



IN MEMORIAM

Donald Howard Shively
Professor of East Asian Languages, Emeritus
UC Berkeley
1921 – 2005

Donald Howard Shively, one of the founders of Japanese literary and historical studies in the United States, passed away August 13, 2005 at the age of 84. During his lifetime he witnessed profound changes in the relationship between Japan and the United States, and he was one of the main interpreters of Japanese culture to two generations of students and scholars. Berkeley book- ended his career; it was in what was then the Department of Oriental Languages (now East Asian Languages and Cultures or EALC) that he began his teaching career in 1950 and where he received tenure in 1956. He taught at Stanford University from 1962 to 1964, then moved to Harvard University, where he taught for 20 years as a professor both of literature and history before returning to Berkeley as professor- in- residence and head of the East Asian Library in 1982, positions from which he retired in 1992, after more than four decades of extraordinary commitment and contribution to building the field of Japanese studies in this country.

He was born in Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital city, in 1921, of missionary parents. Though Japan was at that time experiencing a period of unprecedented receptivity to Western political ideals, technology, and fashions, some of the population could still remember the age of shogunal rule and the last years of the country's more than two centuries of enforced seclusion from the Western world. Kyoto in particular was the center of traditional culture, and Shively passed his early years attracted both to ancient Japanese literature, music, and art, and to American sports, at which he excelled at the Canadian Academy in Kôbe, and American jazz. Throughout his life he remained a crack tennis player and aficionado of American popular music.

But that era when Shively could live in the disparate worlds of the Japanese past and the American-influenced present ended with the rise of Japanese militarism in the 1930s. He eventually left Japan for Harvard University, where his studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II, at which point he enlisted in the Marines as a Japanese language officer, rose to the rank of major, and was awarded the Bronze Star. He thereafter returned to Harvard, graduating summa cum laude in 1946, then obtained in rapid succession his master's degree in 1947 and his Ph.D. in 1951 in classical Japanese literature. Few, if any, in that field have mastered in so short a time even the literary tools (classical and modern Japanese and literary Chinese) needed for a doctorate on a topic in premodern Japanese literature, much less completed the necessary research on the topic itself. Shively's speed to degree was matched by the excellence of his doctoral dissertation, "The Love Suicide at Amijima," which provided a translation and study of one of the major plays of Chikamatsu Monzaemon, centering on the conflict between the main character's love for a woman of the pleasure quarters and his duty to his family. The dissertation, with its combination of fluent translation and stylish literary and cultural contextualization, was published by Harvard University Press in 1953 and remains a classic a half century after its appearance; it was reprinted by the University of Michigan Press in 1991.

The dissertation marked the beginning of a professional scholarly career that would focus on the urban life and popular culture of Japan's Early Modern or Edo period (1600–1868), the age when Japan closed its doors to most of the outside world and developed the unique traditions of ukiyo- e woodblock prints, Kabuki drama, and haiku poetry that remain among Japan's most important cultural legacies. Shively went on to write about

Matsuo Bashō, doubtless Japan's most famous classical poet, and then on Kabuki drama and its tense relationship with the shogunate, whose leaders were intent on maintaining a severe Confucian social order in the face of a burgeoning townsman culture, very much as the Japanese government would later curtail individual liberties during Shively's own formative years. The response of Confucian philosophy to social change was the subject of other important works by Shively, including "Motoda Eifu: Confucian Lecturer to the Meiji Emperor," "Nishimura Shigeki, A Confucian View of Modernization," and "The Japanization of the Middle Meiji." His work therefore ran the gamut from recondite philosophy to the history of popular entertainments, in an era when the latter was seldom considered worthy of serious scholarship. He was far ahead of most of his colleagues in recognizing the importance of these popular arts, and was in a sense a precursor of today's field of cultural studies.

Japan's response to modernity and the West, aspects of which Shively had witnessed firsthand, became the subject of a volume he edited in 1971, *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture* (Princeton University Press). The previous year he had coedited another volume, *Personality in Japanese History* (University of California Press), to which he contributed a notable essay on the shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, who ruled during the great cultural efflorescence of the Genroku period, the brilliant age of Bashō and Chikamatsu. In 1991 Shively brought together a lifetime of research in a major article for the *Cambridge History of Japan*, "Popular Culture of the Edo Period," which evokes the panorama of the era's vibrant literary, theatrical, musical, and artistic activity, the society of the licensed pleasure quarters, the birth of commercial publishing, and the role of shogunal censorship.

Even before completing his dissertation, Shively had already assumed his first teaching position, and for the next half-century he provided both personal instruction and a growing body of scholarship to his successors. Professor Susan Matisoff, who is now retired from Berkeley's EALC department, bore witness to his importance to the development of our field when she recalled that when she was an undergraduate, her professor assigned all of Shively's publications. I studied under him years later during my master's program at Harvard, taking his classes on Edo literature and on legal and epistolary styles of classical Japanese, experiencing firsthand his combination of organized exposition and dry wit. I was particularly lucky to have had that opportunity, since few specialists at that time were as well versed as he in those writing styles, which are central to the study of Early Modern texts.

It was as a young professor at Berkeley that Donald Shively began an administrative career matched by few others in the field, serving as the chair of the Center for Japanese Studies. After he arrived at Harvard in 1964, he directed the Japan Institute for eight years, for four of those years also chairing the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations. The range and importance of his professional service to the field is breathtaking. He was editor of the two most important journals in our field, one after the other, for a total of 12 years, and also served for a decade as director of the American Oriental Society. His public service outside the University was equally wide-ranging, including terms as a member of the National Commission for UNESCO, as the chair of the U.S. delegation to the Committee for U.S.- Japan Cultural and Educational Exchange in the Department of State, and as director of the Japan Society of Boston.

He retired from Harvard and returned to the Bay Area after his wife, Professor Mary Elizabeth Berry, herself an eminent historian of premodern Japan, joined Berkeley's Department of History. Here, Shively assumed the leadership of Berkeley's East Asian Library, a particular challenge because of the size and excellence of the collection. One of his most important contributions was bringing a research team from Japan to catalogue the Mitsui Collection, the largest corpus of early Japanese printed books and maps outside Japan, which Berkeley had acquired after the Second World War but had not been able adequately to survey. The collection is enormous and the work on it was prolonged, but a published catalogue resulted that for the first time turned this valuable collection into a useable resource. With characteristic energy and organization, Shively also continued his scholarly research activities, coediting a volume of the *Cambridge History of Japan*, and writing the above-mentioned survey of Edo popular culture for a different volume in the same series, as well as his administrative contributions, serving as director of the Society for Asian Art at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, and then as director of the Japan Society of Northern California.

Shively's groundbreaking research, wide-ranging teaching, and administrative leadership led to the Japanese government awarding him the Order of the Rising Sun in 1982.

I only knew the public and professional Donald Shively. As a young graduate student, I found him dauntingly erudite, and my respect for him only increased after I joined the Berkeley faculty and learned more of the full sweep and importance of his contributions. He used words sparingly and with forethought, and like few others

he knew the value of silence. His generosity was also of a quiet kind; when I began my graduate career at Harvard, he arranged financial support for me, but I would never have known who had initiated it until I was informed by someone else. He was a man of great dignity and depth, and his appreciation of literature, music, and the visual arts was abiding.

The fields of Japanese literature and history have finally come of age in the United States; some Americans now teach Japanese cultural subjects at Japanese universities, and literary and historical journals in that country now routinely publish articles by American scholars. This was not the case when Donald Shively entered the world of academe. What the field is today, it owes in no small part to him.

H. Mack Horton