

# The oyatoi gaikokujin (御雇い外国人) and the Modernization of the Educational System in Meiji Japan

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**Key words:** Japan, Education, Modernization, Oyatoi gaikokujin, Foreign experts

## ABSTRACT

A striking aspect of the history of Japan in the Nineteenth century is the government's employment of thousands of foreigners to aid its modernization. While Japan's leadership drew heavily on the resources of other nations, at the same time they marshaled indigenous resources, selected from among the successful Nineteenth-century Western models of modern development, adhered firmly to a policy of Japanese control and management, assumed total responsibility for the cost of modernizing, and carried their decision to replace foreigners with trained Japanese as soon as possible. The use of foreign instructors and the sending of Japanese students abroad were two important modernization factors in Meiji Japan's experience.

The number of foreigners employed in Japan during the Meiji period is difficult to ascertain. Umetani Noboru estimates it as no less than 800. But Ogata Hiroyasu finds about 800 persons who served as teachers alone. Saigusa Hiroto gives the names of 1377 foreigners who contributed to the technical and industrial development of the country. It would be conservative to estimate the total number of oyatoi as somewhere in the range from 1500 to 2000.

Most of the oyatoi were drawn from the four countries that played the most important part in Japan's foreign relations at that time: Great Britain, France, the United States and Germany. There was a sprinkling of Swiss, Italians, Austrians, Russians, Portuguese and some Chinese. Except for the university of Tokyo, where there were teachers of several different nationalities, clusters of fellow tended to develop in particular lines of work.

The modernization of the educational/school system was based on the American model and the most important oyatoi in this field were David Murray (1830-1905), Marion McCarrell Scott (1843-1922) and George Adams Leland (1850-1924). Thanks to their help and advices, starting from 1886, the Japanese government began to issue a series of laws with which was established an elementary school system, middle school system, normal school system and an imperial university system.