

〔研究ノート〕

Japan's Call

– how we have answered, and how we will answer –¹

Iwao Osaka

Firstly, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Iwao Osaka. I am an Associate Professor at Komazawa University, Tokyo, Japan.

I came to Ireland last March. I am on a two-year sabbatical as a visiting professor at UCD (University Collage of Dublin). This is my second visit in Ireland. I came here 40 years ago and lived in Rathgar for about two months, then went to London and attended a local secondary school there for about a year.

My hobbies are theatre, rugby, and cooking. I like both watching, playing and eating! I saw Brian Friel's play *Translations* in Galway last year. It was fantastic. And I, myself, performed a play in a pub in Dublin in October which was very fun as well. As to rugby, I played that game for 10 years in my primary and junior high, and high schools and in London as well. And as I have come to the world's best rugby country, I often go to Leinster games and others. I saw the Six Nations' Ireland versus France game in the pub and at the public viewing site at the Aviva Stadium. Hearing "Ireland's Call" with my own ears - fascinating! And I know,

1 This article is a reworking of a lecture that the author delivered in February 2023 at University College Dublin (UCD), where he is currently serving as a visiting professor (2022-2024). I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Dr. Emma Sokell, Dr. Naonori Kodate, and the entire UCD Centre for Japanese Studies for affording me this valuable opportunity.

Raku theatre in Dublin



UCD have produced a lot of good players, such as Keenan, Porter, Ryan, and of course Ringrose. I am very proud of being here, the incubator of Irish rugby, as a visiting professor.

Perhaps related to my love of rugby and theatre, I am studying political communications of Japanese politics. Political communication is a field that observes and studies how the public, media and political elites communicate or engage with each other. It covers the activities of politicians and political parties, public opinion and propaganda, and the media and their influence and so on, but I am particularly interested in how the public, the media and political elites communicate or interact with each other. In this sense, I am a “fight-watcher” and a “theatre critic” of Japanese politics.

三五

As I have written about the recent campaigns of those three actors of Japanese politics in English². So today I would like to take a broad view and talk briefly about the challenges which Japanese politics has been grappling with in recent times.

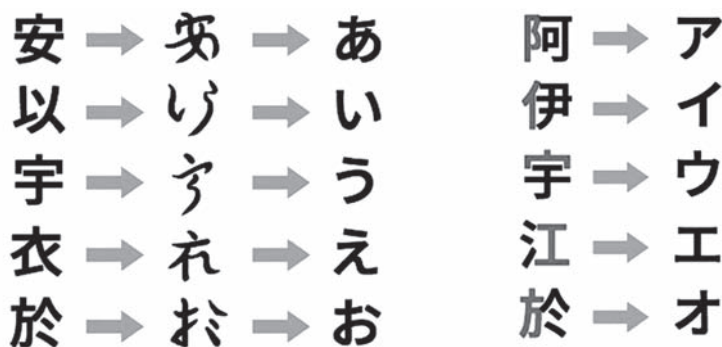
Fig. 1: Map of East Asia (from Google map)



Politics confronts both foreign and domestic challenges. Therefore, I would like to talk about the history of foreign and domestic issues in Japanese politics, as well as about Japanese journalism, which is currently undergoing major changes.

As Japan is located in the east edge of Eurasian continent(See Fig.1), historically relations with China have been particularly important for Japan. China was the superpower of East Asia in the Pre-Modern era. Neighbouring countries were either militarily dominated, or treated as “retainers”, by China. Domination was not only military but also cultural and ethical. It was in China that writing,

2 Iwao Osaka(2023) ‘Mediatization of Japanese Politics: the changing nature of political communication’ The Annuals Report of the Komazawa University Institute for Journalism and Policy Studies, Vol.39 (<http://repo.komazawa-u.ac.jp/opac/repository/all/MD40141798/kjp039-05-osaka.pdf>)

Fig. 2: Kanji to Hiragana & Katakana³

Chinese characters, and paper - the basis of civilization - were invented, and the grand theory of Confucianism - which would also have a significant influence on east asia – was conceived.

We use three sets of characters in Japan: Kanji, Hiragana, and Katakana. Kanji is the Japanese version of the Chinese characters. Hiragana and Katakana, both phonogram, were also created from Kanji. At first, we used the same sounding Chinese letters to represent Japanese words. But we gradually changed Kanji characters to the Hiragana and the Katakana of today. Hiragana, uses curvy lines, simplifies the whole Kanji, Katakana consist of components of kanji and tend to be angular in shape(See Fig.2).

Japanese people were also influenced by Confucianism. The orthodox Samurai's ethics in the Edo period were based on Confucianism. We have also imported

3 Nihon Bunka Kenkyu Burogu 'Kanji, Hiragana, Katakana no Rekishi to Kigen Toha? Hiragana, Katakana no yurai to naritachi' (Japan Culture Lab Blog 'What is the History and Origins of Kanji, Hiragana, and Katakana? Origin and Composition of Hiragana and Katakana') 日本文化研究ブログ, 「漢字、ひらがな、カタカナの歴史と起源とは? ひらがな、カタカナの由来と成り立ち」 <https://jpculture.net/kanji-hiragana-katakana/> 最終閲覧 2023 年 7 月 15 日

Fig. 3: A Chinese encyclopedia of Ming dynasty (1607)⁴



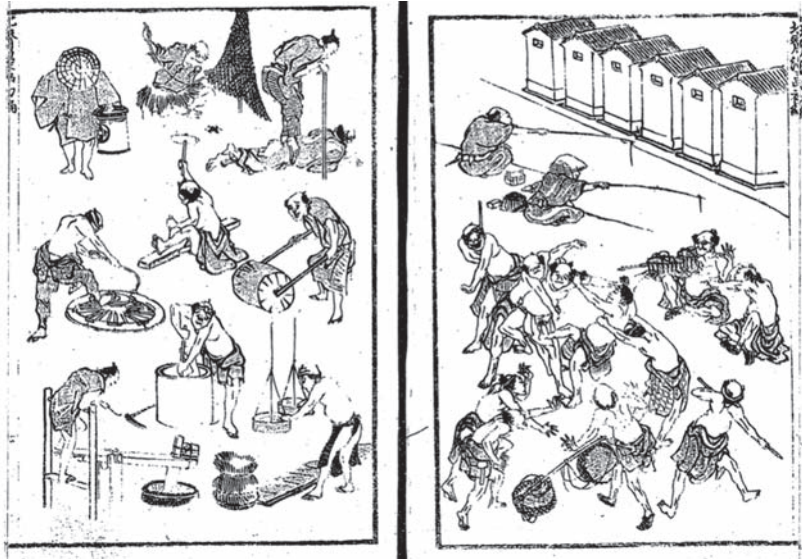
various political systems from ancient times. However, it is interesting to note that all of ethics, political systems, and others are heavily localized, Japanized, as the Hiragana and Katakana.

By contrast with the experience of other nations in the region, Japan was never dominated militarily by China. Indeed, Japan sometimes challenged and attempted to invade China. During the Ming dynasty in China, around the 13th to the 15th century, Japanese pirates raided and plundered the Chinese coast, and in the 1570s Toyotomi Hideyoshi, after unifying Japan, sent troops to the Korean peninsula to dominate China. Although Hideyoshi's attempt failed, Japan was sometimes a challenger, and at other times subservient to China.

In the eyes of China, on the other hand, the Japan of that time was considered

三二

4 Dingqin Chongwen Ge huizuan shimin jieyong fenlei xuefu quanbian 明龍陽子輯 (1607) 『鼎錄崇文閣彙纂士民捷用分類學府全編』 国立国会図書館デジタルコレクション <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2589545/1/5> (最終閲覧 2023年7月31日)

Fig4; Half-Naked of Edo people in Katsushika Hokusai's "Hokusai manga"⁵

a barbarian country. An encyclopedia of Ming dynasty described the Japanese as naked, sword-holding savages(See Fig.3). In fact, this description of naked Japanese is somewhat accurate. These paintings by Katsushika Hokusai show that the common people of Edo period(17-19 century) worked and lived nearly naked. This custom remained, I think, in the generation of my grandfathers, and even today we all bathe naked together in hot springs and public baths. Sumo wrestling, a typical Japanese sport, is also performed almost naked. And we also have many “naked” festivals all over Japan, such as Konomiya Hadaka-Maturi in Inazawa, Sanja-Maturi in Tokyo and Hakata Gion Yamakasa in Fukuoka(See Fig 5).

Beneath Tokyo's contemporary facade, there may still linger traces of barbarism or a

5 Katsushika Hokusai 'Hokusai Manga' the National Library of Japan Digital Collection 葛飾北斎『北斎漫画』国立国会図書館デジタルコレクション <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/851646/1/9> (最終閲覧 2023 年 7 月 31 日)

Fig5. “Naked” festival “Sanja-Maturi” in Tokyo⁶

propensity for warfare. However, this cultural trait was considered embarrassing by China and Korea, and was a reason why Japan was viewed as inferior and uncivilised .

This perception and relationship continued for thousands of years, but there was a major change in the second half of the 19th century, when the east came into regular and sustained contact with the West . While China, confident in its own ways, showed some resistance to modernise, Japan quickly accepted it and achieved rapid modernisation.

6 WaDa Photo Gallery ‘Edokko! Sanja Festival (Naked Mikoshi)’ Wa ☆ Da フォトギャラリー「江戸っ子！三社祭（裸神輿）」<https://wadaphoto.jp/maturi/sanja7.htm> (最終閲覧 2023 年 7 月 31 日)

Japan then fought China for control over the Korean peninsula and won in 1895. This was a huge change in the East Asian world, as a country perceived by China as barbarian had defeated a “superpower” there. Japan also fought and won against Russia in 1904-1905. This was the first victory by an Oriental over a Western power and was greatly appreciated by the Asian people, who were suffering from Western domination. Japan also participated in World War I, defeating German soldiers in China.

Table1; Modern Japan and its war

1894	First Sino-Japanese War
1895	Colonized Taiwan
1904	Russo-Japanese War
1910	Colonized Korea
1914	World War I
1931	Invaded Manchuria
1937	Second Sino-Japanese War
1941	Declared war on United States and Britain(World War II)

However, Japan colonised Korea in 1910 and subsequently invaded north-east China (Manchuria). In the 1930s it established a puppet state (“Manchukuo”) in Manchuria, and in 1937 Japan finally began to a full invasion into China.

After the invasion of mainland China, Japan finally started a war against the USA, and invaded the East and South-East Asian colonies of Britain and the Netherlands in 1941.

At first, Japan won. Japan took possession of the British-controlled Malaya and Singapore and sank the Prince of Wales. But the situation turned bad soon after, and in 1945, shortly after the atomic bombs destroyed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered unconditionally .

Table.2: Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan

CHAPTER II RENUNCIATION OF WAR;

Article 9.

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

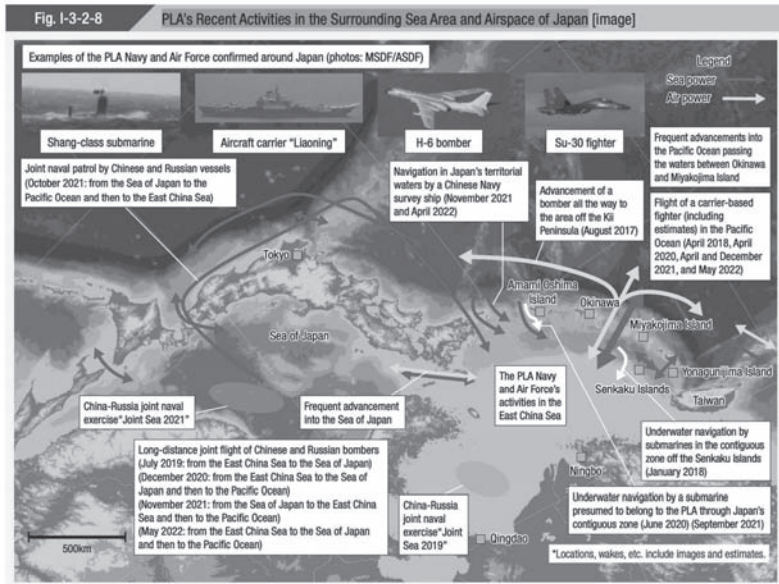
In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

After defeat, Japan was occupied by the United Nations, led by the Americans, and became a pacifist state. Under US influence, Japan amended the Constitution. And Article 9 of the new Constitution abolished the armed forces and denied the right of belligerency. In exchange for allowing the US military to establish frontline bases on its territory, Japan received security guarantees that it would be protected by the US.

As the Cold War progressed, Japan also created a military organisation, called the Self-Defense Forces of Japan, but it did not possess any 'offensive' weapons, such as long-range missiles, for the purpose of self-defence only. Japan chose to leave security to the US and concentrate on the economy. Later, by the end of the 1960s, that defeated country, Japan had grown into one of the world's leading economic powers

But times have changed: the Cold War ended. Since then, the world has become disorderly. With the rise of China and India, the relative power of the US has been decreasing, and as a military force, the US can no longer commit itself to the world in its entirety. The power of the West has also weakened.

As for Japan, China, Russia, and a nuclear weapons-equipped North Korea are the primary sources of concern. Having adopted a socialist market economy, China rapidly increased its economic power in the 1980s and 90s. And with its growing

Fig.6; Confirmed Chinese military activities around Japan⁷

economic power, China is thought to be expanding its territorial ambitions. We see many territorial conflicts between China and neighboring countries, including Japan (See, Fig.6). Tensions with Taiwan are also clearly increasing .

In addition, Russia and Japan have had territorial disputes since World War II and have not signed a peace treaty yet. Putin's recent invasion of Ukraine, which took place in this context, along with the rise of China, has come as a great shock to the Japanese people. The Japanese are beginning to think seriously about our national security, perhaps for the first time since the end of the WWII.

7 Ministry of Defense (2022) "Defense of Japan 2022" https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp_2022.html (最終閲覧 2023 年 7 月 31 日)

To counter China, Japan is trying to form alliances with countries that share the values of liberal democracy, including defense agreements with Australia and New Zealand - not to mention the US - and to foster a deepening relationship with India. Some Japanese argue that we must amend the Constitution to have a regular army, and some even say that Japan should have nuclear weapons.

However, China is our largest trading partner. So, maintaining peaceful relations is vital for both sides. So stabilising East Asia and establishing a peaceful atmosphere in that region are the great challenge for Japanese diplomacy.

Let us now turn to internal politics. What was the main challenge facing Japan in the domestic political sphere? We can say that it is the creation of a modern nation-state with a prosperous society.

The encounter with the modern West was the tipping point: in the 1850s, Commodore Matthew Perry came from the USA and forced the country's opening through gunboat diplomacy.

Perry brought numerous newly developed inventions as gifts. He handed over them to the Japanese Samurai at Yokohama in 1854(See, Fig7). The Samurai were interested in the telegraph and a miniature steam locomotive. At this moment, the Samurai realised that the power of steam and electricity united the world.

The Samurai learned of this global communication revolution with energy and electricity uniting the world as one. So they put down their swords and began to build a modern state: rapid modernisation with the objective “Survive and Resist” started in Japan.

Fig7; Delivery of American presents at Yokohama, March 13, 1854.⁸

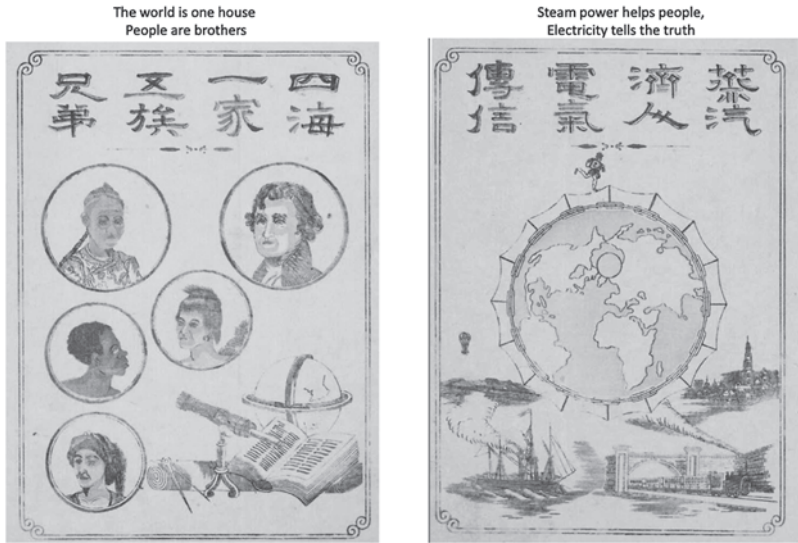


This illustration of Figure 8 is from the cover of a book entitled “Seiyo Jijo” (Western Affairs), written by Yukichi Fukuzawa, a young samurai scholar. This book was first published in 1866, two years prior the end of the samurai Edo period, and became a bestseller, selling over 200,000 copies. The illustration shows a world connected by telegraph (like the internet) and the steam engine expanding global communication. The text reads: “Steam helps people, electricity tells the truth, the world is one house, and people are brothers.”

二五 The Japanese Government sent young scholars to the West to learn not only technology, but also many other things, including political systems and ideas.

8 from “Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, performed in the years 1852, 1853, and 1854, under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy, by order of the Government of the United States.”

Fig. 8: Illustrations from Yukichi Fukuzawa(1864) “Seiyo Jijo (Western Affairs)”⁹



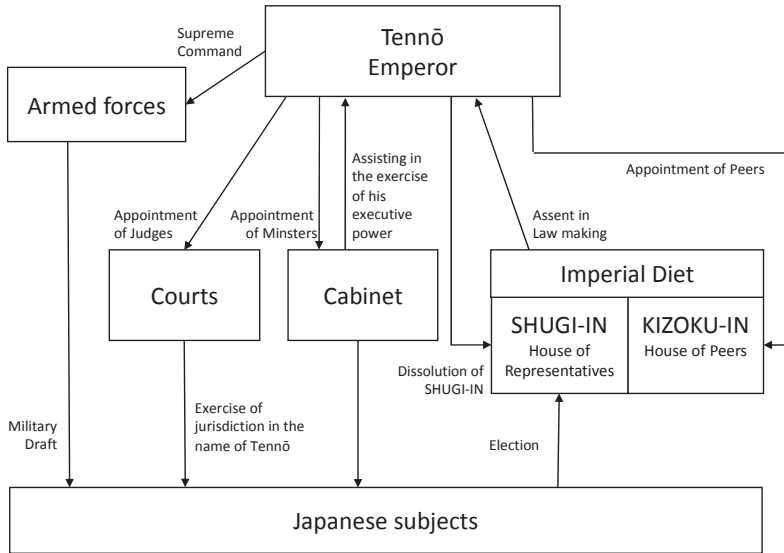
On their return to Japan, they became leaders in their fields and worked hard to modernise Japan.

In order to revise unequal treaties, it was necessary to modernise the political and legal systems and be acknowledged by the powers as a modern nation. In 1889, Japan made a constitution – commonly referred to as the “Meiji Constitution” – in which the State was designated a constitutional monarchy. It gave the Emperor (Tennō, or Mikado), the same status as kings in the West, and it established Shintoism as the State religion. The Tennō was made the Head of State but also the Shinto God.

Meanwhile, a bicameral parliament - a two chamber parliament with an Upper House and a Lower House - was also created. The Tennō was the head of state, but

9 from ‘Digital collections of Keio University Libraries’ <https://collections.lib.keio.ac.jp/ja/fukuzawa/a02/3> (最終閲覧 2023 年 7 月 31 日)

Fig. 9: Political System of Meiji Constitutions



the budget and laws required the approval of Parliament; of the two Houses, the KIZOKU-IN was the House of Peers, nominated by the Tennō, while members of the SHUGI-IN, House of Representatives, were elected (See, Fig9). Initially, only rich men who paid a lot of tax were given the right to vote for the SHUGI-IN, but the tax requirement was eventually reduced and universal male suffrage was achieved in 1923. In the context of these democratic changes, the Prime Minister, constitutionally appointed directly by the Tennō, was replaced by a leader of the party having a majority in the SHUGI-IN. Through this reform, a parliamentary cabinet model was largely established – albeit not a complete version of that model.

However, during the global recession that began in the late 1920s, Japan's attempts as a young mass liberal democracy failed. The “clean” and powerful military received more public support than the “dirty” legislators – a development somewhat comparable to that in Germany at the time. It was around this time that

the Japanese military invaded Manchuria and subsequently launched a full-scale invasion of China . The Japanese people and the Japanese media supported these events enthusiastically. They believed the army's propaganda that it was for the survival of Imperial Japan. However, as I told you, we eventually started to fight the Allies and were defeated.

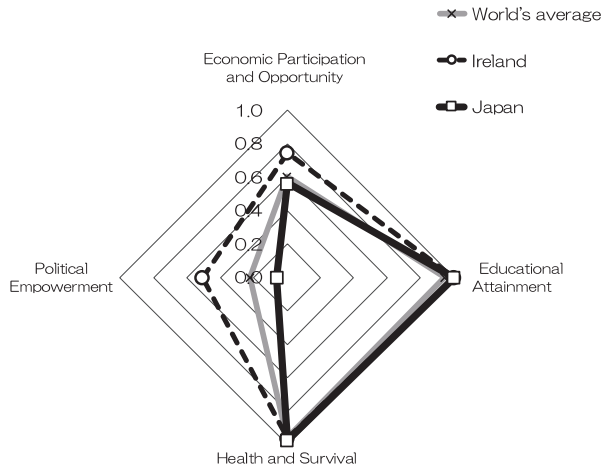
After the defeat, the Constitution was amended during the US occupation, and we adopted three basic principles: sovereign power resides in the people; respect for fundamental human rights; and pacifism. I have referred to the external factors caused by this constitutional change, but domestic politics also changed dramatically. The Emperor issued a 'Declaration of Humanity', saying he was not a god, and became a symbol of national unity. And Shintoism ceased its association with the State.

The aristocracy was abolished, and the KIZOKU-IN disappeared. The Prime Minister was elected solely by Parliament. Women were given the right to vote, and a complete democracy was constitutionally established.

Under this new democratic regime, the people in Japan started to rebuild their lives destroyed by the war. People focused on the economy. They formed various voluntary organisations and democracy developed based on these organisations. The wealth generated by factories in coastal areas of the Pacific was distributed to rural areas. In the 1960s, the Liberal Democratic Party established a one-party dominant system, and political stability was achieved. In this manner, Japan became the world's second-largest economic power in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

But one cannot say that people's feelings and the culture of society changed quickly because of the change in the Constitution. Popular collectivism, which was pushed even more during the war, and the culture of having a hierarchy

Fig10; Sectoral comparison of Japan and Ireland in the 2021 WEF Gender Index.
Data: World Economic Forum "The Global Gender Gap Report 2022"



remained entrenched in Japanese society, companies and families. Some people say that Japan's fast economic growth from the 1950s to the 1980s was due to a culture of organisation in which Japanese society worked as a whole, with the bureaucracy at the center. 'Japan Inc.' was the name for this.

But after reaching its peak in 1990s, Japan has entered a long period of stagnation. The economy has averaged very low growth rates for three decades, and recently the population began to decline.

One of the reasons for this is that our organizational culture is a barrier. A traditional culture that is male-centric, hierarchical, and respectful of elders rejects the notion of women holding positions of power and causes society to reject the changes that are demanded by younger generations. The gender index of the World Economic Forum (WEF) has pointed out the inability of women in Japan to attain high political positions and the more limited economic participation and

opportunities for Japanese women(See, Fig10). The strange female images in Japanese anime and manga are caricatures of Japanese women, who are frequently forced to play the “kawaii” (“cute”) role.

Japan's population is declining, which may give rise to the aspect of organizational culture that prioritises the voices of the elderly rather than those of the younger generations .

In this regard, the challenge for the survival of Japanese society is to transition from a vertical, hierarchical society to one that is horizontal, flat, open, and diverse - one that could reflect the voices of the various sections of the population.

Of course, it is a very delicate issue: male dominance is firmly rooted in customs. It also has a relationship with some of the cultural fundamentals, including the language such as Keigo, a Japanese honorific language, and the differences between male and female speech and so on.

We can also find the same difficulty in the Japanese media and journalism. Printing has a long history in Japan. The oldest printed material preserved in Japan is a Buddhist scripture of 1500 years ago, which is one of the world's oldest paper printings.

With magazines and ukiyo-e (Japanese woodblock prints), a publishing culture flourished, particularly during the Edo period. Ordinary people purchased or borrowed many books and magazines from bookstores. As souvenirs for plays and journeys, people purchased ukiyo-e. And some newspapers began to be published on an occasional basis, though they could not engage in political criticism. They were known as “Kawaraban”. Kawaraban rarely used colors; they were just black

Fig 11. Kwarabans and modern Newspapers



ink on white paper to print news quickly.

Modern newspapers covering politics and published daily developed in the Meiji era. One of them is the Jiji Shimpō, published by Fukuzawa Yukichi. Japanese newspaper journalism had a degree of freedom in the 1920s. But by the 1930s, with the rise of the military and a shift in public opinion, they became flatterers or advocates of the state, like those of Russia and China today.

一九 After the war, they became free but still tended to disseminate what the administration wanted to report. In this respect, they also reflect the hierarchical nature of postwar society. Japanese newspapers are still very much “men's organisations”.

On the other hand, Japanese television, which began in the 1950s, is characterised by fierce competition for ratings, with one public broadcaster and five commercial TV stations. This intense competition for ratings led to the phenomena of Japanese-style entertainment, such as animes and variety programs. This fierce competition extends to news programs. And to gain ratings, they began to add music and sound effects to news footage and even to use puppets of politicians. Political news has also become entertainment, and the politicians who deal with it have a hard time¹⁰.

However, this hierarchical society and the attitudes of the people who support it are slowly changing as generations change. At the Tokyo Olympics held in 2021, the head of the organising committee, who made sexist remarks about women, was forced to resign by pressure from public opinion expressed via the Internet. The government is also showing a certain understanding towards problems faced in raising children and issues affecting LGBTQ people. This may reflect the awareness of those who believe that Japanese society needs to change.

And giving strength to this movement is of course the development of the Internet, especially the spread of social media in recent years. The Internet is making popular opinion visible and destroying traditional hierarchical forms of information distribution in Japan. Certainly, social media generates problems, such as fake news and the rise of far-right activities. But I still believe Japan is gradually transforming into a more diverse, open, and flat society.

I know this is a huge historical challenge, but we have the evidence in a

10 For more information on this relationship between media and politics, please see Osaka(2023).

Fig. 12: Victories of Japan 'national' team¹¹



The screenshot shows a news article from 'The Observer' titled 'Japan stun Ireland to pull off another famous Rugby World Cup upset'. The article is dated 'Sat 28 Sep 2019 14:36 BST' and has 1,816 views. It features a black and white photograph of Japanese rugby players celebrating on the field. The text below the photo reads: 'Japan have done it again, this time against the team ranked No 1 in the world two weeks ago. The World Cup hosts came from nine points down to win after playing with pace, skill and fervour that the humidity and time could not dim.'

“forerunner”. That is rugby. In rugby, as you know, if you are a member of a regional team for three years, you can join the national team there. Players who have dedicated their lives to their team for three years are considered to be on an equal footing with their native team-mates. So, by contrast with Japanese national teams in other sports, the national rugby team includes players from a diverse range of nationalities and ethnicities.

The Japanese national rugby team developed their individual skills and initiative, as well as focusing on team play. With that increased diversity, we could win the world's strongest rugby team at the last World Cup four years ago, and as of now,

11 The Guardian 'Japan stun Ireland to pull off another famous Rugby World Cup upset' <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/sep/28/japan-ireland-rugby-world-cup-match-report> (最終閲覧 2023 年 7 月 31 日)

the “Brave Blossoms” rank 10th in the world.

When I was playing rugby forty years ago, the Japanese team was very weak. However, Japan's national rugby team has now welcomed diversity, established a flat organizational structure, developed individual and team strength, and become strong and creative. Above all, our play is fun to watch. And I believe they are the forerunners of Japanese society in the future.

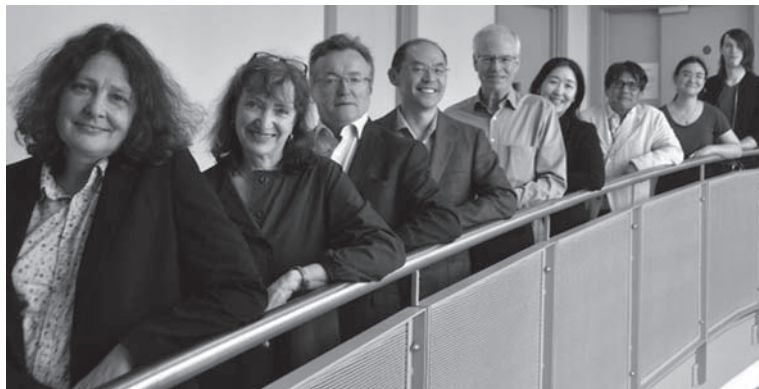
This year the Rugby World Cup will be held in August. If you are interested in Japan's upcoming challenges, you should observe the rugby matches first. And, just to mention it, you don't have to wait until August, as the Japan National High School Rugby team will visit Dublin next month, in March. They will have a number of games in Dublin. The schedule is here. I'm curious why they wouldn't play with us, Ireland's rugby incubator. Maybe they are planning it right now. But in any case, please come and watch – and cheer on - these youngsters facing their challenge, before you go to the World Cup and to Japan.

Thank you very much.

解題

本エッセーは現在、在外研究で客員教授を務めさせていただいている UCD (University College Dublin/ アイルランド国立大学ダブリン校) でおこなった日本政治についての講義を再構成したものである。

講義は「Gateways to Japan」という UCD 全学学部生を対象とした連続講座の中でおこなった。この講座は籍を置かせていただいている UCD 日本研究センターの小舘尚文所長(社会科学・法学部准教授)と Emma Sokell 副所長(理学部教授)がコーディネーターとなり、伊地知伸子氏(日本語・



UCD 日本研究センターのメンバー（手前から Emma Sokell 教授（センター副所長）、Mary Gallagher 教授、Declan Downey 専任講師、小館尚文准教授（センター長）、John Neary 特任教授、伊地知伸子氏、小生、UCD 日本ソサイエティの学生たち）写真は同研究所ホームページより。

日本文化コーディネータ）らの同研究センターのスタッフが中心になって運営している。

寿司やポケモンが浸透し日本文化への関心が高まったのとは対照的に、1980年代や90年代には盛んだったヨーロッパにおける社会科学系の日本研究は、21世紀に入って勢いを失っている。一方、この間、特にパンデミックが生じるまでは、中国がヨーロッパでも各国のアジア研究機関に対して資金援助や人材派遣などを戦略的に行い、研究面においても各地を席卷してきた。アイルランドでもトリニティ大学のアジア研究所では中国関連のイベントが多く開催され、UCDにも孔子学院が2006年にできるなど中国が「進出」している。

一五 一 五
しかし、UCDでは日本のカルチャーへの関心の高い学生たちを中心にUCD日本ソサイエティ (UCD Japanese Society) というサークルが2010年にでき、現在500名近くの学生が参加している。2016年には大学スタッフもUCDジャパンというグループを作り、それが2020年4月の日本研究センターの立ち上げにつながっていった。同センターは欧州において稀

有な存在となりつつある日本に特化した超領域研究センターであり、日本語能力試験の実施や毎秋のUCD ジャパンフェアでのJETプログラム(日本政府による外国青年招致事業 Japan Exchange and Teaching Program)の紹介や日本関連セミナーの開催を通じて、日本とアイルランドの重要な架け橋となっている。

筆者が講義をおこなった講座「Gateways to Japan」は、そのUCD 日本研究センターの活動の中核にあたるもので、日本に関心を持つ学生にさらなる情報・知識を提供し、交換留学や日本語学習の促進、さらには、将来の日本とのビジネスや研究交流を推進する人材育成に貢献するものである。昨年度の講座は毎週月曜日に2時間、2コマ(1コマ、1時間)を使って、オムニバス形式で行われた。元駐日アイルランド大使のJohn Neary氏による「東洋と西洋、態度や外交の違い(Difference in Western/Eastern manners, diplomacy)」や小学館取締役(国際メディア事業局担当)でポケットモンスターのメディアミックス展開の仕掛け人である久保雅一氏による「ニューノーマル時代の日本アニメ」といった現場感覚に溢れた講義もあれば、2020年に日愛の相互理解促進を理由に外務大臣表彰を受けたUCD 歴史学科Declan Downey専任講師の重厚な日本史の講義などバラエティに富んだ構成となっている。

私が講義をおこなったのは2月20日だった。この時期、アイルランドでは欧州ではラグビーのシックスネーションズが始まっており、大いに盛り上がっていた。そこでタイトルはアイルランドのラグビーのナショナルアンセム「Ireland's Call アイルランズ・コール(アイルランドからの呼びかけ)」に引っ掛けて、「Japan's Call – how we have answered, and how we will answer」とした。日本政治が近代において何と戦ってきたのか、そしてこれから戦おうとしているのかを、筆者の専門であるメディアやジャーナリズムについて触れつつ、アイルランドの若者にも理解可能なように話してみたものである。そもそも脱線気味の内容と筆者の拙い英語力、講義でどれほど伝えることができたか非常に心もとないが、学生は楽しんでくれた

ようである。

なお講義の最後の部分に新しい日本の闘い方のモデルとして、ラグビーの日本代表を上げた。その際、3月に高校の日本代表が来て、アイルランドの若者と戦うので、ぜひ新しい日本の闘い、未来の日本の姿を見にきてくれと学生らには呼びかけた。大見えをきった手前、そして筆者はリエゾンとして高校チームの現地でお手伝いをさせていただいたこともあり、大変に心配ではあったが、やってきた日本の高校生らは大活躍した。初戦では世界で最も古いラグビーのクラブでもあるトリニティ大学ラグビー部を55対26のダブルスコアで破り、続いておこなわれた19歳以下のナショナルチームとの試合でも、初戦は22対19で勝利をおさめた。残念ながら2回戦は44対45で敗れたものの、昨年度のアイルランドは欧州のナンバーワンを決めるシックスネーションズでフル代表も、そして20歳以下のチームも共に全勝で勝利するなど、現在、世界一のラグビー大国である。その世界の大国の若きチームに土をつけ、トータルとしては勝ち越した高校ジャパンは、その戦いぶりの素晴らしさを持ってアイルランドの人々に大いに讃えられた。

