Diversity in Japanese Culture and Language

Edited by
John C. Maher and
Gaynor Macdonald

Japanese Studies

DIVERSITY IN JAPANESE CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

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For
Mary Kilroy
Miho Okada
and
Sanae Ogawa

Contents

Illustrations

Tables

Figures

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Part One

INTRODUCTION

1 Culture and Diversity in Japan

Gaynor Macdonald and John C Maher

On a winter's afternoon in 1994 one of the editors found himself sitting in a public hall in a provincial town in Hokkaidō watching a skit being performed, in modern Ainu language, by several children and adults. A phrase ran through his mind: 'I decline to accept the end of Ainu.' Later he realised that he was thinking of William Faulkner's Nobel Prize speech in which he said, 'I decline to accept the end of Man . . . I believe that Man will not only endure; He will prevail.' The irony is that the novelist could also have been talking about Ainu as the word *Ainu* is often translated into English as 'Man' or 'people'.

Across the world, valued aspects of centuries-old cultures can now be glimpsed by a younger generation only as a lizard slipping away into the shadows. There is need to think a different reality. Among the incalculable consequences of this phenomenon, comes the imperative to chart new social horizons, to rethink sociality among the struggles, the successes and the ruins – to think again. To challenge an established way of looking at things is to invoke a new kind of discourse, an alternative language game. As the dominant mode of description is laid aside, the *parole* which serviced a philosophical system, a cherished geographical and cultural insularity or a way of relating to other people starts to fragment. Until the formulation of an alternative syntax, literally a new 'order' of language, there is only deepening paralysis of old modes of description.

This volume suggests an enlarged frame of discourses for talking about Japan. It is not that information and serious discussion on Japan as a whole is somehow lacking. On the contrary, books about its culture, business practices, history and lifestyle have proliferated in recent years. However, the dominant theme underlying most of the discourse is familiar: 'Japan' is a homogeneous entity, sharply-defined and yet-to-be-understood. But Japan is a much more diverse and complex society than much of the literature has portrayed. There is plurality of cultural, ethnic

and linguistic expression which goes beyond the imagined community of conventional description. Among the diversity of societal groups, some are ignored by the mainstream, others experience discrimination on grounds of physical, ethnic, religious or such other difference. The consequent political and social conflicts rarely receive mention in accounts of Japanese life and the picture inevitably becomes lop-sided and thus repetitive.

Sets of discourses and activities which can be glossed as 'Japan-bashing' have proliferated in recent years, particularly within the United States of America. Our desire through this volume is to tell as yet largely untold stories about Japan. Some of them present criticism of mainstream views and policies. To interpret such critical narratives as a succession of attacks on the foe would be a grave misinterpretation of our purpose. Similarly, it would be misleading to categorise the papers in this volume as merely variations on the theme of 'minorities' or 'discrimination'. Our intention is, rather, to start balancing the perspectives which currently exist in the non-Japanese language literature about Japan. We believe that this will lead to a greater recognition of its complexity and diversity rather than its strangeness or uniqueness; and to the realisation on the part of both Japanese and non-Japanese that many of the social and political issues discussed in this volume are shared by other nations and minority peoples. In other words, it is also important for us to grasp the similarities between Japan and other nations in the contemporary world in order to counteract the imbalance created by a plethora of studies of its so-called 'uniqueness'.

An important undercurrent of this book is to challenge the myth of Japan as 'Other'. All too often, literature about Japan focuses on what is different about it, how it can be compared or contrasted with other, particularly 'western', nations. However, these essays highlight some of the very common experiences that Japanese people share with peoples in other parts of the world. It is our hope that English-speaking readers of this volume, from whichever nation or culture, may come to know Japan better within the context of 'commonalities' rather than just 'otherness'. The stories discussed here are distinctly Japanese but there is nothing unique about them: they are experiences which, in broad terms, many peoples of the world are experiencing and confronting. They are a celebration of what people have already contributed and are giving to Japan.

If the chronic exoticisation of the Other found expression in Said's critique of 'Orientalism', what intellectual efforts are needed to dismantle the invention 'western'? This volume rejects a conventional analysis of Japan in terms of such dualism. Nor does it seek a way out of the neo-structuralist dilemma (the modernist reinterpretation of structuralist dichotomy) by celebrating the 'individual' – the heroic *watashi* who stands out against the authority of the collective, wistfully expressed in an oft-quoted Japanese proverb, *deru kugi wa utsu* (the nail that sticks out will be hammered down). We cannot deconstruct one form of violence by replacing it with another. We need a new form of positioning. One that neither posits the hierarchical dualities of 'western' Enlightenment, nor dissolves the other into self or into non-person. Thus, this volume equally advances the notion that what is necessary is both a repositioning of discourse about 'Japan' as well as a definition of the person as a locus of multiple, shifting discourses. Sometimes I am this and sometimes I am that but always I am. The continuous thread linking all of these contributions is precisely that: they attach more importance to an epistemological shift than mere sensitivity to the oppressed.

Several authors allude to the *Nihonjinron* interpretation of Japanese social and cultural reality which has so successfully dominated the descriptive landscape of Japan over the last hundred years, forcing all commentary into its furrow. The term, literally 'the study of being Japanese', refers to a century of essentialist reductionalism evident in literary, academic and popular accounts concerned with the imagining of Japanese life. But let us call this deadly rose by another name, particularly since a Freudian perspective does not feature in this volume and since it has apparently gone unnoticed in reviews of the literature (see Dale 1986). *Nihonjinron* is plainly a phallocentric obsession. Its phallocentricism is constituted in the fact that it positions all commentary around one particular interest. Sooner rather than later, all discourse, however disparate and uniquely articulated, is dragged back to one central monologic nexus. Any description which re-used to converge at this febrile and fixated point is marginalised. It is 'not Japanese anyway'. That its hegemonic effect on many forms of social criticism and intellectual expression is only just now being evaluated indeed makes its impact difficult to assess. However, we may note, in passing, three phallocentric generators. From the Meiji period onwards, the emerging power

elite of Japan was: male, composed of a disbanded and upwardly mobile Samurai class; capitalistic, desirous of a re-grouping of economic power and authority in the hands of an elite; and potently expansionist both politically and militarily. In this male-as-norm denominator of discourse (see Rothfield 1991) multiple perspectives are as unwelcome to this (phallic) preoccupation as are women. Women are 'different' as are all other kinds of so-called 'minorities'. Diversity of any kind constitutes a threat.

Culture as History and Process

We are all caught up in the historical continuum of ideas about the people around us and need to understand them in an historical context. The contributors to Part One look at historical backgrounds to contemporary Japanese diversity, or the suppressions of it. This is not just for the sake of learning 'history' which can then be relegated to the background – for three reasons. First, many ideas propagated as a result of earlier social and intellectual movements are still alive and well. It illustrates the force they exercise despite efforts to change them. Second, the ways in which we understand this history will influence the way in which we understand our present. Third, unless we have a firm grasp of the systems of social and intellectual relations that we are heirs to, we cannot effectively critique them.

The concept of culture was 'born out of a particular history of European thought' (Austin-Broos 1987:xxxi), and shifts in theories and different preoccupations with different human others relate to the political and social concerns of people in 'western' societies (Pandian 1985:97). This is important because we cannot fully assess the usefulness of ideas about culture or diversity without this understanding. And critique of these ideas is essential. Ideas about culture are not just interesting descriptions of people who are somehow different from the person doing the describing. They have been at times an incredibly violent and destructive force on the lives of various peoples.

Raymond Williams has argued for the 'pursuit of a common culture that will unify, not on the basis of spurious social identities conferred by ruling social groups, but on the basis of genuinely

common experiences.' He calls for a 'cultural struggle for actual and lived social identities' (1983:196) which represents the actual expression of people's shared experiences, not culture as imposed ideology. This means a return to the recognition that human potential is vast: much too great for any one person to realise or to even understand. The enormity of this potential has, in other times and places, been associated only with gods, and the awareness of it was the measure of our spirituality. But in this age of science rather than religion, the dominant society selects from this potential and attempts to marginalise or suppress all other human practices. 'Modernisation,' now increasingly and equally distortedly called 'westernisation,' has been pervasively foisted onto society after society throughout the world as some kind of inevitable, benign and desirable gift of the new human gods of the twentieth century, reducing much of this expression of creative humanity to society-sized 'Smoky Mountains,' the garbage of the affluent. This is one reason why we see culture at work so clearly in those areas where people are contesting power structures that oppress them, as they attempt to express themselves. What is increasingly obvious as a result of these 'people's movements' is that the diversity of the world cannot be suppressed indefinitely under structures such as capitalism and the homogeneous nation state. Culture as defined by the powerful suggests we must conform in order to advance or excel, or even just survive, *in their terms*. The opportunity for mutual development is denied. The great challenge is to reorient our societies so that they become cultural and linguistic pluralities, so that the violence which is produced by disallowing and depressing diversity is no longer tolerated.

No society can include or exhaust all human practice, energy, and intention. If there is diversity of lifestyle, there must be diversity of economy and politics. Capitalism's so-called 'culture' of 'westernisation' does not have the right to dominate the peoples of the world. It should not become the criterion by which we judge peoples who do not wish to adopt it.

However, to limit our thinking on diversity to differences between groups is to miss the point. We will and must find diversity and commonality in any social situation in which we find ourselves, in our own society and in others. Young's (1976) influential argument that cultural plurality is a phenomenon of the modern nation-state is not strictly true. Plurality, as the

coexistence of diversity, has been a feature of social life throughout world history. It is the modern nation-state that has defined it as problematic. As Macdonald argues in her concluding paper, this problematic arises out of nationalistic programmes in which nation-building was seen to require a control of the cultural and linguistic plurality which was once a taken for granted part of life throughout the entire world.

Diversity and plurality are not curious human phenomena or options, leftovers from the past or quaint features of Pacific islands or the tropical rainforests. Nor is plurality, as mutual coexistence, a new and experimental programme. Diversity and consequent social and linguistic plurality are essential for our social and intellectual survival. It is as important to maintain diversity in the world, and to encourage its interaction through social plurality as it is to maintain it within the biological world. The exchanges are vital. Without species diversity and interaction, plants will die; without social diversity our social life will die; without a diversity of ideas, there are no ideas.

We do constantly adapt and change, just as the plants and animals around us do, but not in terms of 'progress'. All life adjusts in order to make the most of the situations in which it finds itself, humans included. We too are engaged in a search for quality in our lives, just as plants are growing out to find their nutrients. And when we come across barriers, we too will look for ways to confront and change them, hence our conflicts and struggles. Social and ideational changes and alliances are the stuff of social life, just as parched environments lead to social death. Muehlhaesler, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Adelaide, argues that the loss of different languages means 'a loss of the diversity of perceptions of the world and the loss of a diversity of intellectual tools for exploring the unknown' (Donaghy 1993). Individual languages:

> contain the accumulated knowledge of generations of speakers, fossilised as lexicon and grammar and, equally importantly, each language, through the particular metaphors it favours, represents specific practices for obtaining new knowledges. . . . Languages are a memory of past human ingenuity, something which takes generations to develop. Different languages offered different perpectives of the world and a chance to engage in a genuine, two-way learning

> process, qualitatively different from the euphemism 'intercultural communication' which stands for acculturation and Western hegemony (cited in Donaghy 1993).

Muehlhaeusler calls for a 'grammar of diversity' and a greater understanding of and preservation of linguistic ecologies which are under threat. In many cases they are already destroyed as a result of systems of status, privilege, or even fashion. His call is not a new one, as illustrated in Steele's account of Sōetsu Yanagi's efforts to make Japanese people aware of the threat nationalism posed to Okinawan language and culture.

The study of diversity in Japan will advance through the assertion of its existence and value in Japan, the analysis of the problems of its non-acknowledgement, and through giving it voice. However, there is a long way to go. The notion of diversity needs to be freed both in theory, and political and social practice, from the idea of dominant-minority relations. We need models of power which can encompass diversity. We need much greater understanding of the interface between people of different languages and cultures: contacts, acculturation, resistances, the constantly shifting interplay between similarity and diversity. And we need to shed the essentialist, relativist notions of culture and language which have served to 'freeze' people in place, time and power relations, preventing both their own expressions of culture and their ability to move in and out of a range of social relations across time and space.

Experiencing a Multifaceted Japan

The origins of this book derive from an international symposium 'Towards a New Order', held at the International Christian University in Tokyo, April 1991. The symposium bravely brought together an unusual mix of people representing different nations, languages, cultures, social statuses and educational backgrounds. The theme of cultural and linguistic diversity in Japan attracted attention even within a country where such issues have rarely arisen in the past. The present book seeks to intensify and enlarge the discussion on the experience of living in Japan.

The contributors to the original symposium and this volume share a common experience which, in turn, fuels a unified desire for greater understanding of the diversity which exists in Japan and the need for greater acceptance of a plural social environment. They have each experienced a multifaceted Japan – including experiences to celebrate, and others which caused anguish. Each is aware not only of the diversity which is Japan – because they live it, or because they have made it a focus of study – but also of the commonalities such groups often share with minorities in other countries. Each has participated because of a clear commitment to the value – indeed necessity – for cultural diversity.

Yet in the popular views of Japan, both within and beyond its shores, neither the wealth of this diversity nor the problem areas are sufficiently understood. Japan has seen itself, and has tended to project its official understandings, as monochrome. This also tends to encourage superficial understandings of Japan – in realms such as international politics, trade, and cultural exchange – rather than a sensitivity to the complexity of such arenas within a nation. There is much to be learnt from a greater understanding of this 'other side' of Japan, both as information about the complexity which is Japan and also as a contribution to the broader political and intellectual debates. The authors recognise the need to challenge the popular notion of Japanese cultural homogeneity and to broaden awareness of culturally and linguistically plural situations. The prior question to be addressed, therefore, is just what are the social and political dynamics of a situation in which cultural dominance is asserted by means of univocal description? The ideological, political and economic constraints which now prevent its expression within nation-states are well-recognised and none of the contributors thinks the appropriate ways ahead are either clear or easy to navigate.

In addition, issues of cultural diversity are frequently oversimplified, being reduced to differences of ethnicity: the non-Japanese in Japan. Wallace-Crabbe (1991:5) aptly reminds us that:

> so long as multicultural policies are perceived as merely ethnic in their discriminations they will have the potential to be divisive. Ethnicity as a key to the meanings of multiculturalism may be an important red herring, but it is still a red herring. The multicultural agenda is something far

> broader, something which underlies the very concept of pluralism in a modern democratic society, and which stands in opposition to the steamroller of mere consensus.

This volume is not about the non-Japanese in Japan, nor about who is or is not ethnically Japanese. The question of cultural diversity is much broader. It is about working towards societies which enable the fullest and most creative expressions of humanness for the diversity of peoples who share their life-spaces for whatever period of time – true cultural plurality. It is about encounters that enrich rather than suppress. It is about helping people to see that the persistence in a society of what some people chose to define pejoratively as 'difference', 'disability' or 'inferiority' is our richness not our weakness. Not to recognise what the young and old can give to each other, what people of various heritages and occupations and physical environments can give to each other, what people of varying abilities can share – this is to rob ourselves, to make the so-called whole into the truly crippled. It is in diversity that we find the impetus for creativity, for challenge, for exchange, for sustained life – just as the world of nature is based on and dependent upon maintenance of species diversity, so too is social diversity essential to social life.

Part Two presents general arguments through which the writers paint a broad-stroked picture of events and thinking in Japan which have influenced the creation of structures and ideologies about minorities, ethnicity and culture. Parts Three and Four then focus on specific experiences of marginalisation. Part Three looks at those social groups who have come to be marginalised through a series of specific historical events. These groups – Ainu, Korean and Buraku – have memberships, are subject to specific legislation or policy, and attitudes towards them cluster around socially-recognised ideologies. In Part Four we move to experiences of marginalisation by people who are not necessarily thought of as members of discreet social groups. Their marginalisation as individuals stems from the fact that they share a physical, social or linguistic characteristic which is not valued or is subject to demoralising exploitation in the mainstream society. The sets of experiences in Parts Three and Four are closely related. One can see the same themes and attitudes being replayed as were discussed in Part Two: the organised and not-so-organised ideol-

ogies of suppression and control, of struggle and hope, of models of social order which oscillate between commonalities defined in terms of homogeneity, and socialities longing for a celebration of difference; and the intricate political, economic and ideological relationships which lie behind the politics of suppression of cultural distinctiveness – as well as the value of cultural plurality.

Theme One: History and Ideology

The volume starts, in Part Two, with analyses of the national movements and ideologies within which issues of marginalisation need to be understood, in particular the dominant ideology of Japan as a homogeneous nation. Moulded by government ideology and propaganda since the early Meiji period, Japanese people have been taught to think of themselves in this context – as 'impossible' for non-Japanese to understand, as oil to the water of the rest of the world.

Nationalistic and modernistic ideologies have camouflaged the counter-movements throughout the century involving those who saw 'westernisation' as a destructive force. Steele's absorbing account of the struggles of one man, Sōetsu Yanagi, against these homogenising processes of nation-building illustrates the Japanese contexts set out in the following paper by Nakano. Through this biography, Steele demonstrates how these global and national political forces find expression in the daily lives of real people. He enables us to glimpse the extraordinary energy and commitment of Yanagi's uncompromising abhorence of the national government's programmes designed to suppress regional cultural and linguistic expressions, including those of colonised Okinawa and Korea. Yanagi's promotion of folk arts as a direct response to the Meiji Government's centralising nationalist programme provides an insight into the early stages of Japanese nationalism, and the consequent devaluation of cultural and linguistic plurality that ensued. Yanagi's appreciation of the cultural richness of Japan's diversity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is not only stimulating, it provides a backdrop before which the contemporary stories of denial, destruction and repression which follow take on their meaning.

How has Japan arrived at its public malaise, the public cynicism and let-down over 'money politics', the ever-widening unwanted dependency on foreign workers? Nakano chronicles the development of the 'foreign' in metropolitan Japan, a situation which has given rise to a *mal dans la peau*, the feeling of being not quite right within oneself – if not the point of intense dissatisfaction. The problem is historical, structural, to do with the texture of power and control and, of course, with the ever-present emperor system. Nakano colours in the Japanese historical and ideological landscape, tracing key events which have shaped contemporary Japanese thinking about ethnic issues and attitudes to 'foreigners' in general. In identifying historically-constituted social and ideological structures, which have been both unconsciously and consciously reproduced for various political and social reasons, he challenges the essentialism which disallows Japanese people both the right and the ability to think in critical and creative ways.

One of the significant nation-building actions on the part of the Meiji government was the formal takeover of the island of Hokkaido and dispossession of the Ainu people. Siddle focuses on the particular experiences of the Ainu in Hokkaidō and the ways in which Japanese people came to conceptualise Ainu peoples and culture. This historical situating of an ideology is important for liberating it from essentialist explanations. Siddle's analysis of Japanese ideas towards their northern neighbours, the Ainu, argues that indigenous Japanese ideas and imported ideas, from China and later western powers, were blended at different political moments to legitimise the attitudes and treatment of the Ainu both past and present. As Macdonald later reminds us, this is not peculiar to Japan. Indeed, this is implied in the notion that Japan could learn from other world powers. Siddle helps our understanding of the strength of such ideologies, and thus the enormity of the task which a people, when they find themselves having become a 'minority', have in countering the perceptions of the majority which cripple them. In his later contribution, shared with Ainu leader, Kyōko Kitahara, Siddle looks at past and present Ainu movements aimed at restoration of their rights.

We have alluded to the absence of a discourse of hetereogeneity. Likewise, there is no theory of transition from cultural homogeneity to cultural pluralism. The problem is not unlike that experienced by post-Marxist societies in which there is no theory

of transition from Communist dictatorships to democratic systems (Zeman 1992). Usually, the necessity of such a theory is denied and the theories of change applied to normally functioning societies are regarded as sufficient. How to develop a satisfactory theory of social change which explains the transition from a nation which imagines itself to be monolingual, monoethnic, monocultural to a different awareness embracing cultural diversity, a plural society? John Maher takes our discussion into the realm of language. Perhaps no other area in Japan has been so much the centre of essentialist *Nihonjinron* thinking. To speak 'Japanese' is to be 'Japanese'. Foreigners are not deemed capable of understanding it. The authors free us from this limiting thinking through their analysis of linguistic diversity and complexity in the Japanese archipelego. They explore the environmental paradigm as a model for a kinder and more diffused policy in Japan regarding dialects and minority languages. Many species of plant, many varieties of language.

Theme Two: The Right to Celebrate One's Heritage

The papers in Part Three focus on peoples who have been designated as having a politically and socially distinct identity within Japanese society: the indigenous Ainu, the Buraku people who are of Japanese ethnicity, and the people of Korean descent. Each of these peoples had long histories of discrimination and marginalisation. Hanami gives an overview of the historical and social backgrounds to the emergence of these peoples as distinctive social categories within Japan. New international economic and political roles and consequent responsibilities have challenged the view of homogeneity in Japan. Japanese people are now travelling extensively, and migrating to other countries. An increasing number of non-Japanese – from an increasing variety of national and ethnic backgrounds – are coming to Japan. There is a subtle irony in Hanami's intimation that it is in seeing themselves as less 'different' that they assume that Japanese people may be challenged to see 'difference' in others more positively.

That which 'indigenous' cultures, like the Ainu, claim to be of great value – their languages and spirituality, their arts and

interacting with the animate and non-animate – resides in philosophic truth as searched for in every place and every time. Renaissance theology, as expressed by Thomas of Aquinas, states the ideals perfectly in the maxim, *contemplata aliis tradere*, to pass on to others those things which have been contemplated. The comparison is no mere *trompe l'oeil* but intentional. This truth and this search is heard not only in the voice of an Ainu woman, Kyōko Kitahara, but also in that of Yŏng Yō Yi, a Korean woman in Japan, as both of them, with compelling eloquence, claim the right of transmission of their respective inheritances. Both of these voices of contemporary Japan are accompanied by articles, Siddle in the case of Kitahara's, and Maher and Kowanishi in the case of Yŏng Yō Yi, which contextualise their comments for the reader, filling in the history of events and attitudes which have shaped the 'experience of being' for people such as these women. The struggle for culture and language is one they share, conceptualised as an ethnic otherness.

The people of the *burakus* in Japan are not an ethnic Other, although they experience similar discriminations. Hanami has discussed the various ways in which these Japanese people have been rendered a 'caste'. It is characteristic of people who have felt persistent injustice at the hands of authoritarian elites to experience outrage at the primitive state of knowledge about them and, at the same time, to constantly strive to see beyond the story, to see through it, to transcend it. Such is the stuff of Ryūichi Kariya's decision 'to live on, to prevail' but, more than that, in the midst of suffering, to come to the awareness that 'life is wonderful'. Kariya mixes the scabrousness of ritual victimisation with life at the edge of the precipice. However, from this most relentlessly depressing chapter ('they shoot chickens and slaughter pigs, don't they?'), the passionate description of one *buraku* person's experience, comes also one most filled with the exhilaration of hope. Shuffling through the barren dispiriting landscape of Natsui emerges a larger and more substantial *Existanz*.

Theme Three: Multivocal Japan

'Ainu' or 'Buraku', like the term 'culture' (as in 'Japanese culture', 'French culture') have an unfortunate 'it', suggestive of a stable identity. Culture is, on the other hand, the site of many streams of diversity and difference many of which contradict each other. It ultimately reduces to the problem of the identity of the person. Charting the composition of identity and difference has been the most influential topic in philosophical thought since the creation of the *roseau pensant* from Descartes to Kant to Heidegger. There is flexibility in who we are and in how we wish to be perceived. The new alternative identity embraces the actor, the mask, the improvisator as Nietzsche (1974:302–3) held out:

> The individual becomes convinced that he can do just about everything and can manage almost any role, and everybody experiments with himself, improvises, makes new experiments, enjoys his experiments, and all nature ceases and becomes art.

A socially effective person is one who feels dynamically valued. How sharply this contrasts with the experiences voiced in Part Four. The focus shifts to those who do not self-consciously identify as 'different' but who are rendered different by a discourse which excludes them from valued social arenas, not because of what they are but in order that others who have defined themselves as significant may have their point of contrast, denying the self in the other and the other in the self.

In Japan, as in all the chronicles of the culture of 'westernisation', women are positioned as other and their voices are disturbingly silenced as they are rendered 'human resource'. The papers by Kyōko Kitahara, Yōng Yō Yi, and that here by Aya Nishizono-Maher, Mizuho Matsuda and John Maher describe an ever-lengthening arc narrating women's leadership in communities under pressure. Many of these communities are urban and working-class, in which male integrity is increasingly undermined by the relentless production-driven capitalist machine and from which *karoshi*, or 'death from overwork', coined in Japan, has entered the English language.

Nishizono-Maher *et al.* present a provocative and disturbing

look at a set of experiences of what it means to be 'woman', Japanese or non-Japanese, in Japan. The disquietening aspect being that these case studies emerge largely as a consequence of the fact that these women are just that – women. In other words, not because of their work, their class, their family backgrounds, their personal histories, but because they are women they find themselves in untenable situations of psychological and physical violence in a world in which 'freedom' contributes to new forms of violation.

The inability to function effectively is felt acutely by those who are made to experience the feeling of 'not feeling Japanese', a characteristic of being Japanese for a growing number of Japanese people referred to as *kikokushijo*, 'returnees'. Returnees have spent several years overseas, during which time they usually acquired a language other than Japanese, sometimes as a first language. Not normally considered a 'minority' in Japan, returnees nevertheless face a great deal of discrimination, leading to problems of self-worth and identity emerging from the denial of their way of being. Like the *buraku* Japanese, they too are Japanese, but still Other. However, in contrast, they usually come from higher-status Japanese families and thus represent a different picture from the common association of discrimination with lower status peoples.

Kyōko Yashiro crafts her account of *kikokushijo* around the telling phrase the *gaikoku nagashi* problem ('washing away the foreign'). She charts official attitudes to the 10,000 young Japanese who return each year having acquired the language of their host country. Under the ceruse of the government's *kokusaika* (internationalisation) campaign she records perceived changes in public school attitudes from denial of 'foreign culture' to 'apologetic neglect'. There is a double-bind at play. In this Batesonian world, well described by Akiko Kowatari in her conversation with Gaynor Macdonald, the returnee may be simultaneously loved as a precious flower and relentlessly bullied. The implications of language education policies in Japan are obvious. Until the problem of the painful presence of this internal Other (they are of us but not with us) and unless the basic orientation towards minority bilingualism changes, and actual bilingual programmes are implemented by public schools, Yashiro makes it clear that minority rights and resources remain in jeopardy.

As an apt illustration of the dynamics that Nakano develops

in his paper in Part Two, Akiko Kowatari highlights the way in which Japanese people have been taught to fear, despise and distrust anything 'foreign', including their own people who have had foreign experiences through living overseas. Such deeply-ingrained attitudes make sense of much of the treatment of the peoples portrayed in earlier papers. But it also suggests that the power of socialisation and education, so effectively brought into the service of Japanese nationalism so as to produce such views, can, as Hanami suggested, be equally harnessed to counter them and encourage a new order in Japan. Gaynor Macdonald picks up this theme in her reflections on Kowatari's experiences. She argues that the ambiguities and ambivalences in Japan's attitude towards returnees reflect its great ambivalence towards international relations more generally.

The right to bilingualism is an important issue for returnees, as Yashiro and Kowatari point out. Language is always, of course, a central component in debates about culture, identity and also nationalism. Steele's account of Yanagi's concern to prevent the mono-lingual policies of the Japanese government which he believed would destroy cultural plurality and regional identities has already raised these issues. Whilst these analyses have focussed on verbal and written language, Nobuyuki Honna's account of the obstacles of attitude and policy which deaf people have had to overcome in order to establish their right to their language indicates that the attitudes are more deep-rooted than debates about 'ethnicity' or 'foreignness'.

If this volume signals a need for a radical volte-face in the way in which we conceptualise 'Japanese culture', then Honna's description of the Deaf Community and their language (JSL) pertains to our destructuring of the very notion of *langue*. It is unsettling that even many linguists remain ignorant that sign language 'is a linguistic system, and not a simple system of rudimentary or elaborate pantomimes or gestures'. This is the first step. No freak show but perhaps inspirational drama, Honna makes no bones about JSL's silent presence in Japan's linguistic hierarchy: 'Deaf people are a minority group and their sign language is a minority language,' and adds swiftly, 'Yet through their strenuous efforts, they have sought self-reliance and equal treatment to gain opportunities for wider social participation.' Honna's somewhat detailed description of the structure of JSL is not superfluous. It is designed to convince. JSL is no jabot frill

on the frock of Standard Japanese but a distinct language with a flavour and community history of its own. Coincidentally, it constitutes an ideal semiotic for the minimal formative nomenclatures necessary for multicultural discourse. Honna's terminology for these 'signs' fits perfectly the postmodernist thrust of a new merging discourse, these elements being: multilaterality, simultaneity and complex use of spatial dimensions.

Contextualising Cultures and Languages of Japan

Nostalgia for cultural innocence is a thin emotion on which to base a book, much less a daily philosophy of what the world of real people should look like. Macdonald's paper takes on broader themes in an analysis of the ideas of nation state and culture which have influenced not only Japan but the rest of the world through the twentieth century. Her comparison of Japan with Australia challenges one of the fundamental assumptions of essentialism: that which projects Japanese experience as 'uniquely' Japanese. She thus locates sources of tension and conflict in such a way as to put the more local studies which follow into a larger perspective, taking them beyond domestically-oriented and predominantly psychological or biological interpretations of sources of discrimination to see the variety of experiences of marginalised peoples in Japan as caught up in powerful international movements.

Macdonald reminds the reader that the Japanese nation as we know it today in fact dates back from the beginning of the Meiji period. She attacks the notion that we 'belong' to Japanese or Australian culture, concluding that it is indeed an 'idea which dehumanises'. In the *perpetuum mobile* of a carefully fashioned and Ministry of Education-approved 'national' history, as was outlined by Nakano, we are all safely protected from each Other. And yet, what would happen if Japan's own brand of the invented 'Other' were to be seriously unmasked? What would this entity known as 'Japan' look like? One calls to mind the dilemma of Berlin. Without the presence of the Wall, Berlin was robbed of its identity and political dialectic, and found itself badly in need of new ones. It is finding them. So will Japan if it can be released

from its ideological bonds of nation-statism and homogeneity-ideology. The bare outline of a cultural manifesto is rehearsed by Macdonald. The *verismo* of this fiercely postmodernistic vision does not fail to resonate and challenge the stuff from which Japan's bureaucracy has nourished itself intellectually for the past century: 'that the nation-state is not inevitable or natural'; 'that nations do not have culture – people do'; that 'we are culture and we are the sources of cultural diversity'.

In Conclusion

If the deconstruction of the social nexus called 'Japan' inevitably entails the manipulation of many juxtaposing fragments, then this book itself brings together another kind of diversity – that of style. It was our intention to allow people to 'speak for themselves' as much as possible. There are academic discussions as well as grass roots reports from people who directly experience what it is like not to be part of Japan's 'mainstream', and who have often been denied the right to assert themselves in different terms. There are analyses by outsiders, Japanese and non-Japanese, of the social and cultural movements in which such people are involved. Some of the contributions are brief and provocative, others are longer and more detailed. Together they are a discussion, one which we hope will increase in its urgency, its dissemination and its task of promoting a better quality of life for people sharing their lives in various parts of the world today.

There are many aspects of cultural diversity which have not been covered in this collection, including many which are shared by most societies: the world of children and the aged, various types of mental and physical handicapped peoples, and class-based cultural expressions. We mention only the experiences of the deaf and the rich language through which they relate to the world around them (see Honna). Steele writes on regional diversity from a historical perspective but there is much more that can be said about contemporary Japan's recent and ancient heritage.

There are also components of the discussion which have not been attempted. Although there are papers which discuss particular cases (Siddle on Ainu-related policy, Steele on Meiji policy),

we do not have a general analysis of Japanese legislative and policy making decisions and processes which deal with plurality-related issues. However, several of the contributors raise issues which we believe will prompt further studies in such areas, dealing with them in the broader perspectives we hope this book will encourage.

The reader will find a variety of approaches to the understanding of the issues raised in this collection and it is hoped that this will enhance their appreciation of the lived-experiences of people who have been marginalised for one reason or another within Japanese society. There will be some repetition of events although the contributions vary in theme and style such that the reader will find it complementary rather than tiresome. It allows each contributor's voice to be heard. The papers include scholarly analyses as well as personal histories. They deal with macro and micro issues of discrimination. They have in common a concern for the suppression of the diversity of cultures and languages through which people express their experiences of being in the world, their commonality, sociality and their distinctiveness.

It is a banality to assert that most of the parties to the enduring cultural conflicts in Japan need to tackle the issues practically and not by recourse to principles only. The Ainu's patient attention to the establishment of the *Ainu Shinpo* (New Ainu Law) bodes well. Korean language education now receives municipal support in one or two cities. Consciousness about 'minority issues' is fast becoming sophisticated. The real social conflict set to avalanche Japan is inevitable and has no immediate solution. To paraphrase the UN Human Rights Commission, 'If you want solutions you should ask a chemist. Conflicts must be managed'. This book makes efforts, and may sometimes fail, to avoid painting a triptich of images and parables of imprisoned saints and sinners. In the eclectic mixture of these papers we are certain that the reader will perceive, as we do, much that is good and hopeful as Japan moves forward to the next century.

The pieces of experience we continually inherit from each other in terms of lifestyles, concepts, world-views and languages, constitute a potentiality of human expression which we have termed in this volume 'plurality'. The goal of the nation-state in creating a 'national culture' involved the subsuming and levelling of diversities. National myth-building became as important as the assembling of a national language. But this could only take place

at the expense of other people's languages and myths and histories. There are many people with many stories to tell. This volume has unravelled a multifaceted Japan plainly at variance with the more conventional perception which embraces the petrified myth of cultural uniqueness and homogeneity. As industrial culture pervades all parts of Japanese urban and rural life, and as the hardware of modern life becomes more widely available, the adaptational skills of people and the need to nurture the creative imagination gain in importance. We learn and create best by exposure to many diffent varieties of social, artistic, psychological and linguistic experiences. The oft-quoted charge that monolithic Japan is unable to offer such experience misses the point. The idea of a truly mixed cultural experience in Japan, reaching far beyond what is conventionally imagined, is a liberating notion.

This volume has tried to elaborate on the nature of marginalisation in Japan, in which the potential commonality of 'Other' peoples' experiences are not valued simply on account of some 'difference' which thereby banishes a group, a community, a language, an experience of living to the periphery of the dominant discourse. However, we have also elaborated on and celebrated another important social reality: the complex plurality in and of Japan. When acknowledged and cherished, this ideational and social mosaic holds out the promise of a dynamic and changed future for Japan and for the world.

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