Japanese Culture In Transition

BY SHIRLEY JONES

Dr. Edward Norbeck of the Rice Anthropology Department returned last month from a year of field research in Japan. The National Science Foundation gave him a grant-in-aid for the study of post-war changes in the Japanese culture.

"The nation is fighting its way through a critical period of transition," Dr. Norbeck reported. "There is a critical shortage of housing; therefore, the government is assisting construction. In Tokyo there are several housing projects which hold up to 30,000 people. One is now being completed which will house 300,000.

The public transportation system suffers another indication of the Japanese problem of coping with its large population. The Tokyo subway stations have eighty people hired as "pushers" to cram passengers into the cars. "Believe me, whatever position you're in at the beginning of the ride is yours for the whole trip," Dr. Norbeck said while contorting himself in demonstration.

Crumpled Quarters

"It was very trying for me to be packed into crowds all the time, but the Japanese don't seem to mind," Dr. Norbeck continued. "They have a form of predication for travel; however, the motivation is not to escape being with others." Because living quarters are cramped, the Japanese seek entertainment out-side the home.

The average family income in Japan is approximately five the U.S. average. Food costs about the same, and clothing is also nearly the same. Where the Japanese spend a great deal less is in housing. The Japanese farmers inherit the property of their parents, and young men have found poor to help earn a crust in becoming their wives. The Japanese refer to this as "the bride's family."

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The problem is due to "rainy nagoya," a situation in which the husband takes a job in industry and leaves the farm work to his wife and parents. If a girl chooses to marry the second or third son of a farmer she would have to wait for the return of the parents, and yet a boy finds it hard to interest girls in becoming their wives. French women, on the other hand, have over-all adjusted remarkably. "Actually there are strong sanctions against those who don't adjust," Dr. Norbeck commented. "They're called frudul-and that's taken as a dirty word."

West Vs. Tradition

In their efforts to learn about Western culture the Japanese have found that they can creatively add to it; in the fields of electronics and photography, for instance, the Japanese have made important contributions. On the other hand, some aspects of Western culture have clashed with traditional habits, producing such social problems as juvenile delinquency.

Norbeck

The Norbecks have organized a series of questions and answer programs for the large freshman lecture courses. The review sessions are aimed at giving freshmen a chance to clear up shaky points with seniors in their fields, according to Mike Powers, Norbeck senior fellow.

Power said that it is hoped that for each of the history tutorial sessions the faculty tutorial leaders for the two courses will be present. He added that the programs are designed to give freshmen a chance to ask the most basic questions without feeling self-conscious.

The sessions will be short (45 minutes to 1 hour), and they are not planned to constitute the study efforts of the freshmen involved but to point out directions for effective review of the material covered.

The sessions are scheduled as follows:

- Feb. 24-Chem 129 Wiess
- Feb. 25-Chem 129 Wiess
- Feb. 26-Math 110 CHK 303
- Feb. 27-Math 110 CHK 303
- Mar. 2-Phys 100 RH 110
- Mar. 3-Phys 100 RH 110
- Mar. 7-Hist. 100 CHK 303

Wiess Fellows Initiate Frosh Tutor Program

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