

Japan: Language, Culture, Ideology

Lecture April 30, 2003

Being Japanese

- language
- geography
- "race"

New Year's calligraphy contest

- tradition is constructed in the present

Written Language

- *kanji* from China, 7th c.
 - literally, "Chinese characters"
 - used singly or as compounds

漢字

- two *kana* syllabaries
 - *hiragana* - main syllabary
 - *katakana* - sounds, foreign words/names

ひらがな

カタカナ

Grammar

- S - O - V
 - subject is often omitted
 - particles clarify part of speech
 - Example: *kurabu e iku?*
 - Literally: "Club to going?"
 - Meaning: "Are you going to the club?"

ク
ラ
ブ
へ
行
く

"Eating" Politeness

- *meshiagatte kudasai* = Please eat
 - honorable verb / humble receiver
- *itadikimasu* = (I) humbly eat.
- *inu ni yaru* = Feed it to the dog.

- *tsukutte kureru* = Will you [in-group] make me some?
- *meshi kutta?* = d'you [peer or lower status] eat?

sukiyaki

Status marked by
language

But everyone eats from
the same pot.

Language is a resource, but does not determine culture

- Culture
 - the meanings by which we understand and guide our lives.
- Meanings from . . .
 - peers, family, school, work
 - popular culture

Slasher schoolgirls
(Garo)

William Kelly, "Finding a Place"

- Identity or difference
 - homogeneous salarymen
 - but most work smaller firms

 - standardized education
 - but much variation b/n levels

- Not a question of "consensus or conflict" (192)

Kelly in the press box for the Hanshin Tigers.

He is writing a book about Japanese baseball.

Kelly: Postwar transformations

- ideology
 - culture, class, cohort
- institutional patterning
 - work, schools, family
- everyday life
 - shaped by above (stdzn)
 - but leading to divergences

Akiyoshi Toshiko

jazz pianist, escapes to
NYC but wears kimono

Painter, *Japanese TV*

- Morning Zoom-In
 - ideologically links Japan
- It's OK to Laugh
 - ridicule to bring to *uchi* (quasi-intimate) level
- Wide Shows
 - enforce social norms
 - sensationalize the world

Tamori, host of *Waratte ii to mo* (It's OK to Laugh)

Sazae vs. Crayon Shinchan

- Nostalgia
 - Sazae
 - lost family values
- Contrast to realism?
 - Crayon Shinchan
 - Dysfunctional but lovable
- Popular culture as generational place marker

Crayon Shinchan

Sazae-san

New Middle Class Japan

- New divisions
 - rural / urban
 - generational differences
 - salaryman, educationa mama, samurai schoolkids
 - rise of "educational arms race"

What kind of generation is being raised in the new Japan?

(Wharf of Sadness)

sung by MISORA Hibari (1960)

Affluence, 1974 - 1989

- Cornerstones of expanding economy crumble in early and mid-1970s.
- The end of:
 - access to raw materials
 - stable currency exchange
 - free international trade
 - high global demand

High Growth: Occupations

Occupational distribution change over high growth era

	1955	1974
primary		
(farm, fish, forest)	41%	14%
secondary		
(mining, construction, industrial)	23%	34%
tertiary (commerce, service, professions, gov't)	36%	52%

Source: Allinson (1997: 110)

Domestic responses

- consumer goods saturation
- structural adjustment
- agricultural change continues
- rise of retail and service sectors
 - Japan becomes affluent, post-industrial society during this period (1974 - 1989)

Marriage Rate and Average Age of First Marriage by Country

See United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook*, 1999; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Jinko tokei shiryoshu* (Latest Demographic Statistics), 2001.

Change of Household Structure

See Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, *Nihon tokei geppo* (Monthly Statistics of Japan), January 2002.

Number of Children per Household

See United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook*, 1999; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Jinko tokei shiryoshu* (Latest Demographic Statistics), 2001.