

Introduction

Content and Organization of the Foreign Office Records

The British Foreign Office Records of General Political Correspondence for Japan, 1949–1951, in F.O. 371 is a collection of documents describing British foreign affairs concerning Japan. The microfilm edition of this collection, published by Scholarly Resources Inc., contains all of the volumes of the Japan Correspondence bound by the Public Record Office. These documents in the Japan Correspondence describe governmental, political, military, and economic affairs in postwar Japan as well as policies and events in Anglo-Japanese relations.

The correspondence concerning Japan consists primarily of communications between the Foreign Office and various British embassies and consulates in the Far East, usually in Japan. These records are the London files, containing material received from abroad or from London departments, and drafts of material originating in and sent out of London. In addition, the collection includes public proclamations by various national leaders, governments, and organizations; communications with foreign governments; pertinent publications; personal requests made of the Foreign Office by private citizens or groups; and records of questions asked by Members of Parliament directed to the Foreign Office. Many miscellaneous despatches and papers round out the body of annual correspondence.

Each document arriving at the Foreign Office was processed by the Opening Branch, which identified the origin and sender and the country to which the incoming paper pertained. The document was then sent to the appropriate division of the Archives Branch according to geographical region. Each division of the Archives Branch assigned its documents registry numbers from its own annual series. The Japan Correspondence was sent to the Far Eastern Department, which identified itself by preceding its registry numbers with the letter “F.” After a document had been assigned a registry number, it was assigned a “kept with” or file number. The file number was usually the same as the registry number of the first document in the file. Files ran in length from one document (i.e., “kept with” itself) to many documents totaling hundreds of pages. After filing, the document was indexed according to the country that it concerned. (The index number for Japan is 23.) At the end of every year the files were bound together into volumes. Page numbers were assigned at this stage, with stamped pagination beginning at page 1 for each volume.

Scholarly Resources has published the bound volumes of Japan Correspondence, 1949–1951, on 39 reels of microfilm. The reels are numbered consecutively with each year beginning at Reel 1.

Format of the Scholarly Resources Guide to the Records

The Subject Guide to the Scholarly Resources edition of the British Foreign Office Records for Japan (F.O. 371) lists each file in the order in which it appears in the volumes, followed by a condensed description of its contents. Within larger files the descriptions are broken into separate entries for successive groups of documents. The registry number of only the first document in each subject group is listed in the second-from-left column, labeled DOCUMENT. The use of the term DOCUMENT is necessary to avoid confusion in the use of the terms “registry number” and “full registry number.” Only the first registry (DOCUMENT) number of each subject group is listed, since listing the registry number for every document would prove cumbersome and would hamper document retrieval. The condensed subject descriptions facilitate retrieval as many documents in one area of a file often have identical subject titles. Semicolons separate different subjects within each subject group.

The subject group has a new heading for every change in year, reel, or volume. This second heading identifies the number of each “kept with” or file (FILE), the columns for the reference registry number of the first document in each condensed subject group (DOCUMENT), the page number of the first document in each condensed subject group (PAGE), and the condensed subject descriptions (SUBJECT).

For a more detailed illustration of the use of the Guide, see **Quick Reference Method** (p. vii) for a brief description of how to find a document.