

**A Letter to Madam Ambassador Kennedy**  
**Over the Issue of Yasukuni and the “suicide attack” As Described by Your Cousin**  
**--There Are Several Things I Would Like to Convey, As a Japanese, to Madam**  
**Ambassador, Who Recognizes the Importance of Honestly Discussing Diverse Points of**  
**View**  
**OGAWA Eitaro, literary critic**

Madame Ambassador Kennedy, congratulations on your assuming the post of United States Ambassador to Japan!

Now, finally, Japan has begun taking great strides in the world, with Prime Minister Abe declaring “We want to be a strong Japan that is doing well,” after nearly twenty years of deflation and introversion.

During the past year, under the Abe Administration, the atmosphere in Japan has actually gone through a drastic change. For the past several years, Japan’s ability to govern was in doubt and with phrases such as “the government that cannot decide” being frequently used, the entire country was covered with resignation. Now, things have changed and are moving dynamically in every field of Japanese life, including the economy, national security, diplomacy and preparation for the 2020 Olympics.

And exactly at this very moment, when Japan has changed for the better, you come to Japan.

I wholeheartedly welcome you as the United States Ambassador to Japan. There are several reasons for my heartfelt welcome.

First of all, you are from the Kennedy Family, the most prestigious family in America and, in particular, you are the daughter of former President John F. Kennedy.

Our country traditionally—though now some may doubt this—makes much of lineage and honor.

Japan has, at the center of the state, the Emperor, who represents the ever-lasting Royal Family of over 125 generations. As is often the case with old nations, Japan’s ancient origin is a vague blend of myths and historical facts. In mythological chronology, it is said that about 2,700 years ago, Emperor Jinmu, offspring of the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami (meaning “great world-lightening deity”), unified the country as the first Emperor and ever since then, our country has accepted the Imperial Family and the people have lived together in a loosely integrated community.

However, Japan has not been totally bound by imperial worship, nor been extremely insistent on fixed social status.

In Japan’s two thousand year history, there have been many historical figures who bravely challenged the situation of the time. One of them was ODA Nobunaga, a samurai leader who

conquered a nation engulfed in civil war in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and at the same time a realist who introduced the market economy concept to Japan, a forerunner in the world at that time. In using personnel, he did not care about their upbringing or their status. He was very open-minded in dealing with Europe. Incidentally, ODA Nobunari, former world-class figure skater, is a descendant of Nobunaga.

While having the Emperor on one hand, Japan has had many talented persons like free-thinking and daring ODA Nobunaga on the other. We Japanese hold in esteem both those of noble lineage and those who challenge the status quo. To us, the Kennedy Family is of high esteem, which has given, throughout the twentieth century, the strongest influence on America, a young country. Moreover, former President Kennedy's place in world history is as a challenger, an eminent figure who newly defined democracy.

Another reason for my hearty welcome is that you have the remarkable courage to honestly encourage free discussion.

I read with tremendous interest your interview printed in the *Asahi Newspaper* of January 23.

One passage in particular attracted my attention. Asked about the statement from the U.S. Embassy that the United States was disappointed with Prime Minister Abe's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, you answered, "One of the hallmarks of a strong partnership is the ability to speak honestly with each other when there are differences."

Also, regarding the many responses, both for and against, of your criticism of the drive dolphin hunt by Twitter, you said, "...it's been interesting because you can have a conversation and a dialogue. ... And I know a lot of people have tweeted back at me, both people who agree and people who disagree. So I think that that's all very healthy."

Your willingness for free discussions is unprecedented among so-called professional diplomats. Your pride in having lived through a traditional American democracy at the center of it led to a frank call for free discussions.

These incidents reminded me of Akie, Prime Minister Abe's wife.

While understanding her husband's political position as Japan's Prime Minister, she sometimes boldly presents opposing arguments, such as in the case of the issue surrounding nuclear power plants. At times, she tries to refute policies of the Liberal Democratic Party majority. And she responds to opposing views in a feminine and flexible way. A free and generous approach on the part of Mrs. Abe and tolerance to let her act as she chooses on the part of the Prime Minister together make Japan very airy under the Abe Administration.

Now, let me state a more political reason for welcoming you. Needless to say, it is the deep mutual trust that exists between you and President Obama. Quite symbolic of this relationship based on trust, you mentioned, in the aforementioned interview that:

And Japan, as our most valued ally and trusted friend, is at the center of that strategy. We want a constructive engagement with China, but at the same time, the U.S.-Japan relationship is not defined or dictated by China's actions.

The quadripartite relationship among Japan, the U.S., China and South Korea needs a much firmer approach than that of the past. Madam Ambassador, you, close to President Obama, acknowledged the difference between the U.S.-Japan alliance and the U.S.-China relationship in very clear terms. This fact is far from trivial to every one of the four countries.

Lastly, I must note with pleasure that you love literature. In a speech you made immediately after you assumed the post of Ambassador, you quoted a passage from a Japanese classical work.

**The river never ceases to flow, and yet the river stays there.**

It became quite a topic of heated discussion in Japan, whether or not this passage came from the *Hojoki (Essay from Small Square Hut)*, the most famous collection of essays from the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The original text goes:

**Yuku kawa no nagare wa taezushite shikamo moto no mizuni arazu (The river constantly flows, and the water never stays the same.)**

Japan has an excellent tradition of poetry, dating as far back as eighteen hundred years. Successive generations of Emperors were poets and many of them actually left great poems that have been remembered in a long history of poems. On the other hand, even peasants and soldiers made many similarly great poems (*Waka* or Japanese poetry) since ancient times. Beyond social status and sex, the Japanese people eloquently expressed their joys and sorrows in daily life through Japanese poems and strengthened mutual bonds. I, myself, am not a political scientist, but a literary critic. How delighted I am to know you love literature!

**As a premise for discussing the Yasukuni Shrine visit**

Above everything that I have said, I would like to mention this.

As you asserted, no subject is more fit for free discussion. That is the issue of Prime Minister Abe's visit to Yasukuni Shrine.

Regarding this issue, you repeatedly stated, in your interview of January and of the one made at the end of last year, your "disappointment".

You frankly expressed your view, since “One of the hallmarks of a strong partnership is the ability to speak honestly with each other when there are differences.”

It is perfectly true that open-minded discussion is important and a strong friendship makes it possible. But in Japan, the historical view regarding the previous War, which encompasses the Yasukuni issue has become a topic that is not to be openly discussed. I request that you first understand this peculiar situation.

The scope of discussion or the scope of the language itself is skewed or crooked concerning this issue.

For instance, do you know how Prime Minister Abe’s visit to Yasukuni was reported in the Japanese media?

A poll showed respondents were nearly evenly divided for and against the visit. While many people held that Abe should not visit Yasukuni for fear that the act would appear provocative to China and South Korea, nearly as many people insisted on refusing to allow those two countries to interfere with a purely domestic matter. It is only recently that the visit to Yasukuni became a hot issue. For forty years after the previous War, no one seemed to care. Therefore, in Japan, the pros and cons battle and there are many arguments representing various positions.

However, Japanese media exclusively reported opinions, both domestic and overseas, that were against Mr. Abe’s visit. In a popular TBS TV program featuring political issues, *Sunday Morning*, broadcast December 29, all seven commentators present, which including a writer, an international political scholar and a newspaper reporter, criticized Mr. Abe’s visit to Yasukuni. Even on another TV program, anchor IKEGAMI Akira, a leading and supposedly moderate newscaster (TV Asahi’s *Useful News Commentary by Ikegami Akira*, aired on January 13), only emphasized that Abe’s diplomatic strategy brought on international isolation and not a word was mentioned that indicated the significance of the Yasukuni visit or favorable responses to it. First of all, these pieces of reporting did not at all touch upon the extremely meaningful and important official statement, “Pledge of Eternal Peace,” Abe made on his visit to Yasukuni. And the media tried to hide those who were willing to frankly discuss the Yasukuni issue from the eyes of the Japanese people and international community, smearing them as “Rightists.”

Japan must not evade frank discussion—*Japanese-language Edition Newsweek, Special Yasukuni Shrine Issue of January 28, 2014*, evenhandedly pointed out how deceitful Chinese and South Korean protests were, and at the same time pointed out that Japan is to blame for aggravating the problem because there is no nation-wide discussion or government explanation over this issue. That is exactly the issue. However, as I have just described, the Japanese media unceasing labels people Rightists and impedes “frank discussion”—if a politician voices a “frank view,” the view itself is not even conveyed and he may be shunned by society, being labeled a “rightist”. In such an utterly distorted media world, one man is exceptionally

successful in asserting his own belief and this would be Mr. ABE Shinzo. And his belief is what obligated him to visit Yasukuni this time.

Many Japanese people were indeed touched by and supportive of Mr. Abe's approach! A year after the start of the Abe Administration, the favorable rate of his government is 60%, which is the highest in Japanese political history. I would like Ambassador Kennedy to know that the actual Japanese situation as it really is.

Next, the second aspect of the Yasukuni issue that needs unvarnished discussion is that a visit to Yasukuni is a deeply personal and spiritual pilgrimage and, therefore, should not at all be handled as a diplomatic issue. Allow me to use a rather eccentric comparison.

Would anyone think it would be appropriate to make the virgin birth of Jesus a diplomatic issue?

What if a country repeatedly made diplomatic protest, that "We simply cannot deal with such an irrational country, in terms of diplomatic and military matters, that believed in such a preposterous thing as the virgin birth of Christ; thus we demand that you abandon such a belief"?

Religious life is a life built upon time-honored custom and tradition. There, the irrational and the rational inseparably blend and very often things that are entirely natural to those within a particular civilization may appear difficult to comprehend to those belonging to a different civilization. Therefore, we must not view each other's world haphazardly. Always lurking in the background is the risk of misunderstanding between heterogeneous cultures, totally unpredictable and unimaginable, thus unavoidable.

Religious matters should not be handled within the political sphere. Is this not the new enlightened view that Europe and America finally attained and upheld in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter, as a result of Europe's long history of religious warfare?

The essence of the Yasukuni Shrine visit is a religious matter, remembrance and ethereal solace of the souls of the deceased. An issue involving spiritual matters should not be addressed diplomatically. We have never breached this unwritten rule with either China or South Korea, as well as America.

### **Try to understand the culture of "forgiveness and co-existence"**

On the basis of this general theory, allow me to elaborate.

In the first place, Yasukuni Shrine was dedicated as a consolatory facility in which to enshrine those who fell in battle, starting with the modern era of Japan. It is based on the Shinto faith. In Shinto, a person becomes a *kami* (deity) after death. But this deity is unlike the Western conception of "God". Thus, for the international community to believe that Yasukuni enshrines "Category A war criminals" as gods is an absolute mistake. In the Catholicism, original sin is

cleansed and forgiven by God through Mass. The conditions and structure may widely differ, but in the sense that the dead are forgiven by God, I think the fundamental idea is the same.

In this sense, war as a result of politics and giving solace to the souls of the deceased at the end of a war are acts of different dimensions. Are not these values commonly shared among Japan and Europe and America?

We also have a tradition to pray for the souls of our foes and build shrines to enshrine their souls. The Yamato Dynasty unified ancient Japan without destroying the preceding dynasty. Rather, they were sequestered far from the capital and allowed to keep their religious faith. This is the basis of what is known as Izumo Shrine. This event is recorded in the *Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters)* and *Nihon Shoki (Chronicle of Japan)*, the oldest history books in Japan. There was no conquest, unification or massacre. We Japanese have called this event *Kuni Yuzuri* or “transferring control of the country” since ancient times. Hence, the Japanese people have made as much of Izumo Shrine as Ise Shrine, which enshrines the ancestral deity of the Yamato Dynasty.

We are, essentially, a people of forgiveness and co-existence.

In the case of Yasukuni Shrine, the main Shrine consoles those who died in the service of Japan, but a nearby Shrine within the precinct is devoted to all war dead of any nationality. During the most recent visit to Yasukuni, Prime Minister Abe also paid a visit to this consolatory shrine.

Without doubt, Yasukuni Shrine is a place of consolation of those who died in modern warfare. Naturally, it can strictly coincide with an ancient religion. In any event, what has continuously streamed within the Japanese spirit of consolation is forgiveness and co-existence. Once you stand within the solemn precinct of Yasukuni Shrine, you will surely feel this spirit.

### **The Nazi Holocaust and Japan’s military actions were absolutely not the same**

Why, then, has Yasukuni Shrine become a problematic issue? Presently, China and South Korea are using Prime Minister Abe’s visit to Yasukuni in their strident propaganda, asserting that Japan is returning to militarism, which is far from reality. The sole ground for their claim is that Yasukuni Shrine enshrines Category A war criminals.

Here lies another misconception.

Certainly, they are enshrined, but along with over two million four hundred sixty-six thousand victims of war and violence. Those who were directly responsible for carrying out the War are not honored in particular. Enshrinement is consolation to all victims of war. This is the first point.

Secondly, the term “Category A War Criminal” is a term that is used without thinking and is greatly misused worldwide and I think that this misuse is outrageous. Japan waged a war against

America and the Allies at that time. Regarding individual deeds, certainly, there were many mistakes made. In particular, it was utterly shameful, most contradictory to the Japanese aesthetic, that Japan attacked the Pearl Harbor before a declaration of war. However, the war itself was not wrong. There is no right or wrong in war. In principle, modern warfare is a clash between state interests.

Of course, in a sense, war is a conflict between ideologies. Speaking of ideology, during the War against America, Japan's ultimate objective was to construct a "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere". No one can say this was a wrong ideal or objective. Criticism against "militarist" Japan is highly ludicrous, if one carefully looks at the situation at the time. Aside from the fact that during the war Japan adopted a system of national mobilization, one will not find any evidence that the country was ruled solely by a "military clique" at the time. If one closely examines Japan's history at that time, there were no acts of extra-legal suppression by the military, which foreign forces mistakenly believed they needed to overturn.

The Chinese compared Prime Minister Abe's visit to Yasukuni to Hitler's visit to a cemetery, which is sheer nonsense. It is true that Japan, at that time, was in an alliance with Nazi Germany and the Nazis perpetrated the Jewish Holocaust, the gravest crime committed against humanity. The Nazis were duly convicted of this atrocity and conviction of former Nazis is on-going to this day. This is perfectly reasonable. But Japan, unlike the Nazis, merely waged war and lost. During the war, Japan never once concurred with the Nazi's massacre of the Jewish people. On the contrary, Japan protected many Jewish refugees from a humanitarian standpoint. SUGIHARA Chiune is just one example among many.

Losing a war on one hand and annihilating a people in a Holocaust on the other hand are events that are completely different in nature. It is most regrettable that Japan shares a burden of guilt, as being the same as the Nazis, just because Japan was allied with the Nazis.

However, in order to completely crush Japan, the "Tokyo Trials" were held after the International Tribunal at Nuremberg. I will not go into the validity of the Trials now, but I should point out that the Trials were based on the flimsy notion that equated the Nazis' Holocaust and Japan's defeat. And the international community admitted such a notion as nonsense several years later.

In 1952, the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into effect, and Japan resumed its status as an independent state. Japan then pardoned all surviving war criminals based on a unanimous decision of the Diet. Accordingly, the government recovered the postmortem honor of those who had been executed as war criminals, including those who were Category A—they died not as guilty criminals but as men who died for their nation. Japan of course duly informed the international community of this process and all countries concerned approved. This situation is completely different from that of surviving Nazis, whose prosecution continues to this day. Had

the international community at that time not recognized that Japan merely lost a war, the global rehabilitation of “war criminals” would not have been possible.

In spite of this clear fact, seventy long years after the War, in an atmosphere that is completely lacking in accurate historical knowledge, the global push to eternally ascribe the war dead as “war criminals” has persisted. Is this not a regression from civilization to barbarity?

Essentially, war crimes do exist, regardless of who is the winner or loser; in the first place, war itself is a cruel and absolute evil. With this argument in mind, the accusations against Japan make no sense at all. Let us not start an argument by bringing up the gang of thugs which desecrated and trampled human rights during the fifty-plus years of rule by the Chinese Communist Party.

Instead, allow me to quote a passage from a book with amazing insight entitled, *Why England Slept*, written by young John F. Kennedy in 1940:

We concede that a dictatorship does have great advantages. We concede that the regimentation and the unification achieved by force and propaganda will give a dictator an initial jump on his opponents. However, we believe that a democracy can, by voluntary action, equal this effort when the emergency comes and sustain it over a longer period of time.

### **The “culture of apology” that gave rise to Chinese and Korean propaganda**

Not limited to criticism of Yasukuni, there is a clear pattern in Chinese and South Korean anti-Japan propaganda. I would like to inform you of this pattern from the vantage point of a Japanese.

Their propaganda over the issues involving historical views has become more and more strident in recent years. In most cases, their claims are merely extremist rhetoric, clearly false or cover matters that have already been settled through treaties or pacts. However, during quite, behind-the-scenes negotiations, they urge Japan to yield “just this once,” saying that if Japan yields this time, they will never bring up the issue again. So, Japan yields, while China and South Korea proclaim to the world, “Look! Japan apologized because they were really in the wrong,” thus doggedly trying to turn lies into facts. And then, issues are created anew. And again, in the same manner, they apply pressure upon Japan. For the past twenty years, this is the basic negotiation pattern seen between Japan and the two countries of China and South Korea.

Here lies Japan’s grave weakness, the “culture of apology”. In other words, it is a culture of ambiguity, a culture that places preference to apologizing first, a culture of “*tatema* and *honne*”, of a differing between a stated reason and the actual intention.

This was originally conventional wisdom for smoothly maintaining human relations.



For example, we have a very polite expression, “*Gomen kudasai*,” which is used whenever we are at the front door of a home that we are visiting. Verbatim, it is an apologetic phrase. It is an expression of soft consideration for the inconvenience of disturbing the rhythm of the person’s daily life by our visit. We are not actually thinking about an apology. We have lived in such a culture, believing that the important part of manners is to actually express words of prudence. So, the conversations of the Japanese people are filled every day with unconscious apologies.

As soon as we see someone, we say, “Well, sorry, sorry.” Having something done by someone, we do not say “Thank you” first, but “I’m sorry. My apologies,” feeling apologetic for the trouble that someone went through for our sake. Seeing someone after several days, we say, “I’m sorry for the other day.” The other would say, “No, no, I am sorry, too.” We’ve done nothing wrong to each other, and we don’t actually mean to apologize at all.

One says “sorry” when passing through other people, but our culture is filled with exchanges of apologies, manifold to one’s “sorry.”

In a manner of speaking, the Japanese people are stuck in this habitual “culture of apology” in the diplomatic and political spheres. As an extension of this mentality, even when the other person’s claim is improper, we accept it, hoping that acceptance will ease the other person’s feelings. This is not out of an intension to be mean. Everyone has been in someone else’s circumstance. We consider each other’s circumstance and as long as the issue does not fatally conflict with our own interests, we prefer not to decide which side is in the right. We allow different views and feelings to exist. We don’t verbally argue to the end. This is our culture.

In the end, however, Japan’s relationship with China and South Korea has been what it is for the past twenty years, with both China and South Korea taking advantage of this peculiarity of Japanese culture. As consequences, Japan now shoulders the unbearable shame of being burdened with false accusation, for which, from a moral standpoint, we are not in the least responsible, a false image of Japan is spread throughout the world and Japan’s humanity is degraded by allowing China and South Korea to shamelessly spread false propaganda.

Now, the most important thing for Japan to do is simply to have China and South Korea realize that their propaganda, filled with exaggerations and falsehoods, is no longer valid. To do so, we must first quit the “culture of apology” diplomatically. I firmly believe so.

### **Justice and misunderstanding**

Behind the Yasukuni issue, there is another deep factor. I feel that at the bottom of the world’s understanding of Japan, including that of the United States, lies a deep-rooted misconception. I will explain this as a last point.

At hand, I have a book, entitled *Danger’s Hour*, written by Maxwell Taylor Kennedy. Seeing

the Kennedy name, I suspected a relation to the Kennedy Family and found out that the author is the Ambassador's cousin.

The book is a detailed story describing the battle between Japan and the United States during the US-Japanese War, particularly focused on the American soldiers who risked their lives defending the US aircraft carrier *Bunker Hill* and Japanese soldiers who fearlessly attacked the ship in suicide attacks.

It is a surprisingly pure and balanced book, with equal amounts of respect paid to the soldiers on both sides.

[Generally speaking] Histories are usually written about men like Mitscher and Burke—military leaders who determined the course of the war. But the great lessons of World War II may be learned by passing on the stories of the “ordinary” men who were dragged into the conflict, who fought with and for each other. [Omitted] This remains essentially a story about ordinary men... who were thrust into an extraordinary situation and performed many exceptional acts of bravery.”(Paperback edition, Page 2)

This view is indeed spectacular. The author bears no prejudice toward Japanese suicide attacks. Though “a basic tenant of western culture is aversion to suicide (Page 4),” this is a “relatively recent phenomenon”. In ancient Greece and Rome, Socrates and Seneca killed themselves, which were regarded as noble acts. The western idea of noble suicide is not far from Japanese thinking, says the author.

The rub, of course, lies in determining what constitutes a legitimate interest and a legitimate death. Winston Churchill, when he saw news footage of the bombing of Berlin, asked, “Have we become animals?” But he continued to burn women and children alive throughout the war. Moral lines blurred. (Page 5)

This question of what is right is very serious issue. This is the question no one in the world, neither you nor I, can perfectly answer. It is brave to ask the question.

The reason why moral boundaries are ambiguous is that human life itself is ambiguous and war is the ultimate form of violent clash of human lives. It is easy for one party to declare that the other party is absolute evil and it is equally easy to proclaim that war is absolute evil. However, every day, every one of us will find ourselves walking on a moral boundary that is a tightrope.

Moreover, it is far from easy to judge the thoughts of one who is desperately trying to

defend something at the risk of one's life. Author Kennedy noticed this through his study of the fierce battle fought by both Japanese and US forces.

Japanese military leaders well understood that they had lost the war when they forced so many young men to die as kamikazes. But they knew, too, that thousands, even millions, may be inspired to sacrifice by the moral example of a young man willing to give his life to a desperate cause. Their last hope remained that Japanese of future generations would take heart and resist in the spirit of the special attackers. It is this alluring and ennobling aspect of suicide attacks that everyone living now must try to understand. (Page 10)

Even though the book is generally accurate, based on careful research, there are several fundamental misconceptions about Japan. I have no intention of criticizing the author for this. Rather, it is we Japanese who are to blame, for having failed to disseminate our true image to the world. In fact, the other side of the aforementioned "culture of apology," that is, the "culture of not explaining oneself" accounts for the accumulated global misunderstanding of the Japanese people.

For instance, author Kennedy writes:

It is difficult to rationalize the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and easier to write it off along with the kamikazes as the irrational act of a fanatical nation gone awry. (Page 14)

This is far from the truth, but this can probably be attributed to the following view of Emperor:

The Constitution before the War stated specifically that the Emperor was God. [Omitted] God and Emperor were one, so when they fought for the Emperor they were fighting for God. [Omitted] The Japanese people uniformly stood "Attention!" whenever words containing Emperor were voiced. The word notified all in hearing that the Emperor would soon be mentioned. (Page 27)

The Constitution before the War, that is, the Imperial Japanese Constitution does not state that "the Emperor is God" at all. Article 3 declares him to be "sacred and inviolable", but this means that the sovereign is exempt from responsibilities as seen in the constitutions of European constitutional sovereign states. The Constitution was enacted following a complete study and comparison of European constitutional political entities at that time and Japan's governing tradition, and was highly acclaimed by contemporary academic societies worldwide.

Regarding the posture of “Attention!”, this is standard practice as seen in armed forces all over the world, where soldiers stand at “Attention!”, following their officer’s instruction. This is a typical day-to-day occurrence. It is true that during the war, some strange instances of Emperor worship occurred. This occurred within extraordinary times but place this within the context of a two-thousand-year history of the Imperial system. In principle, the Japanese Emperor was never the core of religious fanaticism. Emperors have benevolently sat at the center of Japan, praying for happiness and peace for the people. The Emperor prays. That is, the Emperor is not shaman or priest. Emperors have prayed for peace in a sense that is understandable to Westerners.

The Emperor was in fact the exact opposite of militarism and fanaticism, a symbol of maternity of the nation of Japan.

### **On the reason for going to war**

Furthermore, author Kennedy greatly misunderstands Pre-War Japanese society. He writes:

Their [the junta’s] fundamental precepts stressed ultimate loyalty and ideal fealty throughout the lives of every citizen. Ogawa [a member of the suicide attack squad described in the book] and his fellow college students had known no other type of regime. (Page 85)

During the beginning of the Edo Era in 1600, Japan attained a level of development similar to that of modern Europe yet fundamentally unique and realized a highly modern society which allowed for individual self-expression. A female Canadian scholar of Japan writes: “If I had been born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and born rich, I would have wanted to live in London, and if born into a lower class, in Edo.” In actuality, Edo society permeated with welfare equality and the joys of everyday living and self-expression, even among people of low status. Otherwise, such common people’s art, such as Haiku and Kabuki would have never fully developed during Edo Era.

At the end of the Edo Era, American warships reached Japan and other European Powers pressured Japan to open its country to outsiders, endangering its existence. Japan finally relented and opened the country.

The situation was not without agony—in the process of establishing their own identity, the Japanese people continuously agonized, striving for national identity thereafter.

In modern Japan, great books of quality equal to that of European and American books, were written by Nitobe Inazo, Okakura Tenshin, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Natsume Soseki, Mori Ogai and others and were widely read. Many of these books were written in an attempt to overcome

the Japanese people's identity crisis.

Many of the Japanese youths were highly literate, at a rate that was one of the highest in the world at that time. It was usual practice for sons and daughters of poverty-stricken peasants to read difficult novels and philosophical books in Pre-War Japan. In the 1930's, a Japanese scholar of French literature named Kuwabara Takeo went to see Émile-Auguste Chartier (Alain). Kuwabara told Alain that 100,000 copies of the pocket-book edition of *The Red and the Black* by Stendhal were sold in Japan. Alain, in disbelief, said to him, "It's unbelievable. Here in France, Stendhal is read only by several thousand readers." But the former number was no exaggeration.

Their [military junta's] chosen dogma was the only philosophy most Japanese people ever leaned. [Omitted] The junta controlled every aspect of life in Japan, and enforced their ideology through absolute control over the laws, religion, governance, education, armed forces and the economy, especially jobs. [Omitted] Japan's ruling clique severely restricted information about the United States. (Page 85)

Apart from a very temporary, limited restriction, the real situation between the 1870's and 1940's was completely different from the description given above. For instance, books by Marx himself were widely read and discussed, up until the 1920's.

Also, throughout modern history, Japan thought favorably of the United States, to an amazing degree. Japanese people early in the modern period particularly admired George Washington as much as traditional Japanese heroes. He was revered as the father of democracy and founding hero of a nation-state, being mentioned even in elementary school textbooks on moral education.

In terms of popularity, one readily notes baseball fever among the Japanese people. Only two years after the first professional baseball team was created in 1869 in America, baseball was imported to Japan, and instantly became a popular sport among young people. Baseball terminology was promptly translated into Japanese. Baseball is *Yakyu*, hitter is *Dasha*, pitcher, *Toshu* and so on. Many of these words were created by the genius Masaoka Shiki, a leading Haiku poet, during the Meiji Period. For example, a famous piece of his Haiku, *Kaki kueba Kane ga Narunari Horyu-ji*, may be familiar to you.

Japan was like this before the War and it would be very odd to think that Japan was an uncivilized state, firmly entangled in fanatic Emperor-worship and a primitive sentiment which had nothing to do with the human struggle for identity.

To sum up, it is far from truth that an Emperor-worshipping, uncivilized and fanatical people who lost the US-Japanese War suddenly became civilized as a result of being defeat.

On the contrary, as I have just described, Japan was highly civilized and its excellent people had a superb cultural curiosity. Why, then, did such a people wage war against America, obviously more than twenty times as powerful as Japan?

And with this question, I ask that you reexamine US-Japanese history.

In the first place, Japan advanced mainly toward the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria. And the two main reasons for Japan's advance was that the very vulnerable Chinese government invited European and American Powers into Asia, which became a real threat to Japan, and secondly, Japan feared Russia's southward advance toward the Chinese Continent.

Ours is a small island country with few natural resources and limited land. Moreover, there was not a regional cooperative community like ASEAN at that time. We were an absolutely isolated people. In the midst of savage imperialist competition, what Japan wanted was a stable supply of resources and assurances that the European and American Powers would not invade Japan. Thus, Japan advanced to the Continent, seeking these two objectives.

However, out of all the possibilities, what actually triggered the US-Japanese War as Japan moved northward? Why did Japan have to go to war with America, which was in the opposite direction from the Chinese Continent and Siberia?

This is hard to explain in only a few words. On one hand, American ambitions were attracted toward lucrative Chinese interests. Thus, there was a need to sweep Japan out of the way. Also, in order to prevent a German victory in Europe, there was the need to strike Japan, since Japan was a member of the Axis. Thirdly, an expanding Japan would be struck as a precautionary measure, before it became a threat to America. At the same time, clumsy Japanese diplomatic policy and "sheer lack of efforts to explain herself to the international community", which has continued to this day, led to American distrust and misunderstanding, eventually leading to the outbreak of war. This may sound like a rushed explanation, but I believe that this outline is not incorrect. And this is one side of history which American intellectuals often fail to see.

Now, it is time for both Japan and the United States to reunite in a strengthened alliance. To do so, I think Japan must stop engaging in its culture of apology and confining herself in a state that disregards efforts to explain herself in the international community.

It is truly necessary for each of us to "speak honestly with each other when there are differences" since Japan and the United States are "in a strong partnership" as you mentioned. Japan must be more serious about making efforts to explain herself. We must be decidedly prepared for substantial discussions, refuting, face to face, each other's misunderstanding and sublimating our understanding into a new friendship. Then and only then, can the peoples of Japan and the United States move forward together.

Although a small letter, unskillfully written, this is meant to be a part of the efforts I have

just proposed.

Naturally, I do not at all expect unconditional approval of my words.

Allow the words reach you, Madam Ambassador. What kind of impact will these words have, through the power of words themselves? As a man of literature, while regretful of my lack of mastery over the pen, I sincerely hope that my words reach you.

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