

「日本のメディア・システムの現状」

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“The Current State of the Mainstream Media in Japan”.

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要 約

日本における現代のメディア・システムは、近年分析の対象となっている。「マスメディアの自由」が戦後の理想として支持されているにもかかわらず、「自己検閲文化」といわれるものが日本のメディア界の主流として次第に進展してきた。関心の争点となっているのは、ニュースがある「主義」に合うようにどの程度手を加えたり、あるいは全くもみ消されたりするのか、「発表ジャーナリズム」という現象、そしてどの程度レポーターと情報筋が協力しているのか等である。

ここでは、日本の主な新聞メディアの組織の歴史的背景と現状を検討し、またこの組織の主義と記者クラブへの加入が、どの程度まで個々のジャーナリストの客観性に影響を及ぼし、またそれがニュースにどう反映されるのか論じる。この論文は六つの論題に分けられる：

- 1) The Japanese print media from Meiji to World War 2 (明治時代～終戦の日本新聞メディア)
- 2) Censorship (検閲)
- 3) The media in the post-war period (戦後のメディア)
- 4) Kisha Clubs - Coercion and co-operation (記者クラブ問題)
- 5) Today's watchdogs - the non-mainstream media (非主流メディアの役)
- 6) Conclusion (結論)

この論文の中ではメディア背景と現状を考察し、その結果、研究の結論として、将来よりよい日本のメディア・システムを作るには二つの主な改善点に決着した。

その 1：実際に、マスメディアの自由を得るために記者クラブ制度の廃止、また改善が必要である。

2：また、高潔的なジャーナリズムを育成するために、新聞道徳、つまり論理の法則が欠けているという問題を重視に検討する必要がある。

KEY WORDS: *media, censorship, objectivity, editing*

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Introduction

The contemporary print and electronic media 'system' in Japan has in recent years been the focus of close analysis. Despite "freedom of the press" purportedly being espoused as an ideal in the post-war period, what one could describe as 'a culture of censorship' has gradually evolved within Japan's mainstream media circles, and the extent to which news is manipulated to suit certain 'agenda' or stifled altogether, has become an increasing cause of concern, both in Japan and abroad.

1) The Japanese Print Media from Meiji to World War 2

There are a number of factors that contribute to the current state of journalism in Japan. Firstly one must look to the historical context in which many of today's media organisations were founded. Following the Meiji Restoration, in the late 19th century, newspapers were initially established and sponsored by the Government as vehicles for furthering understanding of the workings of Government, and informing the general public about new policies. Then, according to Pharr: "The advent of the Popular Rights Movement in 1874 transformed the role of the press and created a different legacy. After Taisuke Itagaki's call for the immediate founding of popular assemblies appeared in the press, most newspapers fell in with the proposal and began to function like a political opposition." (1996:9)

Newspapers openly began to question and defy Government, the result being that the public became increasingly aware of the potential power of the press, and with the newspapers adopting a "watchdog" role, circulation soared as did the number of newspaper companies. It was during this time that the first *kisha club* was formed in 1890, and situated in the Diet building, its role being to ensure access for journalists to the newly formed parliamentary system.

Although censorship legislation was in place at the time, whether it was enforced or not was directly related to the pre-disposition of officials of the time. It was during the inter-war period, particularly in the 1920-30's, that Japanese journalists came closest to resembling their Western counterparts. The Taisho era was a time of liberalism and evolution, and within this climate the number of *kisha clubs* increased, operating as mutual-support groups, and were pseudo guild or union-like in their activities.

"There were still 'lone wolf' newsmen on the dailies who went after scoops and exclusives on their own initiative and wrote under their own name. In spite of strict press laws, which no longer burden their own timid successors today, the kisha clubs often assumed a confrontational, watchdog posture toward the government at times even bringing down high officials who got in their way." (Hall, 1998: 52)

Despite censorship tacitly in place during this period, newspapers were able to find loopholes in order to maintain journalistic and editorial freedom to varying degrees.

"Certainly at no time were restrictions on the press lifted, even in the heyday of Taisho democracy, though the degree of enforcement in any given area, the severity of the punishments for violation, and the strategies used by the press to evade censorship all varied. Despite censorship laws, for example, Tokyo Asahi Shimbun mounted an editorial attack on the government over the Peace Preservation Law of 1926, "accusing the

government of betraying democracy.” (Pharr 1996:11)

Pre-war Japan was a time of intense ideological and cultural conflict. In the years of military build up and imperialist expansion prior to Pearl Harbour, criticism of Government, the Imperial System, the concept of ‘the Kokutai’ and Militarism were to be found in some of Japan’s newspapers. Criticism of such Japanese institutions was, although not widespread, still evident, even up until the mid to late 1930’s. Pharr suggests that during this period the larger media organisations tended to be outspoken and resistant to pressure from the state, a view that lies contrary to the modern day perception of large media conglomerates being simply vassals of the “powers that be”.

2) Censorship

In 1941 however, with Japan going to war against the Allied forces, there followed an all-out crackdown on the media and journalists whose opinions even hinted at criticism of the state. This purge included the arrest, imprisonment and even execution of a number of ‘dissident’ journalists, academics, and writers. (Bix, 2000). The purge did not end with individuals, with the Government taking control of newspapers nation wide, and the reduction of kisha clubs from an estimated eighty Tokyo based clubs to eighteen. Further reforms under this ‘consolidation’ included implementation of the ‘general mobilisation order’ (総動員法) and the ‘newspaper industry directive’ (新聞事業令). Following this, a tightly government controlled ‘Nippon Newspaper Association’ was established and given control of the kisha clubs. Under this directive, only elite journalists from one of the 10 major newspapers of the time were allowed entry into kisha clubs, and a one club per government agency policy was also enforced (一官庁一クラブ体制), with a maximum of four journalists from any given newspaper allowed access to a club.” (Shibayama, 1997:111 translation)

The government, military, imperial and government agencies used these official kisha clubs as vehicles for releasing officially sanctioned news, announcements and propaganda, and one could say that from this point on the phenomena of ‘happyo journalism’ became truly ingrained in the Japanese media.

“This protectionist triangle of establishment sources, media moguls, and elite reporters survived the war and explains the tenacious persistence of the kisha club system today. The government continues to enjoy a powerful spin on the news through its established channels of co-opted journalists; publishers have less to fear from excessively individualistic, ideologically heterodox, or anti-management reporters; and a privileged coterie of news organisations continues to enjoy its monopolistic lien on the sources.” (Hall, 1998, p.53)

3) The Media in the Post-war period

During the Post-war Allied occupation (1945–1952) whilst almost instantaneously abolishing Japan’s military censorship apparatus, GHQ reformed the kisha club system to its pre-war state, and put it to work to suit its own agenda of the time, that is to thwart criticism of its policies, officials and troops. After this initial period of replacing one brand of censorship with another, reform was encouraged, “the Occupation, with the reforms it introduced, obviously gave strong support to the watchdog legacy (of the Taisho period) as well as setting the stage for the Japanese media’s emergence in 1952 for the first time into an environment with basic freedoms in place and no censorship laws of any kind in force.” (Pharr 1996:12) For all intents and purposes the Japanese

press were now completely free and unfettered, as stipulated in the new Japanese constitution.

What became of the media as 'watchdog' from the post-war period to the present is a complex issue. It would seem logical to expect that coming out of such a pre-war legacy of repression and censorship, the media industry, and journalists themselves would, without such constraints, rebound as defenders of the truth, watchdogs of the political process, and advocates of the public interest. Many media analysts, (Shibayama, Hall, Pharr, Sherman etc.) have suggested that today's reality lies contrary to this ideal. It is claimed that the seemingly symbiotic or 'bed-mate'-like relationship between the main stream media. (via the kisha club system) the government, and the bureaucracy allowed the LDP to stay in power virtually unchallenged for 32 years, a dynasty almost unheard of in any country purported to be a democracy. The mainstream media stands accused of strengthening 'the system' rather than keeping it transparent.

4) Kisha Clubs - Coercion and Co-operation

Today's 'mainstream media' refers to the big five media organisations, the five nationally distributed (but Tokyo based) newspaper dailies; *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, *Yomiuri*, *Nikkei*, and *Sankei*. Collectively, they have the highest newspaper circulation per head of population in the world, and in addition to this enormous readership, these media corporations have major ownership interests in television (*Nippon TV*, *TV Asahi*, TBS, Fuji TV and TV Tokyo) and also the majority of radio networks nation-wide. Each of these newspaper groups operates group affiliate papers in regional areas.

Such an overwhelming degree of centralised media ownership is in no way unique to Japan., (one only has to look at the Murdoch Media Empire in the USA, Britain and Australia for a more troubling example). However the fact that kisha club membership is almost totally exclusive to staff journalists from these 5 major press organisations means that the sometimes cosy relationship between bureaucrats, politicians and reporters can often be reflected in the way news is reported. This exclusiveness also denies first hand access to press conferences for many freelance, investigative, and foreign journalists, who are regarded as 'outsiders' of the mainstream.

Today's kisha clubs are information-gathering units, based in institutions as diverse as government ministries, prefectural and municipal governments, police headquarters, and business and union organisations. Sugimoto describes the current kisha club environment as follows;

"The clubrooms are normally equipped with telephones and other communication machines, service personnel and other facilities. Media organisations use them free of charge. In almost all cases, club membership is restricted to the reporters of major news organisations, and is not open to journalists from minor presses or to foreign journalists. In return, government officials, politicians and business and union leaders use these clubs as venues for prepared public announcements which the reporters write up as news stories. By constantly feeding information to reporters in this environment, representatives of these organisations which provide club facilities can obliquely control the way in which it is reported to the public. Reporters cannot risk being excluded from their club because then they would lose access to this regular flow of information." (1997, p.214)

This culture of co-operation among all parties involved is deeply entrenched. A staff reporter can come to be considered as part of the staff of the organisation he or she is based in. It is also alleged that mutual agreement is often reached between club reporters to place embargoes on certain issues, for example pre-election scandals that may negatively effect an incumbent politician, or inside information about a company's economic woes.

The mainstream media has in the post-war period taken these embargoes to the extreme with their coverage, or lack there-of, of the Imperial family. Described by Sugimoto as the 'chrysanthemum taboo', coercion by the mainstream media in order to spare the Imperial family from damaging reporting, (and quite possibly themselves from the wrath of extreme rightists) is an obvious example of co-operative coverage in the extreme. All reportage of the Imperial family is carefully cultivated and announced through the Imperial Household Agency, which set about even prior to defeat in World War 2 trying to re-invent the image of, and to deflect accusations about the wartime responsibility of the Emperor Hirohito. The Imperial Household Agency as it happens, also houses a Kisha club. Bix (2000) contends that the mainstream media still to this day has been complicit in stifling open discussion of Hirohito's legacy and the Imperial system, even after his death.

"... the effort to preserve the Emperor's pacifist image didn't end with his death. Even today the bureaucracy that controls -with an iron fist- information about the royals dictates to the press what photos can and cannot be published. For example pictures of Hirohito in military uniform as he was often portrayed during the war, are rarely seen in Japan. More typical are images from the post-war era, when Hirohito was depicted as a hobbyist consumed with marine biology or as a grandfather gently mugging it up at Disneyland with Mickey Mouse." (Bix, Time magazine, Sept 4:24)

In recent years far less insidious, but similarly obedient media co-operation has been evident in coverage of the ailing Emperor's condition in the months prior to his death, the subject of the Crown Prince's search for a bride, and an 'agreement' to refrain from reporting negatively about the Empress Michiko. Admittedly these issues are more matters of protection of privacy, but on the more pressing issues surrounding the throne, such as in pressing for revelation of wartime documents and Hirohito's diaries, the mainstream media has closely protected the Imperial Institution - leaving many post-war issues of accountability unchallenged and unresolved.

Sugimoto and Shibahara both contend that the paralysis of the Japanese media cannot be solely blamed upon the existence of the *kisha clubs*. Heavy handed editorial practices and the corporate-like infrastructure of newspapers also contribute to the problem. "Journalists in major media organisations stay with the same company for their entire working lives. While some exceptionally high profile journalists permit themselves to be head-hunted, moving from one organisation to another, the overwhelming majority resemble the *salarymen* and *salarywomen* in other large firms, remaining loyal to their corporation for some 35 years." (Sugimoto, 1997: 214)

The recruitment procedure and career structure of media corporations closely resemble that of major business corporations or bureaucracies. Through multi-skilling and lateral promotion, budding journalists are given general skill training while specialisation in a given field is not generally encouraged. The recruitment process also mirrors that of the business world and bureaucracy: "Newspaper companies and television networks rely upon the same labour supply as other major corporations in recruiting prospective graduates and business

establishment in Japan. Recruits have quite similar social backgrounds, with a majority of news writers being male graduates of high ranking universities.” (Sugimoto 1997:24)

Thus Sugimoto suggests that the fact that as these journalists share sociological attributes with the Japanese power-elite, differing from the vast majority of the Japanese population, their ability to report news objectively may be questionable.

According to Shibahara, journalists in the major news organisations often become mere information gatherers, (of facts most often gained from sources via kisha clubs). The information is then compiled and the article written up by editors or staff writers. Reporters are often not credited with their own work – further disincentive to investigate, analyse, and challenge sources. It is felt by some journalists that anything beyond the source’s official line will inevitably be gleaned somewhere during the editorial process.

5) Today's watchdogs- the non-mainstream press

The role of the ‘watchdog’, probing, investigative, and sometimes critical journalism has thus been inherited by the non-mainstream publications, and non-kisha club affiliated journalists in Japan. These ‘outsiders’ include freelance writers, foreign journalists, commentators, and scholars who contribute to the dozens of weekly and monthly magazines published in Japan.

These publications include *Bungei Shunju*, *Focus*, *Friday*, *Shincho*, *Shukan Post* etc, though often viewed as being somewhat ‘lowbrow’ in content, (with a penchant for scandal and gossip about celebrities etc) their readership is wide and demographically diverse. Despite the fact that some of them are owned by the major newsgroups, they are generally free of pro-establishment agenda-driven editors and often feature articles that deal with the taboos, the scandal and the revelation that the mainstream journalists have been compelled to refrain from. These publications tend to attract journalists disillusioned, or unable to fit the mould of the mainstream media organisations. It is these outsider publications that are continuing the ‘watchdog’ role, whilst the mainstream media have as Pharr suggests, merely taken on the role of ‘spectator’.

6) Conclusion

A number of these ‘outsider’ publications, with their aggressive adversarial style have been credited with having the scoop on revealing major political corruption. ‘Scoops’ of note were *Bungee Shinbun*'s revelation of then Prime Minister Tanaka’s irregular acquisition of funds (and subsequent resignation) in 1974, and *Shukan Shincho*'s role in breaking the *Sagawa Kyubin Scandal* in 1992, which sparked a chain of events culminating in the ousting from power of the LDP in the 1993. “If it were not for the outside journalists, Japan would have considerably fewer scandals – and some might argue, more corruption. Several of the most significant scandals of the past few decades have been unearthed, not by those in the best position to expose them – the reporters in the press clubs– but by the outside press. Once the scandal is broken, an avalanche of information descends as the retaining walls crumble and the big insider journalists are freed to release their hoard of information and begin a real investigation.” (Farley from Pharr 1996 : 144) Similarly ‘outsiders’ literally from the outside, the foreign media, have often revealed groundbreaking news from Japan, before their Japanese counterparts were able to report on the issue. (As in the case of the Lockheed Scandal of 1976, and the Royal engagement in 1993).

On the other hand, the 'culture of censorship' of the mainstream Japanese press is not universal, but rather cynically selective. A no-holes-barred attitude is often adopted by reporters when probing the scandalous and the shocking, most notably when the incident has been allegedly perpetrated by an individual citizen, or the event has taken place abroad. The lack of responsibility or balance in such reporting can verge on the unethical and a violation of basic human rights. An obvious example of this would be the merciless pursuit of Kouno Yoshiyuki falsely accused of being the perpetrator of the Matsumoto sarin attack, or the amount of saturation media coverage prior even to arrest or formal questioning of crime suspects. The unbalanced amount of mainstream media coverage devoted to crimes committed by foreign residents in Japan and to incidents of violence abroad, (for example, high school shootings in the USA), have often tacitly implied to the Japanese public that all is well here in Japan, that society's woes are either contracted from outside influences, or simply could not happen here.

Mainstream Japanese journalists can be described as anything but timid in their pursuit of individuals. But on the other hand, fettered by their kisha club affiliation, subsequent reliance on maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with sources, and bound to an imperative to suit the agenda or policies of their given media organisations. They stand accused of supporting, rather than being the watchdog of the elite institutions of Japanese society.

Whilst freedom of information and freedom of speech are protected under the law in this country, journalists find themselves still today in the unique position of censoring and being censored by fellow journalists. The journalistic ideal of 'pursuit of the truth' is replaced with 'selective revelation of the truth'. On the other hand a tendency towards more probing political coverage seems evident in recent years - and this can only be viewed as a positive step towards increasing the accountability of the power structures of this country. On the less positive side, the journalistic integrity of a large part of the print media remains questionable to say the least. It would appear that abolition or reform of the kisha club system, and adopting a code of journalistic ethics in this country are vital keys in restoring such integrity.

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