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The Automobile in Japan

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Preface

A symposium was held in the Michio Morishima room at STICERD on 7 April 2005 to discuss aspects of the motor industry in Japan.

Stewart Lone discussed the impact which the introduction of the motor car had on Japan's urban society in the 1920s, especially in the neighbourhood of the city of Kyoto. By way of contrast, Christopher Madeley traced the relationship between Nissan (and its predecessors) and the British motor industry, starting with the construction of the first cars in 1912 by the Kaishinsha Company, using chassis imported from Swift of Coventry.

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Abstracts

Lone: The 1920s saw the emergence in Kansai of modern industrial urban living with the development of the underground, air services; wireless telephones, super express trains etc. Automobiles dominated major streets from the early 1920s in the new Age of Speed. Using Kyoto city as an example, the article covers automobile advertising, procedures for taxis, buses and cars and traffic safety and regulation.

Madeley: Nissan Motor Company had a longer connection with the British industry than any other Japanese vehicle manufacturer. The article traces the relationship through four distinct stages in 1912, the 1930s, 1952 and 1984. Historians of Nissan have concentrated on its links with US industry and neglected those with Britain.

Keywords: transport, automobiles, Kyoto, Datsun, motorbikes, bicycles, Packard, Chevrolet, traffic police, Nissan, Kaishinsha, Austin Seven, Austin-Nissan Agreement, Nisshin

JAPAN AND THE AGE OF SPEED: URBAN LIFE AND THE AUTOMOBILE 1925-1930

Stewart Lone

In 1920s Japan, a term in increasing use was ‘supiido no jidai’ (the age of speed). This phrase reflected a sense of major social change from the end of WW1. Indeed, the 1920s saw the emergence in Japan of what even today is a remarkably familiar style of industrial urban modernity. Modern life is synonymous with movement and, in terms of the rapid movement of people, there was the creation of Asia’s first underground railway in Tokyo (1927); the first use of machines to issue rail tickets in Ueno and Tokyo Stations (1926); while scheduled air services within Japan also began in the early 1920s (from 1931, there were also the first stewardesses or, as they were called at the time ‘air girls’). In the movement of information and imagery, there were graphic advertisements in the Japanese press for easy-to-use Kodak cameras; photographs themselves could be sent by wire; there were wireless telephones; and 1928 saw the first public experiment in Japan with television. Even that most modern form of not moving but settling, the apartment dwelling, dates, in Kyoto at least, from 1924.

Speed and mobility could, of course, be both liberating and threatening. The Italian Futurists glorified speed and destruction, the automobile and the machine gun; later thinkers such as Paul Virilio have emphasized the violence and self-destructiveness inherent in a world addicted to speed. In the media of 1920s Japan, however, the ‘age of speed’ had a broad and largely positive meaning. Thus, for example, a newspaper advert offered a two-minute mix for hot cakes, just the thing, it asserted, for an age of speed; elsewhere, a retailer of shaving equipment made the same claim about his ‘express safety razor’. This was speed and convenience. There was also speed and precision: a super express train began running in Kansai from 1930 and press reports of its maiden voyage noted with pride that it had arrived thirty seconds ahead of schedule. In major rail

stations already by the end of the 1910s, public clocks were being driven by electricity; in June 1920, there was the creation in Japan of the first ‘time memorial day’ (toki no kinenbi). Thus, the elements of the age of speed may be said to include speed itself but also efficiency, precision, a streamlining of urban life, convenience and, with all this, confidence in the related idea of machine-driven progress.

The great modern driving machine of speed was the automobile. While this had made an initial appearance in urban Japan in the 1900s, it was only from the end of WW1 and into the 1920s, that it came to dominate the major streets of metropolitan Japan. Along with this, naturally, came a greater public use and awareness of automobiles. Indeed, in some parts of the city, it was impossible to ignore them. What I propose to do in this article is to focus on Kyoto, with a population of 760,000, Japan’s fifth largest city in the late 1920s (Osaka was the first). Relying mainly on the two city newspapers, I intend to consider some of the ways in which the automobile featured in modern life between 1925-30. In so doing, I am attempting quite simply to show the continuities between the 1920s and the present. I have divided the article into three main sections: advertising and ideas about automobiles; the drivers and users of taxis, buses and cars; and the greatest social issue of the time with regard to motor vehicles – traffic safety. As prelude to all of this, however, I offer below a brief summary of the automobile’s progress in Japan.

The first commercial use of the automobile took place in Kyoto late in 1903. Two entrepreneurs had seen an American car exhibited earlier that year at an industrial exposition in Osaka. They arranged to purchase a vehicle and run it as a kind of small bus. However, the problems included a lack of appropriate roads, the solid tyres which lasted only weeks and were expensive to replace, and the unpopularity of open-topped vehicles in bad weather. The city trams in places like Kyoto had already become what one author terms ‘the people’s feet’ and the austerity years of the Russo-Japanese war killed the initial forays into the bus or

taxi business. Attempts were made to produce vehicles in Japan. In 1914, the earliest form of the Datsun was introduced at an industrial exposition; this was named the Dat or, in Japanese pronunciation, Datto, a word which translates literally as ‘scooting rabbit’. It would seem, however, that Japanese vehicles were neither fast nor easy to reproduce. What was also missing was a mass market ready to consume the automobile. Consequently, the most common use of vehicles by the public in the 1910s was as hire cars. In Kyoto at least, this market was largely the preserve of the entertainers of the Gion houses. To accommodate their clientele, the car businesses remodeled the interior of some vehicles to provide a tatami flooring or a box for women to deposit their wooden geta clogs.((Note: On the first cars in Kyoto, Takada Masatoshi, Jidōsha to Ningen no Hyakunenshi, Tokyo 1987, p. 178. On the early Kyoto car-hire business, Kyoto-fu Jidōsha Seibi Shinkōkai Nijūnenshi, Kyoto no Jidōshashi, [hereafter Jidōshashi], Kyoto 1970, pp. 13-14.)

The first real motorization of Japanese society began at the end of the 1910s. This was the result of the industrial boom of WW1 and, with it, the rise of an urban middle class, plus improvements in such things as pneumatic tyres and more reliable starting, as well as lower prices for imported vehicles made under the Fordist system of mass production. The rise of automobiles is evident in the spread of town and city bus services from about 1918-19. Of these, the Aoi Bus of Tokyo from 1919 is famous. The use of buses was also aided by the great earthquake of 1923 which devastated Tokyo and Yokohama. The city authorities urgently imported a large number of Ford-model buses to help with putting the cities back on their feet. This gave strength to the idea that the automobile could be a catalyst also for economic growth and there was to be extensive road-building across Japan throughout the decade. In terms of the presence of the automobile on city streets, however, another boost came in 1925 when Ford established an assembly plant at Yokohama. General Motors followed with its own plant at Osaka and these two companies were to dominate the four-wheeled Japanese market until the mid-1930s.

Desires: In the 1920s, the locations for advertising in Japan expanded along with the growth of a consumer economy. For automobiles, there was already a range of specialist journals. Of these, the first car magazine was ‘Motor’ (Mōtā), published between 1913-44; another was the journal ‘Speed’ (Supiido) which lasted from 1918-40. The latter was principally concerned with automobiles but also airplanes. In passing, it seems that trains, for all their improvements in design and speed in the 1920s-30s, were still linked to the industrialization of the nineteenth century. Automobiles and airplanes, by contrast, were both newer and more mobile, and thus were two of the premier symbols of modernity. In addition to specialist magazines, there were also such things as postcards and matchbox labels. For this section, I am using press adverts which were designed for a mass, general audience and had to attract attention by a telling use of image and text.

One of the first things to say about automobile advertising in the Kyoto press of the 1920s is how common it was. Every few days one was likely to see an advert for a car, taxi or truck. This suggests that dealers were confident of selling vehicles at least to some of the middle class. Alternatively, they may have regarded this as a long-term campaign to create a desire for car ownership. One should add here that the retailers were Japanese but the product was overwhelmingly American. In this, the most frequently advertised make was Chevrolet from General Motors. Ford, by contrast, figured very little in the Kyoto press at this time (it did have its own company magazine, Ford Gekkan). Among the other cars from the U.S., there were adverts for a variety of makes including Packard, Dodge, Rickenbacker, and Hudson.

The images and text of advertising may tell us something of a society’s attitude towards new technology. In this era, there was as yet no obvious use of the idea of automobile as escape from the city. This was something which was already appearing in U.S. adverts (most notably in the famous ‘Somewhere west of Laramie’ campaign in 1923 for Jordan) and was to appear much later in Japan: in

1972, Nissan showed its Laurel brand ambling through the countryside accompanied by the text, ‘move slowly, live slowly’. In the 1920s, however, the automobile and the age of speed seem to be identified clearly and comfortably with the city.

Having said that, one of the most notable features of auto advertising in Japan at this time is just how rarely one sees any form of landscape, urban or rural, and how static the automobile appears. The most frequent view of cars and taxis was side-on and stationary. It may be here that the automobile’s speed was implicit and that, in the image at least, there was no need for decoration or exaggeration. This contrasts markedly with the advertising for motorbikes and bicycles. In both of these cases, it was usual to emphasise speed, showing the rider racing through the street, body twisted in effort as if controlling a runaway stallion. Even in a Kennet Bicycles ad which used a female cyclist modestly upright, there was still an impression of movement as she was pictured roving over a map of the Japanese islands and breezing towards the South China Seas.(Note: See adverts for Kennet Bicycles and New Imperial Motorcycles, both in Kyoto Hinode newspaper, hereafter KH, 2 May 1927.)

If the visual image of the automobile in the general press was static, what then of the advertising rhetoric? Here, the recurring impression is that vehicles were being sold at what might be called a nuts-and-bolts level; that is, value for money. One of the most frequently used phrases with different makes was ‘the economical vehicle’ (keizai-teki jidōsha). Even a Rickenbacker advert, while stating that here was a luxury vehicle, still insisted that it was also ‘an economical car with low fuel consumption’. Packard had a dual strategy in the later 1920s; elitism and economy. Thus, one of its slogans in 1926 was the seemingly indisputable claim in English (which no doubt made it more eye-catching) that ‘Only Packard can build a Packard – Ask the man who owns one’. In 1927, it added to the text a list of all the major figures including nobility, cabinet ministers and temple heads, who did own one and to whom one might direct an enquiry. In

other adverts, however, the text was all about value: solid build to minimise repairs, high resale value, low fuel consumption, and, significantly, a refusal to follow fashion and constantly change the body style.(Note: Packard adverts, KH, 6 January, 13 February 1926, 2 and 22 May 1927. Rickenbacker advert, KH, 2 May 1927. For a selection of Japanese and other automobile advertising over the decades, see the pamphlet from the Toyota Automobile Museum, Toyota Hakubutsukan, ed., Jidōsha no Kōkokushi, (The History of Automobile Advertisement), Toyota 1996.) In this way, it seems that potential Japanese car-buyers in the 'age of speed' were looking for exactly the same values as car-buyers eight decades later.

One final point about automobile advertising in the 1920s is how it reveals new methods of capturing the public's attention. In Kyoto, the turning point is 1927-28. Up to then, there were three major automobile dealers; Yanase, one of the earliest such concerns in Japan and still with a branch just off Shūgakuin in the city's north; Nihon Jidōsha (Japan Cars); and Nikkōsha. The latter was the agent for Ford and, in its promotions, it took a quite simple approach, arguing that trucks were cheaper overall than livestock and offering driving lessons to new buyers. From May 1927, however, Ōzawa Enterprises became the new force in town as the agent for General Motors and introducing what was regarded as the American system of selling. In practice, this meant pushing the product; this may explain why Chevrolet adverts outweigh those of all other makes in the Kyoto press. It also meant taking the product to the street. One of the most famous examples of this came with Ōzawa's stunt of hiring a geisha to be 'The Chevrolet Girl' and driving her around in a new Chevrolet. The 'whistle-stops' on the tour of the modern car and the young woman dressed as a traditional bride included the mayor's office, the offices of the Kyoto press, plus the two major department stores, Daimaru and Takashimaya. The success of 'American-style' retailing in the automobile business of 1920s is indicated by Ōzawa's own triumph in a nationwide contest sponsored by General Motors from late 1927 to early 1928. In this, the Kyoto dealer sold 227 Chevrolets, the highest figure in Japan. General

Motors rewarded the company with a bonus of $5,000 and an invitation to its manager to visit its head office in Flint, Michigan.(Note: On the Chevrolet dealers competition and a photograph of The Chevrolet Girl, Jidōshashi, pp. 26-28).

Access: In December 1921, an Association of Automobile Drivers was established in Kyoto with about 480 members. Naturally, this may not have included all those who could drive at the time and, as the name suggested, it probably did not directly overlap with car-owners. Indeed, while new vehicles remained expensive, the actual skill of driving was widely available. One method was to buy a ‘teach yourself’ guide and study at home for the licence. Such guides were regularly advertised in the Kyoto press by publishers mainly in Tokyo such as the Tōyō Jidōsha Kyōkai (Far Eastern Car Association).(Note: Examples of such adverts appear in the Kyoto Nichi Nichi newspaper, hereafter KNN, 12 and 24 April 1929.) There were also driving schools such as the one at Ōmiya Shimabara which, in a 1925 advert, specifically welcomed both male and female students. There was said to be a shortage of qualified drivers in the 1920s and ‘teach yourself’ guides in particular used the lure of high wages – as much as eighty yen a month – for those with a licence. A popular and anecdotal history of the automobile industry in Kyoto suggests that drivers about this time received in relative terms the same wages, and were regarded with the same respect, as jet pilots of the 1960s.(Note: Jidōshashi, p. 15.) This, however, would seem to apply more to those who worked for the hire car companies. Taxi drivers had a much more mixed image. Indeed, a cultural historian of the taxi in Tokyo states there was criticism of some drivers as unkind, dirty, and deceitful. On this latter point, the earlier taxis which operated from a fixed base were seen by some patrons as more reliable than the metered cruising taxis said to have begun in Osaka in 1924. The chaos of unreliable taxis with aggressively pushy drivers in Kyoto became such a problem in the area of Maruyama Park that the police in 1930 imposed a ban on taking such a taxi in most of the daylight hours.(Note: Taxi drivers in Tokyo, Shigenobu Yukihiko, Takushii: Modaan Tokyo Minzokushi,

(Taxi: A People's History of Modern Tokyo), Tokyo 1999, pp. 63-64. Taxis at Maruyama Park, Kyoto Nichi Nichi newspaper, hereafter KNN, 30 September 1930.)

The newspapers of the 1920s make it very clear that the drivers of vehicles in Kyoto were almost entirely young men in their twenties. Having said that, the one form of report which listed the sex and age of a driver was an accident report. Consequently, it may be that there were many other middle-aged men and women of all ages who drove so safely that they were never noticed. According to a statement by a group called the Engine Association in 1930, driving was the most popular job amongst modern youth.(Note: KNN, 3, 11 October 1930.) The first mention of a female taxi driver, however, comes only in the 1930s.

One area where women played a very prominent role was on the buses. Initially, the new bus companies employed young men as conductors on the grounds that the swaying of the vehicle could be harsh and dangerous. However, it is said that some conductors were found to be taking fares without issuing tickets and simply pocketing the cash. Thus, women were employed for their greater reliability; as in other occupations, however, women took lower wages and quit early to marry. Yet, such was the public trust in conductresses that some passengers were said to by-pass buses with male conductors. With considerable speed, the conductress became the norm and her uniform became one of the major identifying features of the company. In other words, the conductress was the welcoming face of the new public transport. Whether or not this linked women in the public imagination to the 'age of speed' is open to question. The early companies fought to obtain prime routes within a city (it seems to have been important to have a major temple or shrine along the way) but they rarely had a large fleet and so buses were infrequent. Indeed, it is said that bus stops were described ironically as 'the gathering places for people with time on their hands'.(Note: On the rise of the conductress, Nakagawa Kōichi, Basu no Bunkashi (The Cultural History of the Bus), Tokyo 1986, pp. 151-155.)

The places where taxis congregated and waited for customers generally were the main railway station, outside the department stores, and around popular leisure sites such as Maruyama Park. In this mix of travel, consumerism and leisure, the taxi (and the bus) was now the vital link. As Japan's economy struggled in the late 1920s, the city authorities and business concerns looked to strengthen this mix by attracting yet more tourists. In this, one of the key selling points was fast and comfortable movement between sites. Thus, in 1930, a gathering was held at the city office on how to improve Kyoto as a 'sightseeing city'. Among the major proposals was an option either to build a driveway along Higashiyama or to create a road linking Kyoto with its newly-acquired towns and villages, themselves full of historical or aesthetic interest.(Note: Kyoto 'sightseeing city' discussions, KH, 21 November 1930.) The point falls outside my timeframe here but it is worth noting that the taxi companies of Kyoto responded to the depression by creating in the mid-1930s a co-operative agreement: under this, they worked together to draw large tourist groups away from buses, offering them a fleet of taxis for their sightseeing convenience and with drivers providing information on places of interest.(Note: Takada 1987, p. 181.) This, of course, is exactly how the taxi companies of Kyoto in the 1990s acted in the aftermath of the 'bubble economy'.

Another form of access to automobiles which is very familiar to the present day is theft. There were frequent reports of automobiles being stolen. This could occur even where a taxi company had a lock-up garage. There were specialists who stole bicycles in Kyoto and sent them to other towns for repainting and sale; the same may well have happened with automobiles. After all, the only vehicles without number plates were those of the aristocracy; the rest in Kyoto had a simple plate 'Kyō- 1244', for example. Thus, a stolen vehicle should not have been difficult to trace. We do hear of one thief who stole a 4,000 yen American vehicle outside Tokyo station, then transported it by rail to Kyoto and attempted to sell it there at half price to a motor repair dealer. He attracted the attention of

the local police by throwing around his new-found wealth on fine clothes and a gold watch. On the question of theft and the automobile, one other practice resonates with the present. That is, there were reports in 1925 of a seven-man gang in Kyoto whose activities including jumping on to the running board of automobiles in transit and demanding money.(Note: Organised bicycle theft, KNN, 6 March 1925; gangs of car thieves, KNN, 14 April 1925; theft of Tokyo car, KNN, 21 March 1925; car-jacking, KNN, 27 January 1925.)

One form of access which is worth noting comes at the end of one's journey in life. That is, towards the end of the Taishō era, a Kyoto car repairer bought two 1912 model Packards and refashioned them into hearses. Later models included Chevrolets. Certainly by 1925, one could find adverts for motorized hearses; one Kyoto funeral parlour stated that the standard rate for any destination within the city limits was seven yen. According to a local history, the motor hearses were met by angry opposition from the established bearers of coffins whose own livelihoods were now endangered. What is said to have been crucial in this particular contest was not necessarily speed. Rather, it was the comfort of the automobile, especially on days of poor weather. The fact that mourners and mourned could make this journey in relative peace meant that funeral companies quickly accepted motorization and banded together to establish a Kyoto Hearse Company.(Note: Jidōshashi, 1970, pp. 33-35. Funeral parlour advert, KNNi, 2 April 1925.)

Danger: The most common reference to automobiles in the Kyoto newspapers of the late 1920s was in connection with accidents. These accidents took all the forms available to a modern set of transport systems. For example, cars struck pedestrians and cyclists; they struck others cars, trucks and buses; they collided with trams and trains; and they went off the road and into houses, ditches and rivers. Some in Kyoto in the late 1920s already described the situation as 'traffic hell'. One problem was the fact that roads were poorly lit; according to a report in the Kyoto Nichi Nichi of 17 January 1925, the municipal electricity bureau and the

Kyoto Light Company had been profiteering by installing a system with an inadequate level of brightness. However, many of the accidents recorded in the press occurred during the daylight hours. There were perhaps two ‘culprits’: the drivers who failed to control their vehicles, and the people who had yet to learn the skills of a pedestrian. In the latter group, the ones most at danger were the children. Then as now, there were few places for children to play in Japan’s cities. Yet, according to a report in the Kyoto Hinode of 9 July 1930, part of the traffic safety problem was the new culture of activity for children. Officials now were asking school principals to instruct children to avoid the road as a playground and leave that entirely to the automobile. Thus, the modern urban landscape of central traffic streams and marginalized pedestrians was being enforced on the youngest Japanese.

In Japan, the first specialist traffic police, the so-called ‘Red Bikes’, were established in January 1918 to reduce accidents. A year later, the Home Ministry set a unified speed limit of 24 kilometers per hour, thus giving the police something tangible with which to work.(Note: Details of traffic safety, Kyoto Furitsu Sōgō Shiryōkan, ed., Kyoto-fu Hyakunen no Nempyō 7: Kensetu Kōtsū Tsūshin-hen, Kyoto 1970, pp. 171-173.) What is not clear is whether automobiles at this time were fitted with speedometers. Thus, enforcing a limit may well have had its own problems.

What the authorities attempted, however, was a number of large-scale traffic safety campaigns. The first of these came in March 1921. In this, 150 policemen were active daily, 65 vehicles with musical accompaniment distributed 30,000 leaflets on road manners, while another 60,000 leaflets handed out by the city’s primary school children.(Note: Kyoto Furitsu Sōgō Shiryōkan 1970, pp. 176-177.) That safety campaigns, then as now, have only a limited impact is evident in 1930. In November that year, another campaign was mounted in response to an official survey for 1929 which showed there had been 2,355 traffic accidents in that year, of which 1,320 had involved cars (among the rest were 531 caused by

trains, 242 bicycles, and 188 carts of various types). As there were something like 3,000 cars in Kyoto city, this suggests an extremely high ratio of accidents to vehicles. The survey also showed that pedestrians were the greatest victims of accident and, in collision with cars, they were more likely to be killed than injured. The principal cause of road accidents, therefore, was seen as the automobile and specifically with cars traveling at excessive speed.(Note: Details of 1929 survey, KH, 9 November 1930.) Consequently, the 1930 campaign was a large-scale affair. It involved over 10,000 people; these included the government officials of the Safety Bureau, the local police forces, the Automobile Union (Jidosha Kumiai), youth groups and pupils from girls' schools. Collectively, they set up 6,000 posters with the slogans 'Stop traffic accidents' and 'Preserve road manners', distributed 200,000 leaflets to homes plus another 230,000 smaller bills around the city, and handed out some thirty thousand small flags. At its conclusion, the chief of the Safety Bureau insisted that drivers now understood the need for greater road care but that the message would continue to be conveyed until the talk of 'traffic hell' (kotsu jigoku) was ended. However, over the three days of the campaign, there had been a spate of accidents ranging from a small girl struck by a cyclist while playing in the street to a head-on crash between a city bus and a train causing major injuries. The Hinode's report on 16 November declared,'Traffic safety day has become 'unsafe' day with over ten incidents on the first afternoon alone and accidents following one after another in an almost sarcastic manner'. Thus, the various conflicts between drivers and pedestrians, and between drivers and the police were already a decade old in 1930 and showed no real sign of being resolved.

Conclusion.

In its relationship with the automobile, the city of Kyoto in the period 1925-30 looks remarkably familiar. The advertising may be less dynamic or escapist in its visuals (and there may be no mention of CD or DVD players) but its core message of value and reliability differs very little from today. The fact that taxis

and buses dominated the traffic of urban Japan, and that pedestrians are squeezed into confined spaces, was already happening and certainly has not changed. In the 1920s, there was social if not economic room for male and female drivers (that is, women could learn to drive but probably had less money with which to buy a vehicle). It may be that taxis, buses and cars were not yet opening up new spaces for activity; the movement of some retailing from city centre to suburban strip was to come later and still exists in Japan in only a limited form. The link between automobiles, tourism and profit was already being well recognized and, in its workings, seems fundamentally unchanged. However, the one great and unchanging aspect of the automobile in the age of speed and thereafter was that it came with a human price and that the authorities would always struggle with only partial results to control it. As for the ‘age of speed’, this was (and is) a mix of stops and starts, acceleration and halts. Perhaps the underlying definition of ‘speed’ in fact was not so much about going ever faster, it was more about convenience, whether one was making hot cakes or moving between tourist spots.

KAISHINSHA, DAT, NISSAN AND THE BRITISH MOTOR VEHICLE INDUSTRY

Christopher Madeley

Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between the Nissan Motor Company Limited (1934-present), its predecessors Kaishinsha (1911-1925), DAT Jidosha Shokai (1925-1926), DAT Jidosha Seizo Kabushiki Kaisha (1926-1931), Tobata Iimono Kabushiki Kaisha (1931-1933) and Jidosha Seizo Kabushiki Kaisha (1933-1934), and the British motor vehicle industry. While there were also licensing agreements between The Ishikawajima Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Limited and Wolseley Motors Limited, and Ishikawajima's successor Isuzu Motors Limited and Rootes Motors Limited (Madeley 1999: 195-211, Madeley 2002: 219-48), Nissan and its predecessors have a longer history of informal and formal links with Britain than any other Japanese motor vehicle manufacturer, and were influential in forming British perceptions of the Japanese motor vehicle industry during the 1930s. Nissan was also the first Japanese car company to establish its own production facilities in Britain.

I shall trace the relationship between Nissan and Britain through four stages; the assembly of the first cars by Kaishinsha in 1912 using chassis and components imported from Swift of Coventry, the alleged copying of the Austin Seven in the manufacture of the Datsun during the 1930s, the licensing and sales agreement between Austin and Nissan signed on 4 December 1952 under which Austins were produced in Japan until 1959, and the establishment of Nissan Motor Manufacturing (UK) Limited in April 1984. While a number of English-language writers have examined the history of Nissan (Cusumano 1985: 27-112, Halberstam 1986: 263-270, Shimokawa 1994: 109-115), the relationship between the Japanese and United States motor vehicle industries (Duncan 1973, Chang 1981), and the relationship between the Japanese government and its domestic car industry (Genther 1990), little attention has been paid to the

relationship between the Japanese and British motor vehicle industries. Indeed there are conflicting accounts of Austin's relationship with Nissan during the 1930s (Wyatt 1968: 147, Maxcy 1981: 83).

Kaishinsha and Swift

British motoring publications offer glimpses of Japan in the early twentieth century, though their contents inevitably reflect the interests and preoccupations of their authors, contributors and readers. They also reveal an awareness of and interest in Japan among the motoring fraternity in Britain at that time. Conditions facing motorists seemed hardly conducive to the establishment of a motor vehicle industry in Japan.

> The streets of many of the cities and towns are too narrow for motor-vehicles, and, although there is no law prohibiting the machines from entering the streets, the drivers usually steer clear of them. Some of the streets are laid with rounded and pointed stones, which are disastrous to rubber tires, and drivers of automobiles avoid these as much as possible.
>
> (The Motor-Car Journal 27 July 1901: 392)

The number of motor vehicles in Japan was initially very low. In May 1906 one writer was able to count just four privately owned cars into Tokyo and two in Yokohama (The Autocar 19 May 1906: 645). By August 1911 the British acting commercial attaché reported that 'there was an astonishing increase in the number of motor cars in use during last year, and at the end of December there were over 100 cars in Tokyo alone.' (The Auto Motor Journal 26 August 1911: 927). The British acting vice-consul at Yokohama gave a breakdown by country of origin of the cars imported into that city. 'In 1911 the United States took the largest share of the trade, sending 67 cars out of a total of 100. Of the remainder 13 cars were British, 6 cars French, and 14 cars German.' (The Auto Motor Journal 6 July 1912: 804). Interest in motor vehicles developed in military circles

in Japan, and this was paralleled in government circles. 'The Japanese Government have under consideration the question of establishing a motor mail van service with the object of connecting up the principal towns in Japan.' (The Automotor Journal 18 September 1909: 1144). The Japanese Imperial family also took an early interest in motor vehicles.

> Messrs. A. Darracq and Co.'s representative, Mr. P. C. Beardwood, had the honour of waiting upon Prince Arisugawa at St. James's Palace on Saturday last with a 30 h.p. car. The Prince expressed his satisfaction with the car, and after a trial run purchased it.
>
> (The Autocar 15 July 1905:91)

In 1912 further vehicles were ordered.

> Quite a fleet of cars is now being finished for the Imperial Household of Japan, and comprises a 57 h.p. Daimler for the Emperor's own use, a 50 h.p. Mercédès for the Emperor's guests, two 35-50 h.p. F.I.A.T.'s and two 38 h.p. Daimlers for the Imperial Household, two 30 h.p. F.I.A.T.'s for use as baggage vans, and one 40 h.p. Mercédès to be used as a shooting brake.
>
> (The Autocar 27 July 1912: 188)

Japan's first automobile club was established in October 1911 (The Auto Motor Journal 6 January 1912: 20). Its members comprised both Japanese and resident foreign motorists, the words of one of whom are reported thus

> 'We cannot help but feel,' said Mr. Frazar (one of the leading participants), 'that the first club run could have been no more successful. It shows what enthusiasm exists over motoring here, and prophesies great things in the future for the automobile in Japan.'
>
> (The Autocar 27 January 1912: 138)

In 1913 Japan acquired its first specialist magazine 'entitled *Jidosha,* the first number of which has just been issued to cover everything of interest pertaining to motor cars, motor boats, and aerocraft.' (The Autocar 18 January 1913: 123). It is against this background that the establishment of Kaishinsha, the forerunner of Nissan, by Masujiro Hashimoto in 1911 must be seen. The following section is based on Hashimoto's biography (Suzuki 1957).

Masujiro Hashimoto, founder of Kaishinsha, was born into a family of landowners in what is now Okazaki city, Aichi prefecture, in 1875. He progressed through Japan's newly established compulsory education system, and in 1891 entered Tokyo Kogyo Gakko (Tokyo Industrial School, now Tokyo Kogyo Daigaku - Tokyo University of Industry). He graduated in 1895 and in 1896 joined the Japanese Imperial Army, completing his period of military service in 1899. He then worked for Sumitomo, but in 1902 was sent to study in the United States as an overseas business practice student of the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce on the recommendation of the headmaster of Tokyo Industrial School. In the United States he entered the McIntosh and Seymour Company of Auburn in New York State, manufacturers of stationary steam engines, where he remained until he was called up to join the Japanese Imperial Army again in June 1905. He worked on the manufacture of machine guns, but the Russo-Japanese war came to an end and his call-up was annulled in September 1905. Hashimoto then agreed to work as head of engineering for the Etchujima Company which was in difficulties, and when this company was bought out by the Kyushu Colliery Company, he was sent to one of the company's coal mines in Nagasaki prefecture, where he became head of the colliery workshop. His real interests and ambitions lay elsewhere, however, and he resigned in June 1911.

In the same month Masujiro Hashimoto founded the company Kaishinsha with a view to entering the field of car manufacture. In addition to his own capital, he obtained financial backing from a Mr. Kenjiro Den, a former classmate Mr. Rokuro Aoyama, and Mr. Meitaro Takeuchi. The name DAT was based on the

first letters of the surnames of Hashimoto's three financial backers, as was the slogan 'Durable, Attractive, Trustworthy.' Hashimoto's company was one of five car companies in Tokyo listed in an English-language publication in 1913 as 'Kaishin Sha (M. Hashimoto), 88 Hiroo, Shibuya-Machi' (The Motor 26 August 1913: 158). It was difficult for Kaishinsha to establish itself by car manufacture alone however, so the company acted as a repair garage for imported cars. According to the recollections of one former Kaishinsha employee, the repair of British cars was the main activity of the company (Toshima Kuritsu Kyodo Shiryokan 1994: 41). In this way Hashimoto and his employees, initially seven in number, became familiar with the design of British and other foreign cars. Hashimoto purchased two Swift passenger car chassis from a company named Swift Shokai in the Tsukiji district of Tokyo that imported and sold Swift bicycles and cars from England. These were assembled, fitted with bodies, and were the first cars to be sold by Kaishinsha.

It is surprising that Hashimoto should choose British cars in view of his background of study in the United States, and in view of the preponderance of American cars in Japan at that time. The link between Kaishinsha and Swift has been ignored by English-language writers with the exception of Genther (Genther 1990: 17). While there are no records of Swift production and sales, a Swift publicity booklet refers to the exploits of one Thomas Bates Blow with his 1904 Swift car in Japan, and it is possible that these exploits enhanced the company's reputation in the Japanese market (Swift of Coventry Limited undated: 20, 34). However Blow shows no awareness of the developing Japanese motor vehicle industry in his own subsequent writing.

> Motor vehicles seem to be the only machinery that the Japanese themselves have been shy to tackle. It has been left to Ford and General Motors to fit up in Japan enormous plants turning out some thousands of cars per month.
>
> (Blow 1930: 15)

Kaishinsha engaged in the manufacture of a light car of its own design, and though the first design was not successful, a second chassis was completed at the end of 1913 and test-driven. A body was then fitted, and the completed car was exhibited at the Tokyo Taisho Hakurankai (Tokyo Taisho Exhibition) in the spring of 1914. This was the first car to carry the name DAT. A third type of car was subsequently designed which was designated the DAT 31 Type. Six cars of this type were manufactured. This was followed by a fourth type of car, the DAT 41 Type. A DAT car exhibited at the Tokyo Heiwa Kinen Hakurankai (Tokyo Peace Memorial Exhibition) in 1922 was awarded a gold medal. DAT car catalogues issued in 1915 and 1921 are written predominantly in English, though there is no indication of whether this was with a view to sales to foreign residents in Japan, exports to English-speaking countries, or to give DAT cars the cachet associated with foreign products (DAT Cars 1915, DAT Cars 1921).

In March 1918 the Japanese government announced the promulgation of the Gunyo Jidosha Hojo Ho (Military Vehicle Subsidy Law), under which manufacturers of trucks to a given specification would be eligible for subsidies, as would the purchasers of the trucks. Hashimoto began the construction of a vehicle to meet this specification, and in October 1924 the Kaishinsha DAT Type truck gained approval. Nonetheless it was difficult for the company to stay in business during the slump following the boom years of the First World War in Japan, and matters were exacerbated by the Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1923. In 1925 Kaishinsha Company Limited was dissolved and replaced by DAT Jidosha Shokai, in which Masujiro Hashimoto became a senior partner. The company tried to base its business on the manufacture and sales of the subsidy truck, and established an office in Osaka. This probably brought Hashimoto into contact with the Jitsuyo Jidosha Seizo Kabushiki Kaisha of Osaka which manufactured cars. After talks with Jitsuyo's president Gonshiro Kubota, the two companies merged in 1926 to become DAT Jidosha Seizo Kabushiki Kaisha. Gonshiro Kubota was the president of this new company, and

Hashimoto the Tokyo managing director. The company manufactured the DAT Type truck, and developed a new vehicle, the 61 Type truck, which also became eligible for the subsidy. In this way the company was able to stay in business, and was able to undertake the development of a new small passenger car with a 500cc engine to replace the previously manufactured DAT cars. The prototype was completed in 1929. It was intended to call it the 'Datson' - 'son of DAT,' however the word 'son' means 'to make a loss' in Japanese. The name was thus changed to 'Datsun.' The Datsun was manufactured with a variety of body styles, and with several changes in the cubic capacity and power output of the engine during the 1930s. In 1931 DAT Jidosha Seizo Kabushiki Kaisha became affiliated with Tobata Iimono Kabushiki Kaisha, and Masujiro Hashimoto resigned. He had no further involvement in the car manufacturing industry, and passed away in January 1944. Jidosha Seizo Kabushiki Kaisha was established in 1933 when the car manufacturing division of Ishikawajima purchased the car manufacturing section of Tobata Iimono Kabushiki Kaisha. However Jidosha Seizo Kabushiki Kaisha intended to concentrate on the manufacture of large-size vehicles, and had no intention to continue production of the Datsun. In 1934 therefore Nissan Jidosha Kabushiki Kaisha was established and took over production of the Datsun. The name 'Nissan' is formed from the first two words of Nippon Sangyo Kabushiki Kaisha, which financed Nissan Jidosha Kabushiki Kaisha.

The Datsun and the Austin Seven

The World Engineering Congress took place in Tokyo from 25 October to 22 November 1929. 577 people from 26 countries attended the Congress, including 57 from Great Britain. A. H. Wilde, chief engineer of the Standard Motor Company Limited in Coventry, contributed a paper entitled 'The British Light Car' which included the makers' specification of the Austin Seven, and was published with a number of figures showing details of the Austin Seven chassis, engine, clutch, gearbox, rear axle, suspension, steering, and power output in the proceedings of the Congress (Wilde 1931: 203-35). A copy of the volume of proceedings containing Wilde's paper is among Hashimoto's books presented to

Toshima Historical Museum in 1998. In addition, Austin Sevens were imported into Japan, both complete vehicles and chassis which were fitted with bodies produced locally by Japanese coachbuilders.

> The light car market in Japan in the 1920s and early 1930s was nearly dominated by British imports headed by Austin Sevens, with some Morrises and small French cars like 5 CV Citroëns and Renaults as well.
>
> (Kobayashi 1995: 124)

Thus there was no lack of information concerning the Austin Seven in Japan.
The Datsun, on the other hand, was brought to the attention of British readers in April 1934 under the headline 'The Japanese Baby Car - A Similarity to the Austin Engine.' (The Motor 3 April 1934: 392). Two days later The Daily Mirror carried an article under the headline 'Japan's Cheap Cars Plan to Flood World. Another Menace to Britain's Most Promising Overseas Markets.' (The Daily Mirror 5 April 1934: 3). This article noted numerous similarities between the Datsun and the Austin Seven, and predicted that the Datsun would be sold for 50 pounds. According to the article a '"big push" has already begun in South Africa - London campaign being organised.' In addition, 'unless drastic steps are taken to meet the threatened "big push" by Japan, our most promising overseas markets such as India, Africa and Australia will be flooded with cheap motor-cars'. It was noted that 'descriptive literature of the new Japanese car has already reached this country and it is printed in English, thus showing quite plainly the marketing intentions behind its production.' The writer stated that 'the specification of the Datsun - except that it has a scuttle-type fuel tank - conforms in every way to the best British and Continental automobile practice.' The low price was attributed to 'cheap labour' and the article ended with the question 'how will Britain meet this new menace to her most flourishing industry?' Other writers gave similar reports.

> During 1934 a Japanese ship was visiting all the West Coast ports in the role partly of a travelling exhibition, partly of an itinerant emporium. On this occasion motor-cars were offered for 4,000 francs (about £55).
>
> (Hubbard 1935:24)

Stein noted that 'the first cheap motor-cars entirely built in Japan have found buyers in the world-markets, and a large expansion is already planned.' (Stein 1935: 22). He too attributed the low price of Japanese goods in part to low wages. 'In view of the great number of unemployed who would be willing to work in the factories for almost any wage, it is surprising not that wages are as low as they are in Japan, but that they are not lower.' (Stein 1935: 58). Not all observers supported this viewpoint, however. Mr. James, chairman of the Kobe and Osaka Foreign Chamber of Commerce, predicted a decline in Japanese competition, due to 'a rise in the wage level, increasing costs of imported raw material, and heavier taxation.' (The Times Trade and Engineering Supplement 24 March 1934: 31). A 1936 British Empire report on international trade in motor vehicles focussed on the six main vehicle-exporting countries; the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany and Italy. The report also devoted attention to Russia and Japan, however. Of the latter it stated 'the development of exports at present depends mainly on the "Datsun" car, a "baby-car" type of 8 h.p. which is making steady progress in Japan.' (Imperial Economic Committee 1936: 15). The report concluded

> Although not yet a serious competitor in the world market, and although dependant on imports for the bulk of the raw materials, Japan may be a factor to be reckoned with, particularly in the light car class and in markets in the Far East.
>
> (Imperial Economic Committee 1936: 15)

A similar comment was made in the course of preparing a wartime study with the cooperation of the Ministry of Economic Warfare. The writer predicted that the

world market for motor vehicles would be divided into five spheres of influence, including 'Japan, exporting to the Far Eastern Area, and perhaps Australia.' (Post War Export Trade Motor Vehicles -Record Survey 1942: Memorandum accompanying a letter dated 8 August from E. J. Holford-Strevens, Minister of Economic Warfare). Actual exports figures for the Datsun in the pre-war period are given as follows: 1934 - 44 vehicles, 1935 - 53 vehicles, 1936 - 87 vehicles, 1937 - 230 vehicles, 1938 - 347 vehicles. The countries of destination included Manchuria, China, Spain, Portugal, India, Chile, Brazil, Australia, Malaya, French Indo-China, the South Pacific Islands and America. (Nissan Jidosha Kabushiki Kaisha 1965: 48).

What was Austin's reaction to allegations that the Datsun was a copy of the Austin Seven? It is evident that Sir Herbert Austin took these reports seriously, as he instructed his representative in Australia to purchase a Datsun which was shipped to England for evaluation. A former Austin employee states 'unlike the European and American versions of the Seven it was a badly finished vehicle and the ride most unstable.' (Henry 1983:22). According to some accounts, Austin and Nissan entered into an agreement under which the Austin Seven was manufactured under license in Japan.

> Careful scrutiny at Longbridge of a model designed to sell on the Australian market for £80 in 1933 convinced Sir Herbert that Jidosha, or Nissan as the Company became in 1934, was infringing patents covered by the Seven, and proceeded to negotiate an agreement with Nissan whereby the Japanese company would in future build the cars under licence. These were the origins of the Datsun motor car.
>
> (Church 1979: 96)

Similarly,

> Another English firm, the Austin Motor Company, chose to license production of its popular 'Seven' rather than to invest abroad. Known as the Austin 'Bantam' in America it was a dismal failure, but it enjoyed a moderate success as the 'Rosengart' in France, the 'Dixi' in Germany and the 'Datsun' in Japan.
>
> (Maxcy 1981: 83)

Foreman-Peck et al state 'Austin seemed to have found a more workable formula when he licensed production of the Austin Seven in France, Germany, Japan and the United States.' (Foreman-Peck, Bowden and McKinlay 1995: 60). Purves presents a similar view.

> It is possible, however, that some form of arrangement was reached between the two companies allowing Datsun the use of specific Austin patents on payment of royalties because during 1933 Datsun built their first car under licence from Austin.
>
> (Purves 1989: 359)

Other writers take the view that there was no licensing agreement between Austin and Nissan however.

> It has been said in recent years that the Datsun was nothing less than an exact copy of the Austin Seven and an infringement of the Austin patents. It certainly resembled it closely and Sir Herbert arranged for one to be brought over to England in 1935 but did not seem to be particularly worried about the situation.
>
> (Wyatt 1968:147)

Mills is more emphatic. 'It has been suggested in various publications that Datsun built Austin Sevens under licence in Japan, or at least had some arrangement with Sir Herbert Austin. This was not so.' (Mills 1996: 114). While discussing the

licensing agreements between Austin and Gotha Waggonfabrik in Germany, which produced Austin Sevens under the name 'Dixi', Rosengart in France, the 'Rosengart', and the American Austin Car Company, the 'Bantam' (Wyatt 1981: 112, 121, 130-1) no mention is made of any licensing agreement with Nissan, nor is any made in the biography of Sir Herbert Austin (Lambert and Wyatt 1968: 145-6). The topic of a licensing agreement has also been raised in the Austin Seven Clubs' Association magazine.

> It hardly seems credible that Austin would have missed an opportunity to exploit the publicity value of operating a licence scheme with Datsun... It looks as though the alleged copy was a logical development of a Japanese small car and its similarity to the Austin 7 was coincidental.
>
> (Magazine of the Austin Seven 1986D: 13)

Noriyoshi Gotoh, the designer of the Datsun prototype, was asked in a 1962 interview whether he was influenced by any particular car when designing the Datsun.

> 'He was quite frank and he admitted there was one. "It was not the Austin Seven, however. There was a Benjamin in nearby Kyoto. It was an unique 750cc French car with a gearbox in unit with final drive. Having examined it closely we purchased it in the end".
>
> (Kobayashi 1995: 124)

In addition any link between Austin and Nissan in the 1930s has been refuted, albeit belatedly, by Nissan.

> Nissan also emphasises: "Nissan did not use any Austin engines, chassis or other mechanical parts in pre-war Datsuns. Nor did Nissan have any kind of licensing agreement with the Austin Motor Company before the Second World War."

(Sharratt 1997: 15)

Moreover

> The Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon has no record of any pre-war agreement between Austin and Datsun. But they do have records of all agreements entered into for the Austin 7 variants such as the Rosengart, BMW/Dixi and the American Austin/Bantam.
>
> (Sharratt 1997: 15)

The car imported for evaluation is currently in the collection of the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu, and is described as a 1935 Datsun Type 14. The information panel accompanying the car states, 'this car was imported by Sir Herbert Austin in 1935, to study for possible patent infringement. Austin took no action and it was relegated to storage, never registered for the road.'

The Minute Books of the Austin Motor Company Limited for 1919-1929 and January 1930-December 1942 make frequent reference to the company's licensing agreements with its partners in Germany, France and the United States, but there is no mention of Japan. This might be taken as conclusive evidence that there was no licensing agreement between Austin and Nissan during the 1930s. However nor does the February 1943-December 1958 Minute Book make any mention of the 4 December 1952 licensing and sales agreement between The Austin Motor Company Limited, Nissan Motor Company Limited and Nisshin Automobile Company Limited. While the recent consensus is that there was no licensing agreement during the 1930s, there was certainly an agreement during the 1950s, and it is to this that we now turn.

Nissan and Austin

The Second World War had a profound influence on both the Japanese and British motor vehicle industries. In both countries the production of passenger

cars was limited or suspended in favour of war material. Nissan manufactured army trucks based on a design it had purchased from the Graham-Paige Company of Detroit in 1936, and was obliged to halt production of the Datsun. Thus the predicted 'big push' into Britain's home and overseas markets did not materialise at that time. Japan became isolated from western technological development, and after the war 'Japan faced a huge 'backlog' of technologies to be imported.' (Goto 1993: 279). Moreover the production of passenger cars in Japan was forbidden by the occupation authorities until June 1947, and restricted until October 1949. (Genther 1990: 50-1). Britain on the other hand had to pay off war debts, and needed to expand its exports in order to do so. The motor vehicle industry was identified as a potential revenue earner. 'The aim of the Government is an overall export of 50 per cent for cars.' (The Autocar November 30 1945: 883). While British and other overseas firms wanted to sell their cars in Japan, Japanese manufacturers needed to update by entering into agreements with overseas firms. The Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry wished to avoid a repetition of the conditions which had prevailed during the 1920s and 1930s however, when Japanese domestic motor vehicle manufacturers had faced stiff competition from vehicles assembled by Ford and General Motors in Japan. It thus imposed a series of conditions in June 1952; overseas firms were only allowed to enter the Japanese market through agreements with existing Japanese chassis makers, small European cars were preferable to large American cars, foreign currency allocated for the import of cars should be used for the import of parts instead to build up to a limit of 1,200 cars per company, Japanese companies should seek to obtain the right to sell cars assembled under licence from overseas firms in South East Asia, and imported parts should ultimately be replaced by domestically manufactured parts (Genther 1990: 81). It was against this background that the agreement between Austin and Nissan was entered into.

After Nissan decided in 1952 to enter into an agreement with an overseas firm to raise its level of technology, it carried out research into the best partner to select.

Austin was chosen for the following five reasons. The Austin car was an English car with one of the longest histories and was reliable as a car, as of March 1952 a grand total of 1,288 Austin cars were in use in Japan and they enjoyed the confidence of their owners, the Austin car had the best engine, from the point of view of engineering the Austin car was suited to Japanese national conditions, and the Austin enjoyed a reputation as the number one European car among Americans at that time (Nissan Jidosha Kabushiki Kaisha 1965: 312 author's translation). Following a series of meetings and negotiations an agreement for the assembly and manufacture of Austin motor vehicles in Japan was signed on 4 December 1952 between The Austin Motor Company Limited and Others, Nissan Motor Company Limited, and Nisshin Automobile Company Limited. This was accompanied by a Distributor's Agreement between the Austin Motor Export Corporation Limited and Nissan Motor Company Limited dated 8 December 1952. The Austin Motor Corporation Limited was the manufacturer of the cars initially supplied, A40 Somerset saloon cars supplied in completely knocked down kit form, and The Austin Motor Export Corporation was the vendor of these cars. Similarly Nissan Motor Company Limited was the assembler of the cars, and Nisshin Automobile Company Limited was the vendor. The agreement forbade the sale of Austins produced by Nissan outside Japan without the written permission of The Austin Motor Export Corporation, and was for a term of seven years. Nissan was to seek from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry permission to import and the necessary sterling to pay for at least 2,000 cars per year, or the maximum permitted by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, should this be a different figure. Nissan was to pay both the cost of the completely knocked down cars supplied by Austin and royalties on a sliding scale calculated as a percentage of the retail price of the completed cars, no royalty in the first year, 2 percent royalty in the second year with a minimum payment of £10,000, 3½ percent in the third year with a minimum payment of £20,000, and 5 percent in the fourth and subsequent years with a minimum payment of £30,000. As parts produced in Japan became available these could be incorporated into the Austin vehicles, subject to Austin's approval. Conversely Nissan had the right

to use parts of Austin design in its other products, once again subject to Austin's approval.

The signing of the agreement and its potential benefit were reported in the British press. 'During the next seven years under the agreement Austin business with Japan was likely to be increased tenfold.' (The Times 5 December 1952). The agreement also attracted official approbation.

> This agreement could substantially increase your Corporation's exports to the Japanese market and I should like you to know of the Board of Trade's interest and its hopes that the agreement will prove of considerable advantage to this country and Japan.
>
> (Letter dated 8 December 1952 from Board of Trade to Austin Motor Export Corporation Limited)

Fears of Japanese competition were expressed when the Japanese Treaty of Peace Bill was read in the House of Commons on 27 November 1951, and the President of the Board of Trade was 'very frank about the difficulties facing British industry from the threat of great and growing Japanese competition.' (The Times 27 November 1951). Britain opposed Japan's entry to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in the early 1950s for the same reason. Yet no objections seem to have been raised against the Austin-Nissan agreement, even though it provided for the cars to be ultimately manufactured completely in Japan. Perhaps this was because 'British business men who had learnt to fear Japan as a competitor in prewar days rated her chances of recovery low and even as late as the middle 1950's thought little of her prospects.' (Allen 1977: 157). When asked in 1954 at a conference in Kyoto for advice on Japan's post-war export potential

> The only exports that the foreign members of the Conference could think of were labour-intensive speciality goods, artistic wares, fishing tackle,

> binoculars, cameras and so on - .... No one predicted the triumphs that would come later in steel, shipbuilding, electronics, man-made fibres and motor vehicles.
>
> (Allen 1977: 157)

It seems that the prospect of increased Japanese competition in the motor vehicle industry as a consequence of this and other licensing agreements was not considered, despite the predictions of the 1930s and 1940s referred to earlier in this paper. In any case, if Austin had not entered into an agreement with Nissan it is probable that another firm would have done so. In addition to the four licensing agreements in the motor vehicle industry which were concluded between Japanese and overseas firms in the early 1950s; Nissan and Austin (UK), Isuzu and Rootes (UK), Hino and Renault (France), and Mitsubishi and Willys Overland (USA), there were a further seven proposals that did not come to fruition (Genther 1990: 82). Moreover, when industry as a whole is considered, 'between 1950 and 1964, 3,200 licensing agreements were concluded between Japanese licensees and foreign licensors' (Davenport-Hines and Jones 1989: 235).

The agreement and subsequent events were reported in the Austin Motor Export Corporation Limited's monthly magazine 'Worldwide.' A group photograph of the signatories appeared in January 1953, while the May 1953 issue devoted several pages to the work of Austin Production Engineers Herbert Bailey and Brian Bayliss, who were seconded to Japan to supervise the assembly of the first vehicles. In July 1954 the completion of the Nisshin Automobile Company's new showroom in Tokyo was reported, and in March 1955 the change over from production of the Austin Somerset to the Austin Cambridge. The July 1955 issue featured Austin's display at the Tokyo Motor Show, while in June 1956 the visit of Herbert Morrison, M.P. to the Nissan factory as part of his tour of the Far East was shown. Thus while the agreement is not recorded in the Austin minute book

there does not seem to have been any desire to conceal the agreement on the part of Austin.

Components manufactured in Japan were progressively substituted for ones imported from Austin, 'the finished complete car being far superior to the original Longbridge build.' (Dick Williams, Austin Export Sales Representative for the Far East, 1953-1959, private correspondence). A total of 20,855 vehicles were produced under the licensing agreement between 1953 and 1959. According to one account

> After the tie-up ended, Nissan engineers realized they had not acquired any technology from Austin that was unavailable through "indirect" methods - copying from foreign firms, or studying literature that was publicly available.
>
> (Cusumano 1985: 101)

The engine design licensed from Austin stood Nissan in good stead, however. Nissan employed an American engineer called Donald Stone who suggested changes to the Austin design, initially reducing the size and power output so the engine could be used in a smaller car. 'Between 1955 and 1972 Nissan powered part of its range with almost two million B-series-derived engines in four sizes' (Sharratt 8 October 1997: 25). Yutaka Kume, who was responsible for the process of substituting Japanese parts in the construction of the Austins, subsequently became chairman of Nissan, and his evaluation of Austin's contribution to Nissan's development is positive. According to Kume, Nissan's former link with Austin was a factor in the decision to locate Nissan's European plant in Britain. 'At the back of our minds was the fact that Britain was the country where Austin was and it had taught us how to make cars in the first place. I know that we had that in our hearts.' (Sharratt 8 October 1997: 25).

Datsun and Nissan in Britain

Datsun cars were first exhibited in Britain at the London Motor Show of 1968. At that time, the post war licensing agreement between Austin and Nissan was reported in the specialist press.

> In 1952 a manufacturing agreement was made with BMC to manufacture the Austin A40 Somerset in Japan. During the setting up of this facility there was a model change to the Cambridge series, which was eventually produced with 100 per cent local content at a rate between 300 and 1,000 per month.
>
> (The Autocar 5 December 1968: 6)

The writer emphasized the benefits of the licensing agreement for Nissan. 'Datsun engineers learnt a lot about car manufacture from the British quality-control engineers sent to vet the products and Japanese engineers studied the Longbridge factories closely.' (The Autocar 5 December 1968: 6). By the mid-1970s the UK had become Nissan's largest export market in Europe. Indeed by 1975 Japanese imports of cars had come to occupy a 9 percent share of the UK car market, and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders was demanding controls on car imports from outside the European Community. The "big push" predicted in 1934 had finally come to pass, and Japanese car manufacturers were obliged to consider manufacture in their overseas markets to counter demands for protection by local manufacturers. In January 1981 it was announced in the House of Commons that Nissan was seeking to build a factory in Britain, and an agreement was reached between Nissan and the British government in February 1984. 'The Engineer' commented as follows:

> In the 30 years since BMC set up mass manufacture of cars for Nissan in Japan, that company has shown itself quite capable of looking after itself. By handing it anything up to £100 million in grants, Britain is further exposing the position of BL whose powers to invest new capital are puny in

> comparison with its rivals. When BL is denied access to government support by privatisation, Nissan is quite likely to repay the favour of the Fifties and help itself to total control of the remnants of car-making in Britain.
>
> (The Engineer 12 January 1984: 5)

The formal opening ceremony of the Nissan factory took place on 8 September 1986. This could have been an occasion to remember the role of Austin in Nissan's development, particularly as the then president of Nissan, present at the ceremony, was Yutaka Kume. There seems to have been no mention of the link between Austin and Nissan at the opening ceremony however, though the history of links between Japan and the north east of England was evoked (Conte-Helm 1989: 151), and the local press noted that 'Nissan has had a long connection with the British motor industry, first signing a production licensing agreement with the Austin Motor Company in 1952 (Sunderland and Washington Times 11 September 1986). The opening of the Nissan factory was a direct challenge to other car manufacturers in Britain, in particular Austin Rover. 'Last year Austin Rover produced 475,000 cars with a workforce of 38,000. Nissan plan to build 100,000 with only 2,500' (Today 9 September 1986). In this context it was perhaps not expedient to mention the role of Austin in Nissan's development.

Summary and Conclusion

Links between the Japanese and American motor vehicle industries have received attention while links between the Japanese and British motor vehicle industries have been ignored. 'From its beginning, the history of the Japanese industry has been closely linked with the technology of the American industry. Pioneers of the Japanese industry modeled their motor vehicles after American ones in most cases.' (Chang 1981: 45). While Nissan did have links with the American motor vehicle industry, it also had links with the British motor vehicle industry. The first cars produced by Kaishinsha, the forerunner of Nissan, were built on imported British chassis. Several of Japan's present-day motor vehicle manufacturers were in production during the 1930s, but it was the Datsun which

caught the attention of British observers, and it was alleged that the Datsun was a copy of the Austin Seven. Nissan was one of four Japanese motor vehicle manufacturers to enter licensing agreements with overseas firms during the 1950s, selecting Austin as its partner. Though certain sectors of British industry feared a resurgence of Japanese competition after the Second World War, no one seemed to expect that Japan would become a major producer and exporter of motor vehicles, consequently no objection was raised to Austin entering into a licensing agreement with Nissan, even though Japanese regulations stated that the vehicles produced under license should ultimately be 100 percent local content. Nissan was the first Japanese motor vehicle manufacturer to make a major direct investment in Britain, but as this was a direct challenge to Austin Rover, little was said at that time about the former links between Austin and Nissan. Kim emphasises the role of push and pull factors at governmental level in the home and host countries in determining the location of Japanese multinational enterprises' foreign direct investments in Europe (Kim 2002: 17-24). However this paper seeks to demonstrate that historical factors also have a role, and while Kim identifies January 1980 as the beginning of the history of Nissan in the UK (Kim 2002: 226), this writer suggests that the licensing agreement of the 1950s and perhaps also earlier events need to be taken into account.

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Austin Motor Company Limited Board Meetings), and the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust (Agreement for the assembly and manufacture of Austin Motor Vehicles in Japan 4 December 1952, Austin Motor Export Corporation Limited Distributor's Agreement 8 December 1952, Worldwide, News from the Austin Motor Export Corporation Limited, various issues 1952-1965).

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