

英米マスメディア研究 A

PAC O'CONNOR

WEEK 11

### JAPAN AS No.1

- DEALING WITH JAPANESE ECONOMIC POWER
- REPORTING THE 'MURKY UNDERSIDE' OF THE WORLD'S No.1 ECONOMY

FOR A FEW YEARS IN THE 1970S, Japan displaced the United States to become the world's No.1 economy. This class looks at how Western reporting and scholarship on Japan reacted Japan's economic supremacy. As we shall see, many journalists dug quite deep into their image archives...

### READING 1: Japan as Number One

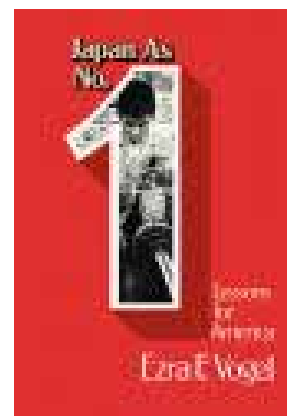
In 1979 Ezra Vogel published "Japan as Number One".

The idea that Western global economic power was no longer dominant came as a shock, with echoes of 1905 when Japan's astonishing victory over Russia in 1905. There was huge interest in the idea of a recently ruined "4<sup>th</sup> rate nation" now

being "No.1"

When Vogel's book came out in Japanese, it was a huge bestseller

People asked, "What is it that makes us so special?" Some put down Japan's economic success to long intestines, innovative brain design, vertical as opposed to horizontal society [Nakane Chie], particularism versus universalism, groupism versus individualism, and the emphasis on "Wa" (和, harmony) in working relations. Japan's economic supremacy sparked off a boom in Nihonjinron (日本人論) and a feeling of national redemption.



## READING 2: The Menace of Japanese Success



**The sheer scale of Japan's economic success** took the West by surprise. When Japan reversed its defeated image by coming out top of the world economic pile, many journalists struggled for ways to express the enormity of Japan's achievement. In early Shōwa, Japan's military success had called for images of monstrous power (left). Such images could not be used again, but the notions of size and of danger could be translated easily into equally traditional images. Clearly, Japan was seen as a threat to Uncle Sam, who is reduced to a comparative midget (below and right).

**In the 1970s**, these and other images of Japan's economic supremacy (Dower in Iriye (ed.) 2001: 301-332) were not all backward-looking or negative. Many American and European financial commentators were genuinely fascinated by Japanese management techniques and tried hard to



find the key to Japanese pre-eminence. This resulted in an opening up of Japanese studies to area specialities in the economy of Japan and Japan's brand of



capitalism (which some commentators likened to Communism because of its highly interventionist practices and long term planning). In 1973, Ronald Dore compared

Hitachi and English Electric and found that the roots of Hitachi's advantage in employee relations lay in 1920s attempts to avoid class-based antagonisms, not in feudalism, and he argued that Japan's search for fairness and community as an organizing principle was integral to its success. G.C. Allen also found that Japanese institutions were better suited to economic development than those of Britain.

**Japan's trade deficit with the United States and Europe** continued to grow (or to 'mushroom' as one overused verb of the 1970s, with echoes of August 1945, had it [another way of describing the deficit was 'ballooning']), this broader academic focus translated into a more curious approach by the corps of foreign correspondents in Tokyo, which led to the opening up of the 'murky underside' of Japan's success.

### READING 3: Reporting political corruption

Links: More on Tanaka Kakuei at <http://www.rcrinc.com/tanaka/ch4-2.html>



**In the 1970s, political scandals** broke the back of the political establishment in the United States and Japan. In the US, the Watergate scandal led to President Richard Nixon's resignation (and very near-impeachment, [left]), and in Japan, the resignation of Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei (田中角栄) under the weight of political corruption and the Lockheed scandal (Tanaka received a



criminal conviction but did not serve any time in prison). Just as Watergate did not end with Nixon but persisted, in spirit, until the attempt to impeach Bill Clinton, so Lockheed did not end with Tanaka Kakuei, but continued in other scandals hanging over the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (自民党)

**Tanaka's downfall** came at the tail-end of Nixon's slow departure from the White House. Throughout his political career, 'Kaku', as he was known, ran a successful construction business. He was completely corrupt, thoroughly immersed in collusive bidding for his own and government business, and vote buying. Like Watergate, it took an independent, courageous journalist willing to break ranks, to expose the system. In the autumn of 1974, Tachibana Takashi ran a series of articles in Bungei Shunjū on Tanaka's systematic 'money-pulse' network. The Japanese correspondents and Tanaka's own kisha club (記者クラブ) ignored the articles, but the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan held an interview with Tachibana, and the US Press then took up the story, exposing the network.

**The Lockheed Scandal** did not break until February 1976, when a US Senate investigating committee learned of \$12.5 million paid in bribes and kickbacks by the US aircraft and defence corporation Lockheed to Japanese politicians to encourage the acquisition of Lockheed aircraft. In the succeeding investigation, everything pointed to Tanaka Kakuei. Miki Takeo, the new Prime Minister, opened the investigation to the entire Japanese press and NHK and in January 1977, Tanaka went on trial. He was not convicted until 1983. In the meantime, Tanaka was able to return to the Diet and openly resume control of his political faction among the LDP.

**Lockheed was not the last political scandal to break in Japan:** The 1988 Recruit Scandal led to the resignation of Prime Minister Takeshita and his cabinet. The Sagawa Kyūbin bribery case was similarly explosive. But Lockheed was

significant in signalling an end to the cosy relationships between powerful interests in the US and Japan that had grown out of compacts agreed in the early Occupation years. Tanaka Kakuei was very much a product of those days, a rough diamond, self-taught, a Diet member since his early 20s and, perhaps most important, a wheeler and dealer in the construction industry, the industry that rebuilt Japan. Tanaka was a survivor, essentially a bagman who knew no other way of doing business.

**Foreign pressure, foreign journalism (外圧)** brought about Tanaka's downfall, but the Japanese press were not that far behind. The difference is that they needed the go-ahead from the top, from Tanaka's successor Miki Takeo, before they went ahead. Most journalists knew about Tanaka, but it took a freelance journalist, Tachibana Takashi, to break the wall of silence surrounding Tanaka's corruption. The Recruit Scandal was broken by two low level Asahi Shinbun journalists in Yokohama, who had problems persuading the head office to take up the story. The Sagawa Kyūbin scandal was broken by reporters on a weekly magazine.

**Deciding what the public should know** The veteran US correspondent in Japan, Sam Jameson, once said: "I have repeatedly got the impression that if the number 10 represents total knowledge of what a government is doing, Washington reporters probably know 7 and write 6 of it. In Tokyo, Japanese reporters probably know 8 and write 5" (Gibney 2001, in Iriye (ed) 2001: 294).