distribution by order of the Home Ministry, eighty-three inspired official
warnings, and on three occasions articles were published which led to punishment of the editor by order of the Kobe district court.\textsuperscript{34} The Gaimushō also kept a close eye on Chronicle articles, translating and analysing their content as a matter of course.

On 15 September 1936, a Chronicle article suggesting Japan compensate the families of those Chinese killed in the recent Chengdu and Pakhui incidents led to the official suppression of the entire edition. Under circumstances that remain unclear, Morgan Young resigned from the Chronicle. Although he considered the offending article ‘as harmless a lucubration as was ever written’, Young seems to have been under official pressure to resign, remarking that ‘Mr. Amu [Amō Eiji, then head of the Gaimushō Jōhōbu] flatters me by being interested in my departure’.\textsuperscript{35} In October 1936, Young sailed for a holiday in England.

In May 1937, Morgan Young was appointed Tokyo correspondent for the Manchester Guardian but his application for a permit to return to Japan was turned down by the London embassy. Young settled down in London and in Cowley, Oxford. In August 1938, he began a ten-page fortnightly newsletter, The Far East Survey, published from his London home.\textsuperscript{36} The Far East Survey was critical of Japan’s activities in China and may have been financed by the Chinese Nationalists.\textsuperscript{37} Later in 1938, Young published Imperial Japan and contributed articles to Asia magazine, the Contemporary Review, Pacific Affairs, The Times and other organs.

There is no sign that anyone at the Foreign Office felt that Morgan Young’s twenty-five years’ experience as a commentator on Japan might help the Far East Department to read and understand the country. In mid-December 1938, the ex-Japan diplomat Harold Parlett was asked by London University to chair a lecture by Morgan Young on ‘Imperial Japan’. Parlett sought guidance from his old employers and was advised that ‘...while we do not wish to discourage you in any official sense from accepting the invitation, you yourself might find it somewhat embarrassing, in view of your past and present associations with Japan, were Mr. Young to make disparaging references to the Japanese Government and perhaps even to the Throne’. Parlett made his excuses and the talk went ahead under another chairman.\textsuperscript{38}

In retirement, Morgan Young continued to write about Japan and China and to pester the Foreign Office about the fate of former associates captured by the Japanese. He died in Oxford on 3 January 1942, aged about 68. His wife, Louisa May, and his two children, Ernest, who had been a businessman in Japan, and Lucy, survived him.\textsuperscript{39} Louisa Young died in November 1970.

\textbf{Not with a bang but a whimper: Edwin Allington Kennard (1902–77), Editor, 1936–1940}

Following Morgan Young’s departure, Douglas Young retired to England and was replaced
by Stanley Foley, who became Business Manager of the *Chronicle*. The British journalist, Edwin Allington Kennard had been assistant editor for nine years and he now became editor of the *Chronicle*. Kennard had been in the Royal Navy for four years, then a journalist for another four years on the *Peking & Tientsin Times* before joining the *Chronicle* in March 1927.

Working in an even more forbidding atmosphere for independent comment, Kennard soon faced the same problems as his predecessors. In August 1937, the *Chronicle* published an offensive article and in mid-October Kennard was summoned by the Köbe district court and briefly imprisoned.

In June and November 1940, fearing that, as the *Japan Advertiser* had just done, the *Chronicle* might sell out to Japanese interests, the British Embassy in Tokyo offered financial assistance to the *Chronicle*. Accepting the second offer, Foley assured the embassy that a sale was out of the question. As the British Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie later reported, ‘This was, of course, at a time when arrangements for the sale had already reached an advanced stage’. On 17 December 1940, Craigie learned that the *Chronicle* was to be sold to the *Japan Times & Advertiser*, and the transaction took place on 21 December. As Craigie’s vexation, on 14 March 1941, on the eve of his departure from Japan, Mr Foley confessed to Craigie that the Gaimushō had been subsidizing the *Chronicle* since 1938. On condition the *Chronicle* temper its editorial line on Japan and keep the subsidy secret, ¥3,000 a month had been distributed among Foley himself, Edwin Kennard, and the Young family.

Or what was left of it. Arthur had died in 1917, Eric had committed suicide in 1926, and Douglas had died in the late 1930s. Ethel, the only surviving child, had divorced Stewart-Scott and removed to Bournemouth. As the principal beneficiary of the Young Estate, Ethel, whom Harold Williams has described rather primly as ‘...an inebriate and a rather notorious person’, had since 1938 been paid ¥1,000 a month by the Gaimushō and her daughter, now aged nineteen, ¥200 a month. As editor, Edwin Kennard received ¥230 a month. As Business Manager, Foley received ¥200. The remaining ¥1,370 a month covered ‘other expenses’.

In December 1940, Foley and Kennard were paid ‘substantial retiring allowances’ and Annie Harloe and her daughter Ethel Stewart-Scott received the lion’s share of the sum ‘considerably in excess of ¥300,000’ paid in foreign currency by the Gaimushō (through the *Japan Times & Advertiser*) for the *Japan Chronicle*. This price was more than fair if we recall that in 1924, when the Chronicle was a going concern, Robert Young’s gross estate, including the *Japan Chronicle*, was valued at £749.11s.3d.

Craigie was irritated by Foley’s deception, but he seems to have felt that Edwin Kennard had concealed the subsidy out of loyalty to his de facto employer, Mrs. Harloe, who would have had to give her assent to his breaking the terms of her deal with the Gaimushō. Not
without misgivings, Craigie recommended Kennard for a post with the Malayan Broadcasting Corporation in Singapore. The last nominally independent editor of the Japan Chronicle sailed from Yokohama on 24 March 1941.

Whatever his involvement in the subornment and sale of the Chronicle, after the fall of Singapore, Kennard’s BBC radio broadcasts from Southeast Asia did much to enlighten British listeners during the Pacific War. In peacetime, Kennard returned to newspaper work on this time the Straits Times in Singapore. He died in retirement in Groby, Leicester, on 27 June 1977, aged seventy-five.

As for the Chronicle, under the wing of the Japan Times & Advertiser its subsidy went up to £4000 a month and, as Craigie reported, it became ‘gradually more pro-Axis until at present there is nothing to distinguish it from the Japan Times & Advertiser’. After the sale, the British Embassy huffily did what it had so often threatened to do when the Chronicle was a less emasculated organ, and cancelled its subscription. Edited and staffed by Gaimushō appointees, the Chronicle continued to publish a daily edition in Kobe and in Tokyo as part of the Japan Times in Tokyo.

Robert Craigie’s disappointment over the Chronicle’s subsidy and sale to Japanese interests was real enough, but he might have seen it coming. Even in wartime, with three of his sons serving on the Western front, Robert Young’s Japan Chronicle never beat the drum for Britain. In all its unsubsidised history, from 1891–1938, the Chronicle never put Britain’s (or Japan’s) national interest before what it saw as the facts of an issue. Foley and Kennard had acted in bad faith, but representing an institution that had scorned unthinking loyalty for almost half a century, it would have been difficult to accuse them of treachery.

The foreign experience in East Asia has been described as ‘a network of multiple overlapping imperialisms, in the interstices of which opportunistic groups carved out new livelihoods and new roles’.45

Robert Young, Morgan Young and Edwin Kennard lived and worked in these interstices. As much as any Parsee merchant or White Russian settler, as much as any American or Ulsterman, the editors of the Japan Chronicle sought their own fulfilment, from Robert Young and Morgan Young’s radical, engaged Positivism to Edwin Kennard’s ‘substantial retiring allowance’ from the sale of the Chronicle. What made the Japan Chronicle so readable was not only its critical line on Japan, but its equally forthright line on British and American affairs. It is a measure of their independence and resourcefulness that today the Japan Chronicle belongs more to the history of Japan than it does to the history of Britain.

Beyond that, the failure of the Japan Chronicle to fulfil its promise as a credible alternative to extreme nationalism in Japan was brought about, not by the censor, not even by official campaigns against its survival, but by the institutional folly of the Young family itself.

The Chronicle failed as a newspaper because the owner’s wife, Annie Harloe, devel-
oped a court of admirers, promoting family members and favoured but unqualified friends to key positions, resulting in an incompetent, subsidized publication that would sell its credibility to the highest bidder – the Japanese government. Having compromised the feisty, highly individual polemic of her late husband’s newspaper, Annie Harloe sold it for a vast profit to the nation to which it had consistently shown truth to power since the turn of the century.

Thus, as an institution, the Japan Chronicle sold its soul and surrendered its credibility to a government mouthpiece in the late 1930s, supporting a war its editors had always opposed, and displaying the very ignorance, superstition and populism that it had for all but the last two years of its political life so thoroughly disdained.

Henri-Frédéric Amiel was an insightful moral philosopher, but in writing that institutions always grow wiser, he appears to have discounted the inevitable propensity of institutions to breed and to feed nepotism, self-interest and mediocrity. Just as these qualities flourished in the dying years of the Japan Chronicle, so they continue to flourish in institutions the world over, for such is the folly of institutional wisdom.

Reading


Ebihara Hachirō (1934) Nihon oji shinbun zasshi shi (History of western-language newspapers in Japan), Tokyo: Taiseidō.


Notes

1 Theodore van Doorn worked on the Chronicle in 1940: “the ground floor was the printing presses, one climbed one flight of stairs to the office floor after entering the bldg.’s main door. To the left was a wooden counter behind which there was the Japanese staff for advertising and accounting. There was one wide corridor to the rear and the first door was Foley’s. The second door was Kennard’s. Opposite was the top of stairs down to the printing dept. At the end of the hall was the editorial staff. Upon opening the door, you faced a counter behind which were shelves of foreign journals such as Times of London, Manchester Guardian, NY Times, etc. Also extending to a table behind the counter holding more papers.” Theodore van Doorn to the author, May 2009.


3 UK Family Division, High Court: Administration granted to George Young, 21 August 1924. Probate Index Effects ref.: 49.3.11.

4 Lafcadio Hearn to B. H. Chamberlain, 23 October 1894. Hearn wrote Kobe Chronicle leaders daily from 11 October 1894 to 14 December 1894, but retired because of problems with his sight. MS6681/1/80: Harold S. Williams Collection, National Library of Australia [hereafter HSW].

5 Brinkley received ¥10,000 a year from both the Nippon Yūsen Kaisha and the Japanese Foreign Office in subventions for the Japan Weekly Mail.

6 Japan Mail: 23 December 1905.


8 Japan Weekly Chronicle: 16 November 1922, p632.

9 Young’s presentation was kept under wraps (Peking & Tientsin Times obit. November 1922). As “M.Y.M.” recalled, ‘a few years ago when Brinkley, Sir Valentine Chirol, and G.E. Morrison paid a visit to the Meiji Emperor, Brinkley was denied access but the others were granted an audience. The Imperial Household Agency explained that “no precedent existed for giving audience to resident journalists, either foreign or Japanese. This answer killed all criticism”’ (“M.Y.M.” ‘Links with the old journalism’ Far East: 13 March 1915, pp.675-676). Morrison and Chirol met the Meiji Emperor in 1909 according to Pearl, 1967, pp.194-196.

10 Nagasaki Press: 1 November 1912.


12 Robert Young edited the Chronicle from 1891–1922, with breaks in 1896, 1906, 1910, 1913–14 and 1919–20. In 1914 Young considered running for Parliament as a Liberal but business called him back to Kōbe. ‘He had a comfortable house on Sydenham Hill and was to be seen every day in the National Liberal Club. The outbreak of the World War [I] raised business questions which required his presence in Japan, and he returned and remained here until his death’ (Hugh Byas, “Twenty Years After” in Contemporary Japan: June 1937, pp.43-51).


For a full account of the *Chronicle’s* line on the Osaka Asahi Shinbun incident, see Kakegawa Tomiko (2001) op cit., *Japan Forum*, n2, pp.31-35.


*The Times*: 9 November 1922.

Young to Bertrand Russell, 27 October 1922, Russell Archive, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University, Ontario, Canada: No. 710.048282.

*Japan Weekly Chronicle*: 10 February 1921, p172.

*Japan Weekly Chronicle*: 16 November 1922.

*Japan Weekly Chronicle*: 16 November 1922.


*Japan Chronicle* (daily): 5 June 1917.

*Japan Chronicle* (daily): 6 June 1917.

FO 371/3235 (F17504/-/23): 3 December 1917, Conyngham Greene to B. Munro Ferguson.

*Japan Weekly Chronicle*: 18 March 1921.

*North China Herald*: 11 November 1922.


‘Misanthrope’: FO 395/447 (P2303/2303/150), T. Snow, Tokyo, to A. Willert, 18 November 1934. ‘against the government’: FO 371/18162 (F392/392/23), Tokyo Chancery to Far East Department, 6 January 1934.

*Diary*, Malcolm Kennedy, 19 March 1930: Malcolm Kennedy papers, Sheffield University, UK. Kennedy’s informant was Harry Griffiths, proprietor of the Kobe bookshop J. L. Thompson & Co.


Morgan Young is usually credited with the authorship of *The Socialist and Labour Movement in Japan* (Kobe, *Chronicle* Reprint), (1921), because his name appears in *katakana* at the back, but the true author was Ivan Kozlov, a Russian political writer who was deported from Kobe to Shanghai in July 1922 (*Japan Weekly Chronicle*, 3 August 1922: ‘The Deportation of Mr. Kozlov’). Young’s name probably appeared on the flyleaf because Kozlov’s would have made publication more difficult.

Young (1939) p.139.


A. Morgan Young to Hugh Byas: 18 September 1936, Byas Papers, Yale University Library.

At Connaught Mansions, Victoria Street, Westminster. Subscriptions were 10/- per annum.


Ernest Young died in the 1970s.
Payments were withheld during the anti-British demonstrations in Tokyo in March-August 1939.

With the sale agreed, Annie Harloe had sailed back to San Francisco on the S.S. Kinka Maru in August 1939. She died in 1941.