

# Discrepancies of Japanese Well-being

-Reconsidering 'Japan' with *Shintaro Ishihara*

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## Abstract

*Shintaro Ishihara* has been the Governor of Tokyo since 1999. In 1968 he became a member of the House of Councilors. Since 1972 he had been a member of the House of Representative until 1995. In this period he had been a member of the Liberal Democratic Party. He became two times a Cabinet Minister; the Director General of the Environment Agency (1976-7) and the Minister of Transport (1987-8).

Therefore, we know him as politician very well, and particularly as 'right wing nationalist.' He has been often criticized as one of the most prominent far right politicians not only in Japanese society but also in international relations, because of his controversial statements.

On the other hand, he has been a prominent author. For instance, he writes a very long and beautiful novel *Island of Fire (Hi no Shima)* in 2008, even during his service of the Governor. Since his famous novel *Season of Sun (Taiyo no Kisetsu)* he has been writing so many novels, plays and essays. Some of them are constructed very minutely, and some of them are in very high repute. His basic theme in literature is focused on the youth and the ties between persons.

In this short presentation I am going to concentrate on the logic of his early long novel *the Crack (Kiretsu)*, because this work shows us his own philosophical position. And from this view point he has been depicting various split realities in Japanese society after the Pacific War. The title of the *Crack* means, of course, multiple discrepancies between generations, life-styles etc. in the early 1950s. Very interestingly, he has often invoked *William Ogburns'* hypothesis of cultural lag. He studied social psychology at Hitotsubashi University. In those days he had found a symptom of cultural lag in Japan.

According to his theoretical preposition, most of Japanese would subconsciously follow up their very rapid civilized high-consumption society. However, at the same time they would lose their own identities. This meant a basic crack of cultural lag. He already forecasted in his early writings that most of Japanese would not adjust their own identities to various split realities in the complex society.

Summarizing his motivation to literature theoretically, I would try to present you to a typographic explanation of Japanese well-being and various sub-universes as cultural gaps in Japan with my original empirical research data.

## 1. Politician and Novelist

He was a member of the House of Councilors (Upper House) (1968-72), a member of the House of Representatives (Lower House) (1972-95), the Minister of Environment (1976-7), the Minister of Transport (1987-8), and the Governor of Tokyo (1999-2012). Very interestingly he has just become a member of the House of Representatives in 2012 again. If we know such a very long brilliant career, we have to admit that he is one of the most well-known politicians in Japan. However, he has always continued to be a novelist since the mid of 1950s. Even while he had been very busy in office as a member of parliament, he could publish lots of novels. For instance, *Petrified Forest (Kaseki no Mori)*, which was published in 1970, was a very long, important and topical novel. Even in his office term as Governor of Tokyo he published a very long and impressive novel *Fire Island (Hi no Shima)* in 2008. He has been publishing more than 250 works including novels, plays, essay and so on.

Now he is eighty one years old. Since his maiden work *Season of the Sun (Taiyo no Kisetsu)*, his main theme has always been on the youth. He has been expecting young 'men' as main subjects of the next era. It is the youth who can and have to challenge for the future of Japan. Therefore he had to describe the youth.

He has been writing novels, plays and articles for sixty years. In other words, he has been depicting various Japanese societies and social changes from the mid of 1950s to 2013. His half century long life history is full of praise and blame. He has always been unique in this period. Probably we don't know such any persons except for him. His political stance has been often criticized as 'right-winger'. But his literature is very seriously elaborated with his very keen observation. Most of Japanese cannot explain how these two faces, namely his political radicalism and his pure literature, could be related with each other. They know him as a 'popular' politician who got three Millions' votes. They know him as a 'radical' politician. However, such simplification must be explained, if you want to know the social changes of Japan from 1945 to 2012. I assume that a stream of typical political radicalism in Japan and some very fine literary depictions have been mediated through this person. In other words this

‘person’ might have been a typical symbolic medium of social phenomena in Japan.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Philosophical foundation in his early works

### 1) *Season of the Sun* (1955)

*Season of the Sun* is a love story. But if this novel had been sensational in those days, it might have been a reason why its composition had been very different from a tradition of private novel by the authors of previous generations in Japan. This novel is translated in English as *Season of Violence*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, *Ishihara* has often used violence as theme and motif in his works. However, it does not mean that he likes violence very much. In my opinion, this novel *Season of the Sun* is a very analytical novel. I assume that he would try to reconstruct a precarious interaction in an intimate sphere, namely a contingent interactional relation mediated by a symbolic media of ‘love,’ through overlapping a strategic action of boxing onto such a love affair between *Tatsuya* (hero) and *Eiko* (heroine). *Tatsuya* liked to play boxing, and a sport of boxing meant a new trend at that time.

*Ishihara* would try to depict a love story, as if it were a kind of game. Indeed, it might be appropriate that lots of *Ishihara*’s works can be understood only as ‘androcentric.’ But what *Ishihara* would try to express in this novel was to give a new picture of love. The platonic love had been depicted as pure or as a traditional image again and again. He tried to ascertain a limitation of love with making a story of doing love. The sun symbolized a very strongly glaring light on the Zushi Beech in Kanagawa Prefecture. *Ishihara* grew up in Otaru, which is a port town in Hokkaido on the coast of the Sea of Japan. When *Ishihara* had moved to Zushi which was the coast of the Pacific Ocean in his adolescence, he could perceive some events and topics, for instance glaring sunlight, sailing

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<sup>1</sup> Mototaka MORI, “Person als Medium –Eine pragmatisch-phänomenologische Alternative zur Systemtheorie, in: Joachim Renn, Gerd Sebald, Jan Weyand, *Lebenswelt und Lebensform –Zum Verhältnis von Phänomenologie und Pragmatismus*, Velbrück Wissenschaft 2012, S.191-205.

<sup>2</sup> Shintaro Ishihara, *Season of Violence* (translated by J. G. Mills, T. Takahama, K. Tremayne), Zurich 1966.

yacht, dance party, nightclub etc. very differently or as shock. The sun symbolized a new life in these days' Japan. In this novel he tried to deconstruct various styles of literature by the previous generations. In this meaning the glaring sun might symbolize a violation.

## 2) *Crack (Kiretsu)* (1956)

He observed such a new tendency. It means a way of consumption culture. According to his interpretation, it was the United States Occupied Army who brought it to Japan. In his first long novel *Crack (Kiretsu)* he subjected such a negative aspect of imported materialized civilization in the restoration period just after the war. The hero of this novel is named as *Mei*. He is *Ishihara's* self-portrait and is composed of his experiences in his student life. While depicting various persons and variously interwoven personal relations, *Mei* would try to seek and consequently could find his way of life. Such variously and complicatedly interwoven human drama shows us the multi-layered cracks between various life courses of Japanese at that time.

A nightclub was a main stage where the hero as self-portrait and lots of other characters appeared and came across. The owner and a bartender there were of war experience. They were soldiers in China or the southern islands in the War. One of the owner's friends had been detained as a prisoner of war in China. Before the war he had been a university assistant of biology. However, he was hired as professional killer by a greed politician then in this story. An actress, who had lost her husband, was suffering from tuberculosis. Then she was always there with lots of male adherents, wrestler, boxer etc. *Mei* met so many persons; politician, power broker, businessmen etc. In the postwar confusing period Japanese were various. Every Japanese had one's own universe of own life otherwise than the former age.

## 3) *Street Corner Religion (Chimata no Kamigami)* (1965)

Such subjects who live themselves on their own multiple realities are depicted also in another work *Street Corner Religion (Chimata no Kamigami)*. This work is a study on new religious sects and groups just after the War in Japan. The State Shinto was abolished in 1945 by the order of the occupied army. It meant a vacuum and a volatilization of old values which had been

severely institutionalized by state since the Meiji Restoration. As long as people are worried about their everyday life, relief and belief are always needed. It was very known that various and many newborn religious sects and cults were grown in cluster just after the War. In this study *Ishihara* explains and analyses fourteen newborn religious sects, mainly *Reiyukai* (*Spiritual Friendship Association*), *Benten-shu*, 'Soka Gakkai (*Value Creation Society*).

This very serious study shows us the existences of multiple unseen realities as plural sub-universes by various religious sects and groups in Japan still now. *Ishihara* was very strongly influenced by *William James's* theory of sub-universes.<sup>3</sup> This conception is, of course, in parallel with the multiple realities which various characters in the novel *Crack* (*Kiretsu*) experienced and expressed. One could sometimes believe on unknowable existences or unseen orders. A sub-universe appears with egocentricity. Such a relation between ego and its own sub-universe seems me to be a liberalistic orientation in *Ishihara's* early philosophy.

Of course, this innocent liberalism leads to a relativism of multiple realities. Such a kind of Hegelian discrepancy should have been reconciled also in case of *Ishihara's* philosophy. He had to try to find out something for the reconciliation.

#### 4) *Challenge* (*Chosen*) (1959)

The novel *Challenge* (*Chosen*) was based on a true story, which a Japanese petroleum company *Idemitsu Kosan co., Ltd.* had adventurously transported oil from Iran to Japan. Until this year Japan had been occupied. The oil trading was very strictly restricted by the major petroleum companies in the United States and the United Kingdom. *Idemitsu Kosan* also had to buy oil from these foreign companies. In 1951 the prime minister of Iran *Mohammad Mosaddegh* nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The UK blockaded the marine transport routes from Abadan, which is the biggest oil export port of Iran. The *Nissho-maru*, a tanker of *Idemitsu Kosan*, arrived to

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<sup>3</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experiences*, Edinburgh 1901.

Abadan in secret and transported oil to Japan safely. Such a heroic story, that Japanese sailors run a risk for Japanese nation against the UK and the USA, means a nationalistic orientation.

### 5) *Year Zero Japan (Nihon Rei Nen)* (1960)

Also in the novel *Year Zero Japan (Nihon Rei Nen)* various human relations and various ways of life are depicted in some human dramas which are mainly related with Japanese own nuclear energy development and science-technology policy. Like *Crack* so many characters, journalist as hero, entrepreneur, nuclear technician, power broker, politician, artist etc.

The energy policy, not only oil but also nuclear energy, was the most important issue for a rash restoration and an economic development in Japan. It would not be any coincidence that *Ishihara* treated oil and nuclear energy as his novels' subjects. These novels were not so highly reviewed as literature. However, I assume that he tried to show a nationalistic orientation for the reconciliation of discrepancies among various sub-universes also in this novel.

### 3. Social psychological Model

*Ishihara* would study firstly at the faculty of accounting of Hitosubashi University. However he was tired of such practices. So, he moved to another faculty. He studied social psychology, particularly under Professor *Hiroshi Minami*, who took Ph.D. at Cornell University in 1943. Although Japan was an enemy country at that time, he could do it. *Ishihara* seems me to have learned lots of things from this famous scholar. *Ishihara* often uses some well-known social psychological models.

Firstly, *James'* sub-universe theory also is one of them. Secondly, he often mentions *William F. Ogburn's* cultural lag hypothesis. *Ishihara* observes a discontinuity between the postwar consume culture transplanted by the U.S. occupied army and the prewar original Japanese society. His question was how Japanese own culture possible against the postwar American materialistic civilization was. Such a discrepancy between ideal and actual has been a cultural lag which should be overcome and filled. Therefore, the main theme in his literature was how persons could be connected with each other instead of

money, sex, violence, power etc. In other words, his question was how pure activities possible were.

Thirdly, he uses a social psychological model which comes from the inner directed political style in *David Riesman's Lonely Crowd*. He believes that the youth have to live each own life with each own gyro in any rush changeable societies. The heroes in the novels, which he wrote after his middle age, have basically their own inner-oriented strong gyros.

#### 4. Three stages model of the youth and reconciliation

In his early collection of criticism *Lonely Crowning (Kodokunaru Taikan)*, whose title would express his own ideal position of gyro in the Japanese literally world in the 1960s, he described a historical developmental model of the Japanese youth.

The first stage represents a typical image of the youth in the Meiji period (1868-1912), for example, Lieutenant Major *Takeo Hirose*, and *Akiyama* brothers. They were born as sons of the low class, poor samurai families from the 1850s to 1860s. They made their tremendously big effort for a nation of 'Japan' with their own patience and talent. *Hirose* and *Saneyuki Akiyama* advanced to the Naval Academy. The latter older brother *Yoshihuru Akiyama* advanced to the Army Academy. They became the heroes in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 to 1905. A period from the Meiji Restoration to this War was a term of the youth of modern Japan. These three persons would and could naturally identify themselves with the young imperial Japan. They could feel this identity as basic needs.

The second stage represents the young officers in the beginning of the Showa period (1926-1989). Two kinds of coup d'état were attempted by such young officers (May 15 Incident in 1931, and February 26 Incident in 1936). Of course, they were the graduates of the above mentioned military academies. However, they were brought up under the already highly institutionalized bureaucratic military. They could learn the identity between themselves and the imperial Japan as informed desire. Unfortunately they could feel it not through

their perceptions but through learned mythology of the worriers in the Russo-Japanese War.

The third stage means the youth in the period which *Ishihara* began his writer activity. Typically they were represented as the then students and young persons who were opposed to the new Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan in 1960.

*Ishihara* was born in 1931. Therefore, he was relatively a little older than these young persons in such opposition movements. However, he also organized temporarily in 1958 the *Society for Young Japan (Wakai Nihon no Kai)* with young famous cultured persons; *Kenzaburo Ohe*, *Toshiroh Mayuzumi*, *Jun Etoh*, *Keita Asari*, *Ken Kaikoh* etc. They were originally opposite to the treaty between the United States and Japan. Of course, this society was soon dissolved and disappeared out. The relation between basic needs and informed desire had already been changed and complicated. The main stream of opposition movements were advanced by leftists. They were anti-American as well as anti-nationalism. As you know, some of them including *Ishihara* were anti-American, but they were conservative or nationalistic. So, *Ishihara* later had become a member of the House of Councilors as member of the Liberal Democratic Party in 1968. He thought at that time that he could change this party and then Japan itself.

*Ishihara* was in sympathy with the first stage of youth. In the above mentioned novel *Crack (Kiretsu)* the self-portrait of him said, "He would advance to the Naval Academy in *Etajima*, however the war was over". Later he cites in his enlightenment book Lieutenant Major *Hirose* as one of the most ten favorite Japanese for him.

## 5. Cloud above the Slope

The Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) produced a long series of TV movie *Cloud above the Slope (Saka no Ue no Kumo)*, which was consisted of thirteen episodes. This movie is nineteen and a half hours long (one episode is 90 minutes long). Three or four episodes were aired at the end of the year from 2009 to 2011. This original long novel, which was written by *Ryotaro Shiba*, is



one of the most famous bestseller books (19 million copies), which were firstly published from 1968 to 1972. The intro narration of this TV movie shows us a core of this long story.

### Cloud Above the Slope

#### Special Drama

A very small country is about to become a civilized nation.  
This story is about three men from Matuyam in Iyo province in Shikoku.  
*Saneyuki Akiyama* was born in this old castle town.  
During the Russo-Japanese War,  
He formulated the tactics to defeat the invincible Baltic Fleet.  
He successfully executed them.  
His older brother was *Yoshifuru Akiyama*.  
He trained the Japanese cavalry  
to defeat the Cossacks, which was the world's strongest cavalry.  
It was a miraculous feat.  
The third man marked a new phase in Japanese Haiku and Tanka.  
He was *Shiki Masaoka*, a poet and the founder of new literary forms.  
All three possessed the typical disposition of the Meiji era.  
They only looked at what was ahead.  
If there were white clouds glistening in the blue sky high above a hill,  
they would only focus on the clouds and climb the hill.

Interestingly, their basic needs were equal to their informed desire. *Saneyuki Akiyama* studied in the United States, *Yoshifuru* did in France and *Hirose* also did in Moscow as military attaché stationed. They learned lots of things there. It is a very famous story that *Hirose* fell in love with *Ariadna Kovalevsky*, who was a daughter of Russian Naval Colonel. However, they came back to Japan and fought for the nation of Japan.

#### 6. Well-being of multiple realities -Interpreting cracks as natural

This TV movie's viewing rate was 14.2 percent average for three years. For instance, the viewing rate of the Tokyo-Hakone round trip long-distance relay marathon on January 1 in 2011, which were aired twelve hours long, reached to 28 percent. Today's youth in Japan prefers athletes to the heroes of the Russo-Japanese War.

Tab. 1. Which images do you have of him?

		very good	good	bad	very bad	I don't know him.
1	Ieyasu Tokugawa	17.1	56.3	14.5	2.5	9.6
2	Hideyoshi Toyotomi	10.0	51.8	23.9	4.2	10.1
3	Nobunaga Oda	18.9	50.6	17.1	3.2	10.2
4	Shinsaku Takasugi	19.4	56.9	6.3	0.4	17.2
5	Takamori Saigo	19.8	59.1	10.2	0.8	10.0
6	Toshimichi Ohkubo	11.3	53.0	14.8	0.7	20.2
7	Aritomo Yamagata	5.0	34.9	15.9	3.5	40.7
8	Hirobumi Ito	15.6	56.1	13.0	2.5	12.7
9	Takeo Hirose	8.5	27.4	7.5	0.8	<b>55.8</b>
10	Yoshihuru Akiyama	9.6	23.4	5.0	0.8	<b>61.1</b>
11	Saneyuki Akiyama	10.2	23.8	4.9	0.7	<b>60.3</b>
12	Maresuke Nogi	7.2	29.3	18.6	6.5	38.3
13	Gentaro Kodama	6.4	17.4	10.9	4.1	<b>61.2</b>
14	Shiki Masaoka	18.9	57.9	6.6	0.5	16.1
15	Ougai Mori	19.0	57.2	7.5	1.2	15.1
16	Souseki Natsume	26.3	59.7	4.2	0.1	9.6
17	Isoroku Yamamoto	16.6	38.1	16.0	5.2	24.2
18	Hideki Tojo	3.6	19.1	31.5	25.2	20.6
19	Shigeru Yoshida	15.1	50.2	16.2	2.6	15.7
20	Shinsuke Kishi	4.4	33.7	21.8	10.1	30.0
21	Eisaku Sato	7.5	43.3	25.0	6.7	17.5
22	Kakuei Tanaka	9.6	40.6	29.0	11.3	9.5
23	Ryunosuke Akutagawa	18.5	60.7	8.7	0.8	11.3
24	Yasunari Kawabata	16.9	59.1	8.4	1.1	14.4
25	Yukio Mishima	8.3	44.1	27.0	5.4	15.1
26	Ryotaro Shiba	23.9	54.3	6.0	0.7	15.0
						N=832

Tab. 1 shows us that 60 percent of Japanese don't know even the names of *Akiyama's* brother and *Hirose*. As mentioned above, *Ishihara* wanted to advance to the Naval Academy. His generation learned these three heroes' names at school. Lots of boys were canalized such a heroism as informed desire. However, a big generation gap could not be filled even with *Shiba's* works and NHK's special TV drama. Nowadays such a heroic story has become only a small historical episode.

In the one hand the *Hinomaru* as the national flag and the *Kimigayo* as the national anthem were established by the Act on the National Flag and Anthem

under the LDP government in 1999, in the other hand ex-LDP member *Ishihara* won the election of Governor of Tokyo 1999. In his office term for thirteen years since then, although he was only a Governor of Tokyo, he would try to restore and promote an existence of Japan with his own conception. For instance, he mobilized the Self-Defense Forces and let the armored cars march along the *Ginza* Street in the general disaster prevention exercise 2000. For his third term of office he made an invitation plan for the Olympic Games 2016 in Tokyo.<sup>4</sup> It ended in failure. In April 2012 he proposed officially as Governor of Tokyo to purchase the *Senkaku* Islands, which China claims as a part of own territory (Fig. 1). The Japan-China relations have become very serious.

However, according to my research results his conception could not synthesize the whole nation of Japan. If anything, these cross tabulations show us that so many cracks can be observed in generations, age-groups, gender, occupation etc. Interestingly, if you know *Ishihara's* idea on a promotion of immigration policy, you understand that most of Japanese are passive rather than him, and that most of Japanese may be mono-nationalists.<sup>5</sup> From these outcomes it will be impossible to reconstruct a concept of nation like the Meiji-Japan, which *Shiba* depicted as historical dramas in his works. Some incidents; armored cars marching, purchasing the *Senkaku* islands etc, were only grandstand plays. These must be only events which happened in *Ishihara's* sub-universe.

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<sup>4</sup> Mototaka MORI, "Imaging and Imagineering Tokyo –Asking with and to the Olympic games in Tokyo 2016" in: György Széll, Ute Szél (eds.), *Labour, Education & Society –Quality of Life and Working Life in Comparison*, Frankfurt am Main 2009, pp.232-3

<sup>5</sup> Mototaka MORI, "Who votes for Mr. Ishihara? –Two analytical consideration on the populism in Tokyo", in: Shigekazu Kusune (eds.) *Socio-cultural Transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? –Risks and Challenges of Social Changes*, Kanazawa 2007, pp.342-3.

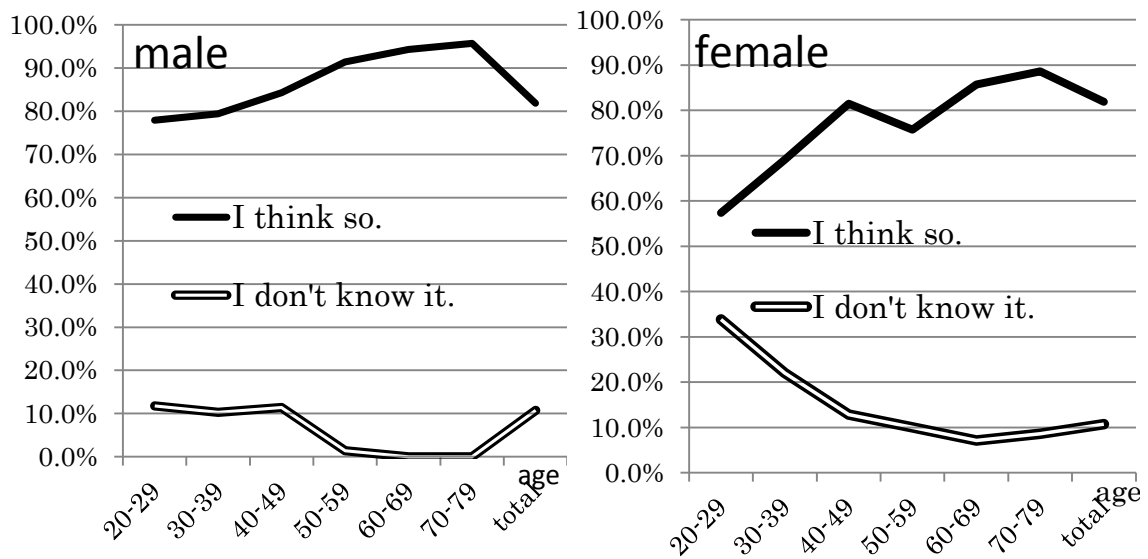


Fig. 1. Is the Senkaku Islands an inherent part of Japanese territory?

If we follow a basic philosophical tendency which we can understand in *Ishihara's* early works, we must know that we have only a way of acceptance of multiple realities. His radical nationalistic tendency were possible only in literary and artistic spheres. The brand of 'made in Japan' in industrial products will be losing its power except for some domains and fields.

If we will embody a nationalistic tendency in a relation of nation to nation politically, it will be too risky particularly in East Asia. We cannot but grasp and absorb some possible nationalistic tendencies into corresponding individual elements of multiple realities. The nationalism cannot reconcile multiple realities as discrepancies, but only the liberalism of multiple realities could show us the plurality of nationalisms. The nationalism is not a single unit. We have to observe lots of cracks there.

I assume that *Ishihara* himself found out such a way philosophically in his universe as novelist in his very young age. A self-portrait of him which was depicted in his novel *Crack (Kiretsu)* can be applied to most of young Japanese still now. Searching for a way of life is universal and a pure activity for the youth. Its result should not be a single reality but always multiple.