

Green Star Japan: Internationalism
and Language in the Japanese
Esperanto Movement, 1906-1944

Ian Rapley, Pembroke College, University of Oxford,

DPhil Thesis

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Abstract

The planned language Esperanto achieved popularity in early twentieth century Japan, inspiring a national movement which was the largest outside Europe. Esperanto was designed to facilitate greater international and inter-cultural communication and understanding; the history of the language in Japan reveals a rich tradition of internationalism in Japan, stretching from the beginnings of the movement, in the wake of the Russo-Japanese war, through the end of the Pacific war, when, for a brief period, organised Esperanto in Japan ceased.

Building upon existing studies of internationalism amongst elite opinion makers in Japan, this history of Esperanto reveals unexpected examples of internationalism amongst the broader Japanese public, a number of competing conceptions of the international world, and their realisation through a range of transnational activities. Esperanto was at once an intellectual phenomenon, and a language which could be put into immediate and concrete practice.

The diversity of social groups and intellectual positions within the Japanese Esperanto community reveals internationalism and cosmopolitanism, not as well defined, static concepts, but as broad spaces in which different ideas of the world and the community of mankind could be debated. What linked the various different groups and individuals drawn into the Japanese Esperanto movement was a shared desire to make contact with, and help to reform, the world beyond Japan's borders, as well as a shared realisation of the vital role of language in making this contact possible.

From radical socialists to conservative academics, and from Japanese diplomats at the League of Nations to members of rural communities in the deep north of Japan, although their politics often differed, Japanese Esperantists came together to participate in the re-imagining of the modern world; in doing so they became part of a transnational community, one which reveals insights into both modern Japanese history, and the nature of internationalism.

Approximately 77,000 words.

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Introduction

This thesis is a history of the language Esperanto in Japan, from its first major introduction in 1905-6 through to 1944 when, as Japan fell into defeat in the Pacific war, Esperanto activity in Japan ceased in the public sphere (albeit briefly). Esperanto is a language that was originally created in Russian-controlled Poland in the late nineteenth century, designed as a medium for advancing inter-cultural communication and understanding. In the early twentieth century it found fertile soil in Japan through the growth of a national movement which became one of the largest such communities in the world, the largest outside of Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, and one which continues today.

The history of Esperanto in Japan is the story of a popular, bottom-up movement, one which reveals a rich tradition of internationalism in Japanese society. Its reach was broad – spreading to all parts of Japan and its overseas territories, persisting beyond the end of the period of liberalism usually known as Taishō democracy and into the 'dark valley' of Shōwa militarism, and attracting a following from a range of different social and intellectual groups.

By tracing the domestic Esperanto network, this thesis not only uncovers internationalist thinking and activity in unexpected places, it also maps the direct connections between them. Diplomats at the League of Nations, members of rural communities across Japan, Marxists and anarchists, and migrants to the Japanese colonies all practised Esperanto, and in doing so they were all brought together in a community that was, for the most part, well integrated and interconnected. This is significant, I argue,

because it not only shows the broad appeal in Japan of the idea of a language of international communication, it reveals that, despite the range of different meanings and interpretations which they brought to it, Japanese Esperantists found sufficient common ground that they chose to practise Esperanto together, rather than apart.

Despite, or perhaps partially because of its presence in unexpected places and times, linking together otherwise disparate historical groups and actors, Esperanto has been marginal in the mainstream historiography of Japan, for the most part relegated to footnotes and passing mentions. By recovering this 'forgotten history', I write a new chapter in the history of Japan's relations with the wider world. It is one which features familiar actors in unfamiliar roles, as well as new actors and new modes of engagement, adding to and reshaping our understanding of Japan's intellectual and cultural experience of modernity.

Unlike many other forms of internationalism, Esperanto was not just an intellectual schema or an attempt to shape the international actions of the state: it was also a language which could be used by anyone. Thus Japanese Esperanto inspired the development of a body of different transnational practices, real world manifestations of internationalist imaginings. These varied methods and motivations for using Esperanto provide a study in the complex and dynamic nature of the concept of internationalism, revealing it not as a single discrete ideology but as a spectrum of different views and aspirations that were pursued and realised through a range of different activities and events.

I suggest that, at its most simple, what linked the diverse members of the Japanese Esperanto movement, their various activities, and the motivations which drove them, was

a shared urge to connect with the wider world: to learn from other nations, to introduce Japanese perspectives and culture to international society, and to participate in the act of reforming or creating a new, modern world. In doing so, they also shared a recognition of the role that language played in making possible this contact and exchange. Whether they were radical socialist cells building revolutionary networks, students writing to their pen-pals, Buddhist monks seeking to explain their religion to other cultures, or those engaged in any of a wide range of other forms of use and study, they were united through the fundamental act of using Esperanto to imagine a society which transcended Japan's borders and to play a role in it making it real.

Esperanto is a planned language: a language devised by the conscious effort of an individual or individuals, rather than one which emerged, as with most commonly spoken languages, out of an ongoing haphazard process, sometimes determined by the policy of some state or institution, but more often by gradual transformations within the body of the community of its users.¹

Planned languages have a rich history, the chief origins of which can be traced to the European Enlightenment.² Whilst the first experiments in planned languages tended to be 'philosophical languages', attempts to construct a language from scratch to correspond perfectly to the nature of reality, the nineteenth century saw a shift to projects that were designed as rational improvements upon existing national languages. These marked a change in focus from language used as a representation of knowledge to language used as

1 Sometimes the term *artificial* is used in place of planned but, recognising that no language can truly claim to be natural, planned more accurately captures the specific characteristics of the process of creation of planned languages.

2 There are various histories of planned languages, such as Okrent (2010), Eco (1997) and Large (1985).

a means of communication, in particular an effort to directly tackle the problem of communication between peoples with differing national languages.³ Esperanto is one such.

To be more precise, Esperanto was conceived as an 'international auxiliary language'; that is, as a global second language. The peoples of the world would speak their own national language within their national communities but would use Esperanto for international and cross-border communication. Although within the Japanese Esperanto movement, as elsewhere, Esperanto admitted different conceptions and ideologies, the central idea common to all remained that of a language for use in inter-ethnic and international contact.⁴ One fundamental aspect of this auxiliary aspect of Esperanto's initial articulation is that, rather than challenge the legitimacy of individual national languages, it sits between them, potentially acting as a buffer protecting minor languages from the threat of incursion by languages such as English and French.

The first planned language to achieve significant popularity was not Esperanto, but another one from within the same tradition, Volapük. The first Volapük text was published in 1880 by its creator, Johann Martin Schleyer; it had a grammar that has been described as 'regular, but difficult', and a vocabulary that although 'drawn from national languages... is so simplified as to be barely recognizable'.⁵ Nevertheless, it attracted a number of speakers, clubs, and magazines across Europe, and was even introduced to Japan (as is explored in

3 Janton & Tonkin (1993) p.7.

4 For the most part, Japanese advocates of Esperanto did not conceive of it as a replacement for the Japanese language, although there were some exceptions, such as Kita Ikki (see Usui 2008). There was also a Marxist school of linguistic theory which, although it did not advocate Esperanto as a direct replacement for Japanese, did anticipate the eventual withering away of national languages, to be replaced by some future world language, of which Esperanto was to be a forerunner (see chapter five for some discussion of this).

5 Janton & Tonkin (1993) p.13. Thus the name Volapük is made from the roots Vola ('world') and Pük ('language').

chapter one). The peak of its popularity occurred around 1890, ten years after it was first published, and from there it fell into decline as a result of a schism within the Volapük-speaking community related to who should control the language and its reform.⁶

Volapük's loss was Esperanto's gain. Esperanto had been created around the same time as Volapük but it was not publicly released and promoted until 1887, as the Volapük movement was reaching its fullest development.⁷ Esperanto's creator, Ludwig Zamenhof, grew up in a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic society in Białystok, in what was then a part of Lithuania, within the Russian Empire, but is now Poland. Zamenhof was a part of the Jewish majority in the town, but he perceived the barrier of language as one key cause of conflict between the different ethnic groups: Poles, Jews, Russians, and Germans, amongst others, who made up the whole community. It was experience of living within this environment that led to the creation of Esperanto. Zamenhof's vision was not simply of a language which would facilitate better communication between different peoples; it was that, by doing so there would be greater mutual understanding and thus less conflict in the world. From the publication of the first pamphlet in 1887, Esperanto grew, especially after 1890, when the decline of Volapük channelled adherents to the new leading candidate for widespread adoption. The crowning of Esperanto's rise came in 1905, when Esperantists in France hosted an inaugural international Esperanto congress in the town of Boulogne-sur-Mer, at the same time as it was first making headway in Japan.

The common aspects of Volapük and Esperanto are characteristic of nineteenth

⁶ Large (1985) p.69-70.

⁷ Esperanto was originally simply termed *Lingvo Internacia* ('international language'), but it eventually came to be known by the pseudonym used by Zamenhof in releasing the language, *Dr Esperanto*; Esperanto meaning 'one who hopes'.

century planned languages. They were designed, as mentioned above, from a starting point of existing national languages, with a goal of regularity and simplicity – seeking to iron out the historical accidents that become embedded within all 'unplanned' national languages. One basic aim was the goal of being easy to learn and use. Zamenhof created Esperanto based upon his knowledge of European languages: it uses a version of the Roman alphabet, a regular grammar that owes much to Indo-European languages, and takes its vocabulary from European origins also. Words are formed from basic roots and a series of prefixes and suffixes which alter the meaning and denote grammatical function; this latter means that word order is relatively flexible within a sentence, but in practice Subject-Verb-Object is much more conventional than Subject-Object-Verb.

Although this history of planned and, in particular, international auxiliary languages is largely European, the increasing levels of contact with the wider world brought it to Japan's shores. The need for foreign language skills, already present in the Dutch studies tradition (*Rangaku*), accelerated dramatically with the mid-nineteenth century opening of Japan to wider contact with other cultures. Chapter one explores how both Volapük and Esperanto were introduced to Japan, but even before this, the idea of a common international language had been expressed, independent of the European tradition, in an 1874 essay, 'Shitsugi Issoku' ('A Certain Question') by Sakatani Shiroshi, published in the influential Japanese magazine, the *Meiroke Zasshi*. Sakatani suggested 'what an unprecedented blessing it would be if, after consulting with foreign countries, we achieve through indefatigable effort the great benefit of a common world language'.⁸ There

⁸ Sakatani, 'A Certain Question', in Braisted (1976) p.137, (*Meiroke Zasshi*, #10, June 1874). Sakatani was a Confucian scholar, in contrast to the majority of the members of the *Meiroke Zasshi*. It has been suggested

is even an early example of a Japanese planned language, created by Oka Asajirō. Oka created his language, Zilengo, after becoming dissatisfied with Volapük, in the late nineteenth century; it is very much in the international auxiliary language tradition, although it remained an intellectual exercise, since Oka never sought to spread it.⁹

The context of Japan's opening to the wider world, then, made clear and compelling the logic of a simple to learn, rational medium for international communication. This appeal held firm through into the twentieth century, as the number of people who sought to make contact beyond Japan's borders grew and grew.

The specifics of Japanese society led the Japanese Esperanto movement to develop along its own lines; a part of the wider transnational movement, to be sure, but one which developed a separate and distinct identity, not least due to Japan's geographic removal from the European centre of mass of the wider Esperanto community. By considering who took up Esperanto in Japan, how they organised, what ideas they invested within it, and to what uses they put it, we can see Esperanto as not just a language, but as a set of socially embedded phenomena – a community, an idea, and a set of practices.

Intellectual life in 1920s Japan was described by a contemporary observer as a 'three cornered fight' between 'traditional conservatives', 'progressive liberals', and 'radical socialists';¹⁰ throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Esperanto appealed to

that his experience with Chinese provided him with a unique perspective on the idea of languages (Braisted 1976, p.138), but I would suggest, alternatively, that perhaps a slightly more sceptical attitude to western influence allowed him to make what can be interpreted as an implicit criticism of the plethora of European languages facing Japanese scholars.

⁹ *La Revuo Orienta*, April 1940, p.141-2.

¹⁰ Tsurumi Yūsuke, 'Japan's Internal Problems and Her Relationships with China, Russia, America, and the British Commonwealth', in John Condliffe ed., *Problems of the Pacific* (1927), quoted in Schlichtmann (2009). p.11 & p.68 note 3.

greater or lesser extents to all three groups, and no less importantly, to many who were not outspoken members of any political faction. The main impetus in the early movement was Kuroita Katsumi, an academic who is best known as a key figure behind the creation of the state-sponsored *Kokushi* national history project,¹¹ but another early leader was Ōsugi Sakae, one of Japan's most influential anarchists; indeed, the two are directly linked through the figure of Yamaga Taiji, a print worker and Esperantist who looked to both as mentors. Others who were attracted to Esperanto in Japan included scientists; doctors; Buddhist monks; followers of the 'new' religion Ōmoto-kyō; Christians; atheists; diplomats; journalists and authors; Marxists and anarchists; defenders of Japanese tradition; students; residents of cities, villages, and overseas colonies; ex-patriot Japanese abroad and foreign residents within Japan; in short, Esperanto appealed to an expansive range of Japanese and non-Japanese of different backgrounds and outlooks.

No less significantly, this diverse population of practitioners was brought together in a single community that was, for the most part, highly interconnected. Each of these different groups came together in their shared interest in Esperanto. As I have suggested, I think that this is important in showing that different and competing visions of the wider world and its possible future were able to meet and find common ground in Esperanto's message of linguistic union. Rather than each group participating in their own vision of Esperanto independently, each group revealing more about themselves perhaps than something intrinsic to Esperanto, they formed a fairly cohesive community within which debates could be had, exposing differences in interpretation but also agreements and

11 See Yoshikawa (2007) for an account of Kuroita's life and academic work.

commonalities. Revealingly, the key exception to this mingling was the case of the proletarian Esperantists during the late 1920s and early 1930s, who formed their own groups with relatively little connection to the mainstream Esperanto organisation. This break was driven by both social and intellectual forces: by the state's aggressive suppression of communist and proletarian groups, and by key differences in the ideology of socialist and non-socialist Esperanto.

The diversity within the Esperanto community also, I suggest, largely explains why Esperanto has remained peripheral in Japanese historiography: because it cannot be contained satisfactorily within a conventional unit of analysis such as socialism or liberal internationalism, because much activity took place where internationalism might not be expected, and because it connects so many otherwise seemingly unconnected individuals and movements, these connections have tended to remain marginal, or have even been overlooked.

In describing Esperanto in Japan as a popular movement I am seeking to make reference to the diversity of opinions within it, as well as to its non-state, bottom up nature. The Esperanto movement initially coalesced from a number of different sources within Japanese society; from there it grew into a self sustaining movement spread across Japan, with only occasional and minor support from official sources. It is, nevertheless, valid to ask how popular a popular movement it was. Esperanto's linguistic origins and use of the Roman alphabet did act to shape its wider appeal within Japan – it was more enthusiastically embraced by those with more education than less, and was of particular interest to teachers and students, for example.

Overall membership of the major Esperanto organisations was never huge. The first body, the *Japana Esperantista Asocio* (the JEA) achieved over 700 members within a year of its creation, although between 1910 and 1915 it fell to between one and two hundred.¹² From this base, membership began to grow again when a new body, the *Japana Esperanto-Insitudo* (JEI) was formed in 1919/20, it had an initial membership of 400. This rose rapidly – to 1000 in 1920, 1400 in 1921, and 2700 in 1924, thereafter remaining around 2000 until it fell gradually during the 1930s, to 1000 by 1936.

In 1932, the major European Esperanto magazine, *Esperanto*, gave statistics on the membership of various national Esperanto associations, suggesting that, at 2,100, Japan had the second largest membership in 1931, alongside Germany (2,114) with the UK at 1,975 and France at 1,587. The same article gave figures for 1927 and 1923 in which Japan was also in second place behind Germany in absolute terms (although the Soviet Union was a notable absence from the data, and other, less populous European nations, such as the Netherlands, had higher levels of Esperanto activity per unit population).¹³

However, whilst membership of the central Esperanto organisations provides one measure of overall levels of Esperanto activity, it is a narrow measure of what constitutes an Esperantist, and arguably not even one that is consistent over time. During the 1920s and into the 1930s, the sophistication of the Japanese Esperanto movement grew, with increasingly specialist groups and organisations – clubs for Esperantists working in science, Esperanto rail workers, Buddhist Esperanto, and so on, and more significantly the emergence of a separate proletarian Esperanto movement. Thus, during this period, it

¹² JEI (1956) p.13, p.35-6.

¹³ *Esperanto*, October 1932, quoted in Forster (1982) p.25.

became more likely that one might be a member of one such group, but potentially not of the JEI. Indeed, an alternative measure of activity – attendance at the annual Japanese Esperanto congress – shows a peak not in the mid 1920s, but in 1932.¹⁴

Defining the necessary and sufficient conditions for considering someone an Esperantist is not straightforward – different individuals display a wide range of levels of ability, activity, and participation, for example. Whilst the movement centred around a core of very active advocates of the language, there were wider circles of more occasional Esperantists, lapsed learners, sympathisers, and so on.¹⁵ Rather than seek to identify a single definition of an Esperantist and thus a single figure to signify the size of the Esperanto community in Japan, it is perhaps better to conceive of it as comprising concentric rings of people who were more or less engaged with the language at any given time.

Even within the central, highly active core, there were many who were not necessarily members of the main organisations. For example, in 1923, there were 47 regularly active Esperantists in the major Japanese settlements in Manchuria, of whom only 5 were members of the JEI.¹⁶ Similarly, chapter four explores a vibrant Esperanto scene in Aomori in the early years of the 1920s of whom only a small fraction were JEI members. Likewise, whilst printed lists of the JEI membership in 1922 and 1923 indicate very low levels of women members – perhaps as low as a few percent, photographs of

14 *La Revuo Orienta*, March 1936, p.2. As is outlined in chapter six, Japanese Esperanto continued to develop greater richness and sophistication through the late 1920s and into the 1930s.

15 Indeed, there were those who sought to promote Esperanto who did not necessarily study the language itself – two examples being Nitobe Inazō, the under-secretary to the League of Nations, who is featured in chapter three, and Nagata Hidejirō, the mayor of Tokyo, who is briefly mentioned in chapter six.

16 *La Revuo Orienta*, April 1940, p.32.

local Esperanto club meetings seem to suggest that the general population of Esperantists, if still male-dominated, included a significantly higher proportion of women than the JEI list. This echoes the rough estimates of the contemporary Esperanto community of Jouko Lindstedt, who hypothesises a scaling factor of ten between ‘fluent speakers’ and ‘active users’.¹⁷

In 1928, a survey by Johannes Dietterle, a German Esperantist, suggested that the number of Esperantists in Japan was 6,900, in comparison with the JEI membership of 2,160.¹⁸ This was comparable with the figures for a range of European nations on an absolute basis, such as Great Britain (7,855), France (5,237), the Netherlands (6,649), and Czechoslovakia (8,967); greater than that of the United States of America (4,845) but significantly behind Germany at 30,868.¹⁹ Whilst the example of Manchuria in 1923 suggests a figure of active attendees of local clubs almost ten times the number of JEI members (in 1923, when the JEI membership stood at 2,300), it might be expected that JEI membership rates in the peripheries might be lower than in the centre, just as the relative rate of membership of the UEA was lower in Japan than in Europe. Thus the figure given by Dietterle of around seven thousand, three times the JEI’s membership, seems a reasonable estimate for some idea of ‘active’ Esperantists in late 1920s Japan, although, as

17 Lindstedt (2010) p.2.

18 J. Dietterle, ‘Tutmonda statistiko esperantista’, *Esperanto*, July-August 1928, in Forster (1982) p.20-22; *La Revuo Orienta*, March 1936, 1-3. Forster (1982, p.22) describes this as ‘what appears to be the only systematic attempt to present a general statistic overview of the Esperanto organisations’.

19 The Soviet Union was given as 5,726, although according to Drezen it was roughly three times this.

Dietterle’s methodology is also unclear, as is his definition of an Esperantist, although Forster suggests that he ‘attempted to avoid exaggeration’, and that it ‘almost certainly reflects better access to German information’ (Forster 1982, p.22). This last point, together with the high figures for Germany and (per population) for Austria, suggests perhaps that the lower figures for other nations might even be somewhat understated.

Lindstedt suggests the margin for error remains high.²⁰

Beyond these circles of active learners of Esperanto of different levels of activity, there was a wider cultural presence. There were often Esperanto articles or columns in national magazines and newspapers; some general magazines even took Esperanto subtitles. For example, the January 1927 issue of the Esperanto magazine, *La Revuo Orienta*, recorded nearly 30 articles involving Esperanto in major newspapers and magazines during December 1926.²¹ Esperanto pamphlets and books, both published domestically and imported from overseas, were sold in mainstream book stores such as Maruzen, meaning that, by 1930, even amongst those who did not take up the language there was a relatively high level popular awareness of Esperanto. This general presence was mirrored in other mediums: chapter four includes discussion of a lecture tour of Tōhoku at which some 20,000 people attended meetings promoting the language, whilst on several occasions in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the take-up of texts supporting radio courses in Esperanto ran to several thousand copies (this is discussed in more detail in chapter six). Inter-war Esperanto in particular was an idea that was radical in its ambitions of change in the patterns of international communication, yet ordinary in the place it established within mainstream Japanese society.

Within this broad domestic community, Japanese Esperantists engaged in a wide range of different ways of using their language. Some, such as the Esperanto school run by Ōsugi Sakae, the Esperantists of the religion Ōmoto-kyō, the scientific work of the meteorologist Ōishi Wasaburō, Akita Ujaku's trip to the Soviet Union, and the marriage of

²⁰ Lindstedt (2010) p.2.

²¹ *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1927, p.9-10.

Hasegawa Teru to Chinese Esperantist Liu Ren [劉仁], are mentioned in this thesis but the full scope of them is greater still, revealing that Esperanto could be expressed in any number of ways, from major public events through to small aspects of everyday life.

The practice of doing Esperanto developed increasingly rich forms over time. There were domestic activities – promotional meetings and courses; regular club evenings; annual events such as the national congress, regional gatherings, and the celebration of Ludwig Zamenhof's birthday (December 16th); and more; but there was also of course, a specifically international perspective to Esperanto. Thus transnational activities represented an important manifestation of the Esperanto movement. Japanese Esperantists visited other nations and received visitors from abroad, they joined international Esperanto associations, they imported and exported books, magazines and pamphlets, they attended international conferences, and they also exchanged letters.

The first half of the twentieth century was a period in which the opportunities for Japanese to travel overseas (especially to Europe) were limited but there were fewer barriers to the flow of ideas. Therefore, the range of books and magazines published by foreign Esperanto groups occupied a key role in the experience of doing Esperanto in pre-1945 Japan, but also correspondence represented the opportunity for a more active engagement with the language and, through it, the wider world.

Many of the major national and international Esperanto magazines hosted adverts for those seeking writing partners; each one of these adverts opened the door to a potentially huge number of relationships. For example, the JEI archives house a file of over 120 letters from at least 25 countries – mostly European, but including Rhodesia,

Argentina, Uruguay, China, the United States of America, Mexico, Australia and the Soviet Union, all relating to a single advert taken out in the April 1925 edition of the international magazine, *Esperanto*, by a Waseda University student, Yanagi Kōjirō. This figure seems fairly typical: Edward Gauntlett, at the very outset of the Japanese Esperanto movement, mentioned receiving some 700 letters from 'about 75 different countries' over the course of 3 years,²² whilst a local Sunday school in Wakayama received over 1000 replies on both occasions that they sought correspondents in the early 1930s.²³ These could also be long running relationships: in 1994, a chance encounter led to the discovery of some 1300 letters and cards received by Nishimura Isamu, another student from the 1920s, charting ongoing relationships between 1928 and his death in 1954.²⁴

Whilst the contents of much of this correspondence was mundane – typically descriptions of the writer's family, occupation, and daily life – it was nevertheless a vast network of tangible transnational connections between Japan and large parts of the wider world that took place in a mode that is now almost entirely lost to historians. Moreover, I think that it represents well the nature of Japanese Esperanto and its manifestation in transnational practices: popular, non-state modes of engagement with the wider world along informal channels that was often small scale and personal in nature, but revealing a diverse and widespread Japanese engagement with the world, and finally, involving flows of exchange in two directions – Japanese individuals learning about other parts of the world, but also sharing knowledge of Japan and Japanese life.

22 Gauntlett (1906) p.9.

23 JEI (2008) p.9.

24 Yoshikawa (1996) Introduction & p.4.

These activities represented tangible realisations of the ideas which Japanese Esperantists invested in Esperanto. The spectrum of different views which they embedded within the language covered a wide range. However, there are three broad forms of Esperantism, the philosophy underlying and motivating Esperanto, which were significant enough to warrant more detailed outline. All three originated within the wider global Esperanto movement, but all three were of importance within Japanese Esperanto, as ideas around which many individual Esperantists' personal views clustered.

The first philosophy of Esperanto is one that can be called 'neutral', or 'pure linguistic' Esperantism. This is the view that Esperanto is a language alone, with no deeper moral, political, or ideological significance than as the solution to an extant problem of international communication. Advocates of this view often argued that only by being explicitly apolitical could Esperanto fulfil the role of a medium of communication for all groups and individuals in the world, allowing the expression of any political views, whether they be in accordance with broader views of international friendship or otherwise.

This is contrasted by more idealistic forms of Esperantism often described as the 'inner idea' (*Interna Ideo*). This term captures a loose set of values in which the function of Esperanto in solving the international language problem serves to achieve a wider goal, chiefly of establishing peace amongst the peoples of mankind. The *Interna Ideo* has been described as 'a nebulous value orientation, involving peace, solidarity, friendship, and justice'.²⁵ Ludwig Zamenhof developed his initial motivations for creating Esperanto into one manifestation of the *Interna Ideo*, a philosophy-cum-religion he named *Homaranismo*,

25 Forster (1982) p.397.

within which Esperanto was one part of achieving the goal of world peace.²⁶

In the European Esperanto community, these two positions clashed at the 1905 Esperanto congress at Boulogne-sur-Mer. Zamenhof, who had explicitly surrendered control of Esperanto to its community of speakers, had his normative perspective defeated by the neutral camp. The congress established the *Bulonja Deklaracio*, the Boulogne Declaration, which defined Esperantism as the 'endeavour to disseminate in the whole world the use of a neutrally human language... every other idea or hope which any Esperantist links with Esperantism [being] his purely private affair'.²⁷ Zamenhof and others continued to campaign for a more idealistic conception.

In Japan, both views attracted adherents; in the 1920s in particular the *Interna Ideo* was influential, whilst in the 1930s there was a resurgence in the explicit articulation of political neutrality within Esperanto. I will generally refer to the idea that Esperanto might represent something more than a technical solution to a linguistic problem as 'idealistic' or 'ideological' Esperantism, and the idea of Esperanto solely as language as 'neutral', or 'linguistic' Esperantism.

The final key set of views regarding Esperanto and Esperantism is that of the socialist Esperantists. Once again these are not necessarily a single well defined position, but rather represent a shifting set of values and ideas over time and between individuals. In particular, it is important to recognise that, whilst socialists generally looked to Esperanto as something more than just a language which would help engineer the

²⁶ *Homaranismo* translates directly as 'human-ism', but I prefer in this thesis to refer to it and the *Interna Ideo* by their Esperanto terms, to retain focus on their Esperanto-specific context.

²⁷ Forster (1982) p.89.

transformation of world society, and thus had much shared ground with *Interna Ideo* inspired views, nevertheless one could embrace the *Interna Ideo* without being a socialist, and vice versa. Two noteworthy international examples of socialist Esperantism are the establishment of the SAT, the Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda ('World Non-National Association') which articulated a non-nation-based idea of world citizenship within a heterodox socialist setting; and the emergence of Marxist Esperanto, which established a dialectic materialist theory of language anticipating the decline of national languages and the rise of a single world language. Both of these came to influence Esperanto in Japan during the 1920s.

Esperanto in Japan, then, was an idea and a practice which admitted multiple motivations and interpretations; it was a movement with room enough to accommodate the 'aloof socialists, the cynical realists, the moderate idealists, and the radical utopianists',²⁸ and others, and within which they were able to interact and find common ground. In seeking to understand this diversity, and what it implies for the wider meaning of the Esperanto movement as a whole, I have drawn on concepts of internationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Whilst it is true that, by comparison to the vast scholarship on nationalism, the body of work on internationalism is more sparse, nevertheless there has been sufficient work to throw up disagreements. A key debate is one between those who see internationalism as innately opposed to nationalism, as only having meaning 'as a back-

28 Adapted from Stegewerns (2003), p.10.

construction referring to its opposite',²⁹ and those for whom the two concepts are related in more complex fashion, for example, for whom internationalism 'is only the opposite of selfish and competitive practices between existing nations'.³⁰ The core of this disagreement is whether one interprets nationalism to mean more than the aggressive pursuit of the interests of one nation-state at the expense of others; and internationalism as more than simply co-operation between nation-states (I would say yes to both questions).

Scholars have however agreed that internationalism is neither static, nor single in its nature; rather that it is a constantly re-interpreted concept, admitting multiple forms and meanings.³¹ For Fred Halliday, it is a 'cluster concept', in which a number of allied ideas are contained, without any single core generality,³² whereas Akira Iriye identifies various forms which are a mix of motivation and mode of engagement – in particular legal, cultural, socialist and economic forms of internationalism,³³ and the Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History notably titles its entry internationalisms.³⁴

The case of Japanese Esperanto has led me to see these various forms of internationalism within a broad space of ideas linked through some idea of a society of the world or of humanity. That is, what defines an internationalism as such is the articulation of a 'broader community than that of the nation or the state'.³⁵ This conception of a world society can take a range of different forms, with different consequent rights and

29 Anderson (2002).

30 Williams (1985) p.214.

31 For an influential statement of this dynamic quality, see Ishay (1995) xxi.

32 Halliday (1988) p.188.

33 Iriye (1997) Chapter One. Akira Iriye's study draws upon the international Esperanto movement as one example of his central interest, 'cultural internationalism'.

34 Iriye & Saunier (2009) p.586.

35 Halliday (1988) p.187.

obligations of its members. For those Japanese Esperantists who looked to the neutral forms of Esperantism, it was analytic, descriptive, or what I describe in chapter one as presumptive: articulating an existing international society of states with a pressing need for a common language. By contrast, those who looked to the *Interna Ideo* were more normative or prescriptive, even utopian, in their outlook – suggesting that through Esperanto a more desirable world society could be realised. Similarly, Esperantists' visions took a range of stances in relation to the nation-state: most usually explicitly or implicitly recognising the presence of the nation within their vision of a world society, but occasionally taking a more hostile stance (for example, radical socialists' vision of world revolution).³⁶

This idea of internationalism as a space of different ideas also admits concepts of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism, the idea of the 'citizen of the world', has a longer and no less dynamic history than internationalism, perhaps focused more on the individual and on philosophical understanding than on the nation-state and political institutions. Most recently, a body of scholarship that could be termed 'new' cosmopolitanism has sought to understand what cosmopolitanism might look like in the age of globalisation, seeking to balance a multicultural respect for difference with the idea of a common humanity, alive to the charge that cosmopolitan statements of universality can often be

36 One way of understanding this idea of a spectrum or space of different forms of internationalism is to borrow from the scholarship on nationalism, which has developed a rich understanding of the variant forms it can take. For example, Benedict Anderson's idea of the imagined community has been extended to consider a global community, for example in Cheah & Robbins (1998). I find useful Ozkirimli's (2010) concept of a 'discourse of nationalism', a discourse which asserts the existence of the nation as the legitimate body of political aggregation and organisation. Thus a 'discourse of internationalism' shared by forms of internationalism would assert that a global community did or should exist, and that institutions and individuals (and, significantly, nation-states) owed certain obligations to this community in their actions.

little more than (typically Euro-centric) assertions of local values.³⁷ Whilst cosmopolitanism and internationalism represent two distinct intellectual traditions, I think that they share the underlying call to a community that is greater than the immediate society and state in which we live, and thus can be linked within the conceptual space which I am defining. Whilst I generally refer to the entirety as internationalism, I will occasionally use cosmopolitanism to describe ideas which are either more focused upon individual identity, or which seek more explicitly to transcend the nation-state.

My suggestion is that this way of seeing internationalism and cosmopolitanism as a space of different ideas of global society helps to explain how it was that the Japanese Esperanto movement housed a range of different visions and motivations, each of them representing some form of internationalist thinking, and conversely, that the diversity within Japanese Esperanto helps us to see the complex and variable nature of concepts of internationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Existing works on internationalism in Japan, whilst recognising the fluid nature of the concept, have focused chiefly on what I would describe as diplomatic internationalism – multilateral diplomacy or 'international cooperation with the western powers (most likely within the framework of the League of Nations and/or the Washington Treaties)',³⁸ delineating a sharp distinction from ideas such as 'universalism and cosmopolitanism',³⁹

37 For an introduction to this body of work, see Cheah & Robbins (1998). The modern tension within cosmopolitanism between what defines our common humanity and the variety of local cultural representations can be seen in parallel to the proposed role of Esperanto as auxiliary language: acting as a common language for mankind, and yet respecting and sustaining the position of national languages.

38 Stegewerns (2003) p.13.

39 Abel (2004) p.5.

'*sekaishugi* and *kosumoporitanizumu*'.⁴⁰ The two best examples are Stegewerns (2003) and Abel (2004), but there are also works in the field of international relations, such as Shimazu (1998) and Burkman (2008), which treat Japan's participation in the internationalist institutions of the post-First World War world and thus also touch upon similar themes.⁴¹ These works also concentrate either on the actions of the state and its representatives, or more broadly upon the views of 'opinion leaders'⁴² in elite intellectual circles.

By contrast, my work studies internationalism through the lens of a popular movement; I believe that this presents a number of advantages, allowing me to build upon the existing scholarship in new ways. Most obviously, it shows that ideas of internationalism had an appeal beyond elite circles, finding a following within broader society. Exploring a social and cultural movement, rather than other methodologies such as tracing elite discourse or intellectual biography, allows me to uncover internationalist activities in unexpected places, such as the Esperantists of northern Japan discussed in chapter four. The change in field of exploration also perhaps explains why I have been drawn to a more inclusive understanding of internationalism and cosmopolitanism, where studies of elites and state policy have focused more narrowly upon state-centred definitions.

In this way, my approach sees the international not as a world made up of nation-

40 Stegewerns (2003) p.13.

41 There is also scholarship on Pan-Asianism, such as Saaler & Koschmann (2007), and Hotta (2007). Pan-Asianism is an example of what are often called 'Pan-nationalisms' or 'Macro-nationalisms', since they display many of the self/other characteristics of forms of nationalism. Nevertheless, I think that, within my more flexible understanding of these ideologies, they might usefully be conceived of as containing elements of both nationalism and internationalism.

42 This phrase is used by both Stegewerns (2003, p.3) and Abel (2004, p.3).

states acting as well defined atomic entities, with internationalists and others seeking to influence official policy, but as one in which the nation is a more complex entity, acting through a wide range of different institutions and modes, both formal and informal, planned and unplanned. The Esperanto network shows that these groups and channels were often deeply interconnected. Thus, patterns of common Esperanto practice linked, often directly, such otherwise disjointed places and themes as the League of Nations, rural Japanese communities, revolutionary socialists, and settlers in the new state of Manchukuo. It is these commonalities and connections which have driven my reading of differing forms of internationalism and cosmopolitanism, seeking to find their shared ground, rather than draw distinctions between them.

In seeking to write a history of Esperanto in Japan, I have drawn on a wide variety of sources, from both within the Esperanto movement and from without. The major source for the texts that I have used is the Japanese Esperanto movement itself, both in terms of their origin and in terms of their collection and their preservation. The archive of the JEI, housed in their offices in Tokyo, represents my single largest source of documents.

In particular, I have drawn from the main JEI magazine, *La Revuo Orienta*, throughout the thesis. *La Revuo Orienta* was a monthly magazine for members of the JEI which ran continuously from the formation of the JEI in 1919 until its brief suspension in 1944, and then again from 1945 to the present day.⁴³ The contents of *La Revuo Orienta* includes editorials and other articles about a range of subjects including debates within the

⁴³ A complete collection of *La Revuo Orienta* exists in the JEI archives; this is the collection which I consulted in the first instance. In addition to this the JEI published two volumes of selected articles *En La Revuo Orienta* (JEI, 1956) to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Esperanto in Japan, whilst a reasonable proportion of the pre-war run of the magazine is available in digitised form from the Austrian National Library, at <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=e2e> .

Esperanto movement, the history of Esperanto, reports of trips and visits, visitors from overseas, articles written by overseas Esperantists, translations of literature and poetry, introductions in Esperanto to non-Esperanto specific subjects, and more. In addition it features advertisements for other Esperanto books, publications, and related products, as well as reports of general Esperanto activity (including an ongoing series, 'Enlanda Kroniko', charting local Esperanto meetings), and reports of the annual Esperanto congress and the celebrations of Zamenhof's birthday.

The JEI archives also feature a range of other magazines, pamphlets, and books, as well as photographs and letters. Especially during the 1920s and 1930s, a wide selection of magazines related to Esperanto sprang up. These ranged from small, short-lived journals put out by regional and local groups, to specialist magazines covering religion, science, and professional groups, through to more general Esperanto related titles put out by commercial publishers. Extant collections of these magazines, as well as the selection of pamphlets which have survived, are more partial in nature than *La Revuo Orienta*, although taken in aggregate they stretch across the entire period considered in this thesis.

There is, of course, a question of survival of the sources, and whether the passage of time has built in any bias regarding what remains and what does not. The complete run of *La Revuo Orienta* mitigates this somewhat, and provides a point of comparison for the other sources in considering their potential partiality. In general, I have not detected any systematic absences in the JEI collection.

Whilst sources from within the Esperanto movement provide a vital collection covering the views, debates, and controversies within Japanese Esperanto, they are

however limited in their ability to assess Esperanto's wider presence within Japanese society. Esperanto in the pre-Second World War period was an enthusiastic pursuit – Esperantists often (although not always) wrote with optimism about the growth of the language and the spread of interest in it, but, of course, these comments must be seen as subjective and even performative statements, rather than unbiased fact.

Where documented by contemporary sources, I have recorded reported numbers (be it of attendees to meetings, sales of magazines, or members of groups or classes) simply as is, noting the source of the figure. In many cases there are photographs accompanying smaller groups which substantiate the figures given. However, where there are conflicting reports, or the source of the figure reported is more distant from the event itself, I have outlined the history of the claims so as to give some sense of their likely reliability (most notably in the figures given for the sales of the proletarian Esperanto textbooks and magazines discussed in chapter five).

To corroborate the evidence from within the Esperanto movement itself, and to see the movement from a different perspective, I have drawn on general newspapers, books and magazines, government documents and reports, and other contemporary sources. The presence of these attests to a wider awareness and interest in Esperanto beyond the movement itself, and their content represents more consistently members of the movement speaking to non-Esperantists, as well as non-Esperantists' views of the language than do, for example, the magazines written by Esperantists for Esperantists.

I have also drawn upon sources in archives collected by other historical projects and traditions – for example socialist archives and local history collections. These, too, help to

balance the reliance upon internal Esperanto archives. If, as the central archive of the major national Esperanto organisation, the JEI archives are more likely to retain sources originating from and oriented towards Esperanto-as-organisation, then these other archives help to provide some alternative texts from further from the administrative centre. A key example of this is a number of local newspaper articles used in chapter four, which were collected by local historians working in Aomori prefecture.

I have drawn upon memoirs and individual stories recorded in the postwar period, as well as published diaries of some Esperantists (most notably Akita Ujaku, Sasaki Kizen, and Yanagita Kunio) to access personal experience. Memoirs have to be read with an awareness that they are recorded through the prism of memory – I have endeavoured wherever possible to make clear where I have drawn upon non-contemporary sources. Published diaries have the advantage of contemporaneity, but they are a source subjected to a selection bias of their own: they are the diaries of persons thought of historical significance enough to warrant the publication of their diaries and work. This is something of a drawback in seeking to access 'normal' Esperantists' experiences, but nevertheless they provide some insight into everyday Esperanto.

The government suppression of proletarian movements, together with the split between proletarian Esperanto and the mainstream Esperanto organisations, led to a perhaps unsurprising relative absence of direct sources on proletarian Esperanto, at least in comparison with the mainstream. Whilst magazines and textbooks, for example, do remain, any relative lack is balanced by two contrasting sources of information: contemporary government investigations into Marxist and other left wing groups, and

postwar historical work. I have drawn upon both of these in writing chapter five.

There were two major government reports which considered left-wing Esperanto in the 1930s: *Puroretaria Esuperanto Undō ni tsuite* (Takeuchi 1939) which was solely on proletarian Esperanto, and *Puroretaria Bunka Undō ni tsuite no Kenkyū* (Hiraide 1940) which looked at the wider proletarian arts movement. Although both were written a few years after the demise of the groups which they were investigating, they both quote publications of the proletarian groups themselves. Likewise, the postwar work done by writers within the Japanese Esperanto movement, although written after the end of the war, draws upon the experiences of surviving participants in the proletarian movement. Whilst neither of these two sources represents an unmediated portrait of the movement, nevertheless they are both a valuable source of information about its activities.

In recent years, the English language historiography of modern Japan has begun to see Esperanto as more than just a historical oddity. Usui Hiroyuki and Ulrich Lins provide broad overviews of parts of the movement, whilst Nancy Stalker considers the role of the language within the religion Ōmoto-kyō, and most recently Sho Konishi uses Esperanto to explore a popular imagination of world order in the immediate post-Russo-Japanese war period.⁴⁴

In the Japanese language, there is a longer history of historical writing about the Esperanto movement, almost entirely originating from within the Japanese Esperanto movement itself. The act of looking back at Japanese Esperanto's past began only shortly after the subject it studies, however the bulk of historical writing about Esperanto in Japan

⁴⁴ Usui (2008), Lins (2008), Stalker (2008), Konishi (2013).

has come in the years after 1945. This secondary literature has been a valuable source of information, leads, and wider understanding for my work. Whilst I have drawn upon few completely new sources and events in writing this thesis, I believe that in my selection of articles and texts from existing archives, in my placing of the movement in a wider social context, and in my analysis and interpretation of the language, I bring a fresh perspective and new meaning to the history of Esperanto in Japan. Thus a reader who knows the extant historiography of Japanese Esperanto would recognise much of this narrative, but would, I believe, encounter a number of articles, events, and discussions which were new to him/her, would learn more about some situations he/she knew of already and see them in a new light or from new perspectives, and most significantly would be presented with an overall portrait of the history of Esperanto in Japan embedded within the wider historical context that tells a new story of Japan's experiences with modernity, language, and the wider world.

The overall structure of this thesis is a mix of thematic and chronological elements, seeking to highlight the times and locations of the most significant and revealing intellectual and cultural elements of the Japanese Esperanto movement. Esperanto's first major growth within Japan was in 1905-6, in the wake of the Russo-Japanese war. Chapter one deals with this emergence in comparison to a previous event: the introduction of Volapük to Japan some twenty years earlier.

From that first boom, there was a lull in activity until the late 1910s, when the Japanese Esperanto community began to grow once again. This was boosted dramatically by the end of the First World War, when peace and the international wave of 'Wilsonian

Internationalism' gave rise to a surge in Esperanto worldwide. Chapter two explores the growth in transnational Esperanto connections and the rise of more idealistic forms of Esperantism during this period of expansion.

From this second boom, the early 1920s was the period of most rapid growth in Japanese Esperanto, and also perhaps the period of highest profile of the language internationally. In particular, Esperanto was the subject of a series of discussions and activities at the League of Nations, some of the participants of which were Japanese diplomats and Esperantists. This was the closest that Esperanto came to achieving official support by the Japanese state, as well as in international politics, so chapter three focuses on the events and the Japanese actors involved.

However, at the same time as Esperanto was making its closest contact with traditional forms of diplomatic internationalism at the League of Nations, the Japanese Esperanto movement was growing domestically, spreading into all of the prefectures of Japan. Chapter four changes focus from the sphere of international relations to small rural communities in the Japanese deep north, asking what it meant to practise Esperanto so far from the centre. Whilst the locations of chapters three and four could scarcely be more different, Esperanto linked them directly, not only through patterns of language practice, but through the relationship between the folklorists Yanagita Kunio (who encountered Esperanto at the League of Nations) and his collaborator Sasaki Kizen (who took it up in his home town in northern Japan).

Chapter five outlines the history of proletarian Esperanto in Japan. Although the left formed a core constituency within Japanese Esperanto from its very outset, in the late

1920s and the 1930s the proletarian Esperantists broke away to form a set of organisations and institutions that was distinct from the mainstream groups. This rupture highlights the ways in which different forms of internationalism could find themselves to be incompatible and in conflict with one another. Finally, the subject of chapter six is perhaps the most unexpected manifestation of Esperanto in Japanese history: the persistence of Esperanto in Japan throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s, as Japanese foreign policy grew increasingly unilateral and aggressive. Esperantists adapted their movement to better reconcile their goals with those of the Japanese state.

Together, these different sites and periods form a portrait of a cultural movement which was diverse and dynamic, allowing us to recognise within it, not an unlikely solution to an emergent modern problem, but rather a range of attempts to re-imagine and recreate the world along new, and improved lines.

1. *Sekaigo* - Esperanto Origins

On the 28th of September 1906, approximately 130 people gathered at the Seinen Kaikan in Kanda, Tokyo, for what was the inaugural Japanese Esperanto congress. The attendees were a diverse mix of educated society: the anarchist Ōsugi Sakae, only recently released from Ichigaya prison, presented an Esperanto translation of the Momotarō story, the honorary chair of the congress was Hayashi Tadasu, the then Foreign Minister, and others present included lecturers at the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages, Asada Eiji and Takakusu Junjirō, classical literature professor Kuroita Katsumi from the Imperial University, and journalists from the *Yomiuri Shinbun*.

The audience listened to a number of speeches in and about Esperanto, as well as a rendition of *La Espero*, the unofficial anthem of the European Esperanto movement, and then voted to seek: 1) to hold a world Esperanto congress in Tokyo to coincide with a world exposition planned for 1917, 2) to propose to the Education Ministry to have Esperanto added as an optional part of the curriculum of all vocational schools, and 3) to explore how to get words of Japanese origin added to Esperanto's vocabulary.¹ Of the three goals, only the final was realised – Japan would have to wait until 1965 to host an international congress, and Esperanto never managed to achieve official recognition within the Japanese education system.

However 1906 marked the beginnings of the Japanese Esperanto movement. The congress was the culmination of a year which saw an explosion of Esperanto activity in Japan: two separate groups with the name Nihon Esuperanto Kyōkai (Japan Esperanto

1 JEI (1956) p.12; Hatsushiba (1998) p.21.

Association) were founded (merging soon after), local clubs formed in a number of the major towns, at least nine different textbooks and study aids were published in Japan in addition to the foreign textbooks which had been imported, and a series of promotional lectures and meetings, including the first Japanese Esperanto congress, attracted audiences in the hundreds.²

The timing of Esperanto's arrival in Japan was no coincidence. Or rather, it was the result of several factors which coincided. In Europe, whilst Esperanto had become the most successful planned language over the last decade of the nineteenth century, the early years of the twentieth (and in particular the first international congress, held in 1905) marked the real establishment of an international organisation. In Japan, the same period saw a transformation in Japan's position in relation to the wider world, and the west in particular, and with it, a change in Japan's self-image. The period including the Sino-Japanese war and the Russo-Japanese war are typically seen as one of triumph for the Meiji project of nation-building: military victory helped to establish Japanese national security and sovereignty, placing the nation on a more even footing with the western powers – renegotiating the 'unequal treaties' and joining the diplomatic great powers. However, in doing so, it enabled the rise within Japan of an image of 'Japan of the world', a Japan as a participant in world cultural and intellectual affairs, rather than as the passive recipient of western knowledge. Esperanto was one example of this, making the rise of Esperanto perhaps an unexpected cultural consequence of Japan's military victories.

But for the language to take root in Japan, it had to be introduced and to find an

² A detailed timeline of early Esperanto events is contained in JEI (1956).

interested audience. The ongoing development of transnational contact with the west during the nineteenth century helped not only to provide a number of different routes by which Esperanto was brought to Japan, but also to establish a growing community of Japanese for whom a simpler international language had obvious appeal.

This chapter explores the entry of Esperanto into Japan, highlighting the various paths which it took as evidence of the diversifying and growing networks of overseas contact, arguing that the solidification of Japan's national security helped to permit the rise of this linguistic internationalism. Finally, it shows how the ways in which Esperanto was imagined reveal not a prescriptive internationalism seeking to promote international cooperation, but a descriptive form, seeing Esperanto narrowly as a answer to a linguistic problem emergent as one aspect of a global modernity.

The Origins of Organised Esperanto in Japan

Although it appeared on the public scene seemingly out of nowhere, the Esperanto craze of 1906 was the result of the coming together of several separate chains of events that occurred over a period of several years. Typically, three distinct routes have been identified through which Esperanto entered Japan, named according to the European language most closely associated with them.³ For the most part, prior to 1906, the different Japanese groups and individuals who were investigating Esperanto were seemingly unaware of one another's presence; it was the act of them coming to know of one another which helped to precipitate the 1906 boom.

The three main routes were complementary – Edward Gauntlett's 'English route'

³ For example, see Fujima (1978).

established a working population of Esperanto students; Kuroita Katsumi, the key figure resulting from the 'French route', was the principle driving force behind the formation and promotion of the early Esperanto organisations; and Futabatei Shimei's textbook, the result of the 'Russian route', not only provided a resource for new Japanese Esperantists to learn the language, it added to Kuroita's work in spreading knowledge of Esperanto more widely across Japan. Together they form portrait of the different networks of informal Japanese contact with Europe that were operating in the early twentieth century.

Route One: the English Route

The Welshman George Edward Gauntlett was one of a wave of Europeans and Americans who came to Japan as missionaries and to support the new Meiji education system. Born in Swansea in 1868, son of a canon of St. David's Cathedral, he travelled to Canada and the United States of America before arriving in Japan in 1890. He worked as a teacher of English and Latin in a number of schools throughout Japan, in particular at the Sixth Higher School in Okayama.

Gauntlett was introduced to Esperanto by a Canadian friend, Daniel McKenzie, who was working as a missionary in Kanazawa. McKenzie suggested that the two might study Esperanto, 'the new universal language', together during the summer of 1903, when Gauntlett was due to stay with him. Gauntlett recalled being sceptical:

That was the first time I had ever heard the word "Esperanto", and remembering that Volapük, another universal language had failed I wrote and told him that I thought Japanese was hard enough without going into a new language.⁴

However, when Gauntlett arrived in Kanazawa, McKenzie was temporarily engaged, so

⁴ Gauntlett (1906) p.2.

Gauntlett picked up the Esperanto textbook that McKenzie had purchased, seeking to pass the time. He swiftly became hooked.

Mindful of the failure of Volapük, Gauntlett was not an automatic believer in the power of a universal language and was wary of investing too much time in it. Comparing Esperanto's structure to an old Volapük textbook, however, reinforced his faith in Esperanto. Its simplicity stood in stark contrast to Volapük, whose inventor 'was evidently no linguist'. This simplicity, Esperanto's most powerful aspect, was deceptive:

At first, during the study of the language there is nothing specially interesting, but THE MORE YOU GO INTO IT THE MORE INTERESTING IT BECOMES AND THE MORE YOU ADMIRE IT.⁵

Gauntlett wrote his first letters in Esperanto within his first few days in Kanazawa; as mentioned in the introduction, by 1905/6 he estimated that he had received as many as 700 letters from perhaps 75 different nations. They covered commercial and academic matters in addition to the simple interest in corresponding with Esperantists based in Japan. Many of the letter writers mistook Gauntlett for a Japanese native.⁶

However, more significant than his correspondence was Gauntlett's work in spreading Esperanto within Japan. In 1905, he began a study group in Okayama including his wife, Tsuneko, brother-in-law Yamada Kōsaku (who became a famous Taishō-era composer) and others. Then he began a correspondence course which was taken by over 600 students across three intakes in 1905 and 1906.⁷ It was a collaborative affair – Edward Gauntlett writing the lessons, Tsuneko Gauntlett running off mimeographed copies, and

⁵ Gauntlett (1906) p.4, original emphasis.

⁶ Gauntlett (1906) p.9.

⁷ Regarding the number of Gauntlett's correspondence students, a figure of 677 is often quoted, although I have been unable to ascertain the original source for it. The introduction to Gauntlett (1906, p.1) claims he had taught 823 students.

other members of the Okayama study group helping out.⁸

The book from which Gauntlett learned Esperanto was a British one, *The Complete Student's Textbook*, by John Charles O'Connor. A number of other Japanese Esperantists also studied it as their first introduction to the language. For example, in 1903 Yoshino Sakuzō, the famous liberal academic, bought a copy. He had encountered Esperanto through a series of articles by the British journalist, William Stead, in the London *Review of Reviews*. Based upon these columns, Yoshino wrote an article of his own on Esperanto in the magazine *Shinjin*, published by the early Japanese Christian, Ebina Danjo.⁹

Other, more active members of the early Esperanto scene, such as Fukuda Kunitarō and Abiko Teijirō, also encountered Esperanto for the first time through the *Review of Reviews* articles. Abiko Teijirō worked at a publishing company and book importer, Yūrakusha. In 1906 they began to import copies of O'Connor's textbook. Katō Misao a young marine engineer in training, picked one up after he was introduced to Esperanto by a friend. Katō joined the British Esperanto Association from details in the textbook and then went about creating his own Japanese Esperanto organisation.¹⁰ His Nippon Esperanto Societo (NES) held its first meeting on the 20th of May 1906, in a nursery school in Yokosuka.¹¹ About 20 people attended, they held a formal opening ceremony, and then

8 Oka (1988) p.9-27.

9 'Esperanto to Watashi', Yoshino Sakuzō, originally published in *Kōgaku Yodan*, 1926, reprinted in *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936, p.21-22. Yoshino confessed that he was not very diligent in his studies, and soon gave up, although he later re-encountered the language during the Taishō era, when the student group, the Shinjinkai, with which he was associated, became interested in it.

The June 1936 issue of *La Revuo Orienta* celebrated 30 years of Japanese Esperanto activity with a series of personal memories from early Esperantists. Many of them are used in this chapter.

10 'Yokosuka ni Nihon Esuperanto Kyōkai wo Sōritsu shita Tōji no Omoide', Katō Misao, *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936, p.191-6.

11 Both the Nippon Esperanto Societo (NES) and the Tokyo based Japana Esperantista Asocio (JEA) discussed in section 2.2 took the Japanese name 日本エスペラント協会, Nihon Esuperanto Kyōkai. For ease

sang a translated version of the national anthem, with the wife of the school's owner playing the organ.¹²

The NES was eclipsed in June 1906, a month after it was created, by the formation of the better connected JEA, which was based in Tokyo. When Katō became aware of the JEA, he rapidly got in touch with its founder, Kuroita Katsumi, and, whether due to deference to Kuroita's status as an academic at the Imperial University, or for some other reason, showed a notable lack of preciousness about his own group's primacy, arranging for it to take the new name Nihon Esuperanto Kyōkai – Yokosuka shibu (the Yokosuka branch of the JEA). As it happened, this auxiliary status did not last long, and the NES/ Yokosuka branch folded into the main JEA in the spring of 1907.

Route Two: the French Route

Edward Gauntlett encountered Esperanto in 1903, and began the process of teaching it and introducing it more widely from 1905. However, he was neither the only, nor the first foreign teacher to bring Esperanto to a Japanese audience. Kuroita Katsumi, the central individual behind the creation of the JEA, which was to be the the core body for organised Esperanto activity in Japan until the end of the First World War, was introduced to Esperanto through the work of a different European teacher, Alphonse Mistler, based in Nagasaki.

There are suggestions that French Catholic missionaries in Nagasaki studied

of comprehension, this text uses the parallel Esperanto names the two groups adopted. In fact, according to one account, the NES was apparently not the even first to use the name Nihon Esuperanto Kyōkai – Abiko Teijirō having created a short-lived group in 1905 (JEI 1956, p.8).

¹² *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936, p.193.

Esperanto in the late nineteenth century,¹³ but Mistler was not involved with Esperanto until 1902. Mistler was a science teacher who had been in Nagasaki since 1893, ultimately leaving Japan in 1933. His brother, Jean, was an active Esperantist; through him, Alphonse came in contact with Ludwig Zamenhof and Esperanto. Mistler began to introduce Esperanto to some of the students at the Nagasaki middle school at which he taught. In total he had approximately sixty students; he also wrote a profile of the language for the English language magazine, *The Nagasaki Press*, also in 1902.

The article caught the attention of Kuroita Katsumi, a young lecturer in classical literature at the Imperial University in Tokyo. The following year, he obtained a copy of Zamenhof's *Ekzercaro de la lingvo internacia Esperanto* (one of the first Esperanto textbooks, often known just as the *Ekzercaro*) and began to study the language. It took a couple of years of study before Kuroita began to seek to promote Esperanto. His first such effort took the form of an interview which the socialist Sakai Toshihiko turned into an article in *Chokugen*, the successor magazine to the newspaper, the *Heimin Shinbun*, in 1905; the following year, the *Yomiuri Shinbun* ran a two part article on Kuroita and Esperanto.¹⁴ There were slight errors in the details of both Esperanto's history and grammar in these articles, which serve to highlight the extent to which Esperanto was still largely unknown in Japan.

Until these articles were published, Kuroita had been unaware that there were others who knew of, and were beginning to study, Esperanto. In the 1905 *Chokugen* article,

13 'Meiji Jidai Nagasaki de Esu-go wo Yatta Hito', Tomimatsu Masao, *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936, also see JEI (1956, p.7), although the source for this is likely Tomimatsu.

14 *Chokugen*, 19th March 1905, see Rōdō Undō-shi Kenkyū-kai (1960) p.51; *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 17th May 1906.

Sakai wrote (based on what Kuroita had told him) that Kuroita and Mistler 'and perhaps one or two others' were the only Esperantists active in Japan. However, these articles helped to bring together some of those hitherto isolated individuals who had been studying the language – for example Abiko Teijirō, who had been importing and selling O'Connor's Esperanto textbook on behalf of the publishing firm, Yūrakusha, as mentioned above, and Muramoto Tatsuzō, a member of Gauntlett's study group in Okayama, who both got in touch with Kuroita.¹⁵

On the 12th of June 1906, three weeks after Katō Misao had founded the NES, Kuroita Katsumi, together with Abiko and the *Yomiuri Shinbun* journalist Usui Hidekazu, still unaware of the creation of the Yokosuka group, founded the Japana Esperantisto Asocio (the JEA), holding a first meeting in Kanda. There were 10 people present for the first meeting, the others being a mostly journalists and teachers. They set the membership dues at one yen per year and resolved to meet on a monthly basis. The creation was reported in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* (on the 10th and 27th of June) and the *Asahi Shinbun* (the 26th of June) which helped the distinct pockets of Esperanto activity to coalesce still further, as well as attracting new people to investigate the language. The second meeting, on the 12th of July, was attended by Katō Misao from the NES, Ōsugi Sakae, and others. The *Yomiuri Shinbun* continued to report on Esperanto events and activity throughout the subsequent months of 1906 and 1907. Organised Esperanto activity in Japan had begun.

15 Muramoto worked in his family printing firm, which did a moderate amount of *Romaji* based business with the foreign residents of Okayama. In March 1906 he brought out one of the first Japanese domestic Esperanto publications – an English-Esperanto dictionary designed to support Gauntlett's correspondence course (Oka 1988, p.18-22).

Route Three: the Russian Route

In seeking to recruit new members and new students of the language, the newly formed Japanese Esperanto groups had one key requirement: the need for appropriate tools for Japanese students to learn the language. Gauntlett's course was based in English, and the other Japanese Esperantists had learned the language through European language textbooks, but there was as yet nothing available in Japanese. Consequently, the new Esperantists worked to fill the gap: the first Japanese language Esperanto textbooks were published in 1906 by Edward Gauntlett (in July, together with Maruyama Juntarō) and Katō Misao (in September);¹⁶ two Japanese-Esperanto dictionaries were released in October, one written by Kuroita Katsumi.¹⁷

However, the best known and most successful textbook published in the foundational years of the Japanese Esperanto community was released by someone from outside the burgeoning community: Futabatei Shimei, the well known author and translator. Futabatei's textbook, *Sekaigo Esuperanto* was published in July 1906, based upon a Russian text. The title describes Esperanto as a *sekaigo* (世界語) a 'world language'. This name persisted over time, although *kokusaigo* (国際語, 'international language') tended to be more widespread. The textbook was immediately popular and brought a yet greater audience to the study of Esperanto. Futabatei followed it up with a translation of Zamenhof's *Ekzercaro*, titled *Sekaigo Dokuhon*.¹⁸ In comparison with the other textbooks,

16 Both of these are available in digital format from the National Diet Library. See details in the bibliography: Gauntlett & Maruyama (1906) and Katō (1906).

17 The given authors of the book, *Esperanto-Japana Vortaro*, were Kuroita, Asada Eiji and Abiko Teijirō, but it is suggested that Kuroita completed the project more or less single handedly in a week-long holiday in Hakone (*La Revuo Orienta*, March 1947).

18 For details of both books, see bibliography entry for Futabatei (1906b).

rushed to print on as short a time-line as possible, Futabatei's *Sekaigo* had a longer and more involved gestation.

Futabatei's chief interest was in Russian literature. In 1902 he resigned from a post in the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages and travelled to Vladivostok and Harbin, to experience Russian society first hand. In Vladivostok he became friends with the then president of the Vladivostok Esperanto Society, Fjodor Postnikov. Postnikov was an early Russian Esperantist – he had served as the third president of the earliest Russian Esperanto Association, *Espero*, prior to moving east.¹⁹

Futabatei and Postnikov hit it off well. It is clear that the two had much to gain from one another – Futabatei had found someone from whom to learn more about modern Russian society, and Postnikov had found the perfect candidate to help introduce Esperanto to Japan. This was a priority for Postnikov: prior to his relocation to Vladivostok, he had met with Zamenhof, who pressed upon him the need to help Esperanto's spread in Asia, to make it more truly a world language. In a later interview he mentioned that he had even made a visit to Japan: to Nagasaki in 1894, where he left some European language pamphlets about Esperanto with local residents, without any lasting success.²⁰ So Futabatei, a Russian speaker and member of the *literati*, represented a new opportunity for Postnikov to help Esperanto reach Japan. Introduced to Postnikov by a mutual acquaintance, Futabatei attended the Vladivostok Esperanto club a number of times and went so far as to join it. Postnikov personally taught Futabatei the basics of Esperanto and

19 Fujima (1978) p.40.

20 'Futabatei to Esuperanto', Itō (1974) p.251.

Futabatei agreed to work on a Japanese translation of the Russian Esperanto textbook.²¹

After less than a month in Vladivostok, Futabatei went on to Harbin for a further three months, before returning to Japan via Beijing, apparently thinking no more about Esperanto. Much to his surprise, whilst in Beijing Futabatei received a letter from a French Esperantist; he later received a second letter once he was back in Tokyo, this time from Mexico. Both letters inquired after Esperanto's presence in Japan. They served to open Futabatei's eyes to the growing international spread of Esperanto. He replied, composing his first, and apparently only, letters in Esperanto.²²

After parting company with Futabatei, Postnikov had contacted Zamenhof, confident that his goal of introducing Esperanto to an east Asian audience was going to be successful. Zamenhof in turn included the presumed-to-be-forthcoming Japanese textbook in a 1903 list of Esperantists and Esperanto publications with Futabatei's name recorded next to it.²³ The message that Esperanto was in the process of expanding into Japan spread amongst the existing Esperanto community worldwide, explaining the source of Futabatei's letters. But the textbook was still three years from its eventual publication.

In late 1903, Postnikov visited Tokyo on his return from a trip to America. There he found Futabatei 'sitting on a floor spread with tatami, translating the Russian-Esperanto textbook into Japanese; [they] consulted in depth on how to publish it in a format suitable for Japanese people'.²⁴ Postnikov agreed to fund the costs of publishing Futabatei's work, leaving him \$50.

21 Fujima (1978) p.43.

22 Futabatei (1906a).

23 Itō (1974) p.253.

24 Fujima (1978) p.45.

Unfortunately, the Russo-Japanese war then intervened, giving Futabatei more urgent journalistic work, so that by the time he eventually managed to get the full translation completed and published, in July 1906, both the Yokosuka and Tokyo Esperanto associations had been founded. It proved a huge success. In addition to his subsequent translation of Zamenhof's *Ekzercaro*, he also wrote articles for *Jogaku Sekai*, *Gakusei Taimuzu*, and *Seikō* in September and October 1906, increasing yet further Esperanto's public profile.

However, despite going to the effort of writing these articles promoting the language, the extent of Futabatei's engagement with Esperanto seems to have ended once his obligation to Postnikov was paid. On the title pages of *Sekaigo*, he gave his credentials as 'member of the Vladivostok Esperanto Club', but besides the letters he wrote in 1903, he seems to have spent little time studying the language. Once the books were published and his debt to Postnikov paid, he put Esperanto aside. So cleanly did he cut his contacts with the burgeoning movement that he even went so far as to pretend to be out when Esperantists (including Gauntlett) visited him.²⁵

The three routes described above, and the individuals most fundamental to them – Edward Gauntlett, Katō Misao, Alphonse Mistler, Kuroita Katsumi, and Futabatei Shimei – played the most important roles in the emergence of the Japanese Esperanto movement in 1906. It is key, however, to recognise that these were not the only ways in which Japanese citizens and society came into contact with Esperanto. If we are seeking to identify distinct entry points for Esperanto into Japan, then Gauntlett and his students,

25 Fujima (1978) p.50.

and those individuals who encountered Esperanto through the London *Review of Reviews*, such as Yoshino Sakuzō, though they all used O'Connor's textbook, cannot really be seen as the same route of introduction. But even beyond that there were others whose introduction to Esperanto came at a similar time to the three major routes, but in a different place or way.

In addition to Yoshino and the other readers of the *Review of Reviews*, there was Oka Asajirō, who was likely the first Japanese to study Esperanto (see below); Nakanome Akira, who discovered Esperanto whilst in Hungary; Sasaki Tadasu in Sacramento; Higuchi Kentarō in France; Akino Matsukichi in Vladivostok; and Takahashi Kunitarō and Shimose Kentarō (separately) in Manchuria.²⁶ The diversity and number of these separate encounters reveals the ever growing scope and range of Japanese society's networks of intercourse with the wider world, and the growing profile that Esperanto had in the early twentieth century.²⁷ Moreover, each of these points of international contact represents an example of where the appeal of an international language might be keenly felt.

The problem of language was by no means a new one to the Japanese of the early twentieth century. But the importance of scale in these transnational networks, both for transporting Esperanto to Japan and for establishing an embryonic Esperanto community in Japan can be seen, along with the importance of the timing of Esperanto's arrival, by contrasting the Esperanto related events of 1906 with those of another world language, another *Sekai-go*: Volapük, and its introduction to Japan, in 1888-89.

²⁶ Various essays from *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936.

²⁷ Another intriguing early link between Esperanto and Japan came in the person of Richard Geoghegan. The Irishman Geoghegan was an early Esperantist who produced the first English texts on the language by a native English speaker. He subsequently moved to Seattle, where he worked for the Japanese consulate for some time roughly between 1893 and 1900, reputedly visiting Japan during this time (JEI 1956, p.6).

Volapük: the First *Sekaigo*

As mentioned in the introduction, Volapük was a forerunner of Esperanto, its immediate predecessor as heir presumptive to the proposed role of international auxiliary language. A German priest, Johann Martin Schleyer, created and published Volapük in 1880. During the subsequent decade, it gathered a community of speakers in Europe, spreading beyond Germany, most notably to France. There were numerous Volapük clubs, a range of publications and three congresses were organised, in 1884, 1887, and 1889, the last reportedly conducted solely in Volapük. However, this last congress marked the effective peak of the language's spread, as it revealed the cracks forming in the community of Volapük speakers. Schleyer wanted to retain a veto on all proposed changes to the language; denied this he boycotted the congress. Marred by internal fallings-out regarding potential changes to grammar and structure, the 1890s were a period of self destructive argument, causing a decline in the language's popularity. Although a small community of Volapük speakers continued into the twentieth century, by 1900 it had decisively been replaced by Esperanto as the leading candidate for widespread adoption.²⁸

Volapük's introduction to Japan came just as the language's popularity was at its peak. This is no coincidence, since a high level of activity in Europe was a strong selling point for Volapük (and later also for Esperanto) in Japan, as well as making higher the likelihood of it coming to the attention of a Japanese audience. The first article mentioning Volapük in Japan was written by Katō Hiroyuki as early as 1886. Katō was a leading player in the introduction of European political innovations to Meiji Japan; his article on the new language was published in the second issue of a new English language magazine *The*

²⁸ Forster (1982) p.46-47.

Student.²⁹ However, there was little reaction to either this article or another the following year (in the wake of the second Volapük congress), this time printed in the *Japan Gazette*, a Yokohama-based English language journal.³⁰

However, around the same time a Dutch doctor, Willem van der Heyden, also based in Yokohama, became interested in Volapük. It was through him that the language really began to receive exposure to a wider audience in Japan. As a result of his efforts, the *Yomiuri Shinbun* ran an article introducing the language on 30th December 1887, and announced that a series of pull-outs covering the basic grammar and vocabulary would be published in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* in the new year. Between January and April 1888, these inserts built up to form an introductory textbook. They were supported by a series of articles on debates both for and against Volapük.³¹ Then, in 1889, van der Heyden, together with a colleague, Sasaki Hayato, published a *Sekaigo*-Japanese dictionary, *Wayaku Sekaigo Jirin*, to help Japanese students learn the language.³²

Despite the hard sell, what is most notable about Volapük's introduction to Japan is the apparent total failure of the language to get off the ground. There were a few scattered individuals who began to study it but, despite calls in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* for the establishment of a Japanese Volapük association, including a letter from Tanaka Chigaku, the head of the Rissho-Ankokukai,³³ this seems to never have come to pass. After the flurry of promotion over the first year, Volapük seems to have died away in Japan.

29 JEI (1956) p.3.

30 Fujima (1978) p.27.

31 There were at least 40 articles and grammar inserts in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* between the first mention in December 1887 and December 1888.

32 Heyden & Sasaki (1889).

33 立正安国会, this was the forerunner of the Kokuchukai, 国柱会, also led by Tanaka Chigaku, which was a prominent nationalist-Buddhist organisation in the early Shōwa period.

It is possible to trace connections from Volapük's *Sekaigo* moment to Esperanto's. The first mentions of Esperanto in Japan came during the introduction of Volapük in 1888. A brief article in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* was somewhat dismissive of Esperanto in comparison to Volapük: 'to invent is hard, to copy is easy; to invent is lasting, to copy is generally not'.³⁴ Indeed, whilst a later article noted that Esperanto was the leading alternative to Volapük, superior to others such as Soresol, Nal Bino and Pasingua, it was even more dismissive of the idea of alternatives to Volapük, rather sniffily remarking that:

'It [Esperanto] is easy to learn for European scholars only, it is not suitable for all the people of the world, therefore to make a fourth new language after Schleyer's *Sekaigo* [i.e. the three named above, plus Esperanto] is really wasted effort; to create a new language coming after Volapük has already spread throughout Europe and elsewhere, with the publication of newspapers and the formation of clubs, is in short, a waste of time and effort.'³⁵

However, the most direct connection between Volapük's introduction to Japan and the later rise of Esperanto was a number of individuals whose interest in Volapük in 1888-9 later led them to become early members of the Japanese Esperanto community. These included Takusari Kōki, a pioneer of shorthand in Japan and one of the earliest Esperantists to promote the language in Tōhoku, and Shimose Kentarō, a military doctor whose experience in international military negotiations motivated his interest in solutions to the international language issue.³⁶

The most prominent Volapükist-turned-Esperantist, indeed, the earliest Japanese student of Esperanto of all, was Oka Asajirō, a biologist. Oka went on to be best known for his works popularising Darwinian evolution and natural selection, but like all scientists

34 *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 19th February 1888.

35 *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 2nd May 1888.

36 'Meiji 25nen Esugo ni tsuite kiku', Shimose Kentarō; 'Vorapyūku yori Esuperanto made', Takusari Kōki, both in *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936.

and scholars of western subjects of his generation, he was, perforce, also a linguist. Oka, however, was far from a reluctant language student, learning several during his studies. He took up Volapük in 1888-9 with a similar positivity but, put off by what he perceived as some weaknesses in its structure, he gave up, preferring to work on his own language, Zilengo, as mentioned in the introduction. This was completed in 1890; in 1891 he left Japan to study in Germany. It was there, whilst looking for a textbook on Swedish (a measure of the degree to which his interest in languages went beyond the likes of English, French, and German) that Oka discovered Esperanto for the first time. However, as with Volapük before it, Oka perceived some flaws in Esperanto which prevented him from committing to it seriously until he became aware of the fledgling Japanese Esperanto movement fifteen years later.³⁷

These connections trace a link between Volapük's introduction to Japan and Esperanto's, but there were also remarkable similarities between the *Sekaigo* moment of 1888-9 and that of 1905-6. Both languages received the active support of the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, both involved a foreigner resident in Japan in a leading role, and both occurred to the background of a booming European scene. Indeed, there are also strong similarities in the ways in which the two languages were presented and motivated.

For all that much of Japanese society had changed between 1888 and 1906, the problems involved in engaging with the wider world remained tediously the same, in particular the problem of language. As the following two quotes show, the primary appeal

³⁷ 'Kokusaigo Zilengo no Chosha, Oka Asajirō hakase ni kiku', *La Revuo Orienta*, April 1940, p.142-4; 'Antaŭ Kvindek Jaroj/Ante Kinkdek ano', *La Revuo Orienta*, March 1941, p.84-89. Oka's interest in international languages made him one of very few Japanese to also take up such other rivals to Esperanto as Ido and Idiom Neutral (*La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936, p.202-3).

of a planned language was as a functional solution to a problem that was emerging in an era of expanding globalisation. Van der Heyden writing in 1888:

In recent times the association between all the nations grows by month and by year, and thus those who would engage in the least exchange between the members of other nations must learn one or two, or even four or five languages; for those who study, in politics or in trade, the inconvenience is not inconsiderable.³⁸

and Sakai Toshihiko/Kuroita Katsumi in 1905:

As world intercourse becomes more incessant with every day, so do the differences between the languages of all the nations make inconvenience and disagreeableness more and more keenly felt...It has been a yearning in the hearts of many how convenient, how agreeable it would be were peoples throughout the world to use the same language. In short, the idea of *Sekaigo* has come to pass.³⁹

Setting a single standard language of international communication was of obvious advantage to the Japanese engaging with the wealth of European ideas and thus faced with a multitude of different languages of potential importance. But Tani Shintarō, who wrote the majority of the *Yomiuri Shinbun's* articles on Volapük, argued that it would be of great advantage to all the peoples of the world. Though he had initially suggested merely that Volapük might provide a replacement for the pidgins used in Asian ports, it rapidly became clear that Volapük's bid to become an international language was not a challenge to minor trade slang, but rather to the major European languages, most particularly English.⁴⁰

Faced with the suggestion that 'English, which has emerged victorious from contact with other national languages' was the *de facto* international language, and no alternative

38 *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 3rd January 1888.

39 *Chokugen*, 19th March 1905, see Rōdō Undō-shi Kenkyū-kai (1960).

40 *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 30th December 1887. In particular, he mentioned Yokohama's '*Pekesaranpan*'. This is presumably what is usually referred to as either Yokohama Language/Yokohama-Kotoba, or Yokohama Pidgin Japanese (see Daniels 1948). It was documented by Hoffmann Atkinson in 1879 in a work entitled *Exercises in the Yokohama Dialect*.

was needed, Tani modified his claim regarding the advantages that would accrue to the nations of the world given the adoption of Volapük.⁴¹ It would, he acknowledged, involve some short term inconvenience – the necessity for everyone, even those who already spoke several languages, to study Volapük – however he suggested that this was a small short term concession in the name of longer term progress.

Not only would no nation accept the choice of another nation's language as international language, Volapük anyway represented a superior long term choice, because of its ease of study. Progress in Volapük could be measured in months, rather than years of studying English. To forego the benefits of Volapük because of the presence of English was therefore akin to refusing to invest in the railways because of the existence of the roads.⁴²

In 1905-6, the early Esperantists, too, drew the parallel between their *Sekai-go* and the developments of modern technology. Katō Misao called it a 'new practical language of twentieth century reason',⁴³ whilst Higuchi Kanjirō suggested that, in a world with remarkable resonances to the contemporary process of globalisation, language remained a key barrier:

Now, the uncanny power of steam and the superhuman power of electricity have made the globe small and brought all the nations close; in the number of days it would have taken to travel from the north of Japan to the south 30 years ago, one can now go to any of the nations of the world, a 10 sen stamp is enough to communicate with all of the civilised nations and a few hours is enough to make contact by telegraph further than 1000 ri. Moreover, in recent years more telephone lines have been laid, and we are reaching an era in which radio communications will be of even more practical use. However, because the language of each country is different, there

41 *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 24th February 1888. The quote came from a letter to the (London) Times from a Charles Jonas of Prague.

42 *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 18th February 1888.

43 Katō (1906) Introduction.

are many cases where new cultural conveniences cannot be made use of.⁴⁴

The comparison of international language to the modern developments of the rail-road and the telegraph remained, for example arising again in the 1920s in the writing of Sasaki Kizen (discussed in chapter four). Whilst Esperantists also placed the language within a historical tradition of language creation dating back to the philosophical languages of Leibnitz and Wilkins, presenting it as an incremental development rather than a disruptive discontinuity, nevertheless it was fundamentally a modern phenomenon, to be compared to the railway and the telegraph in its power to enable communications.⁴⁵

Indeed, these comparisons to modern technology reveal something of the way in which Esperanto was perceived: in effect, as presented in 1905-6, it was a form of modern technology itself. That is to say, it was as a narrow solution to an emergent linguistic problem, a modern solution to a modern problem but one that appears to not have been motivated with any wider political or moral meaning. This is noteworthy both in relation to the subsequent history of Esperanto in Japan and internationally. The rise of Esperanto in Japan coincided with the first European Esperanto congress, in 1905 in Boulogne-sur-Mer. As mentioned in the introduction, the congress saw a fierce debate as to the appropriate understanding of Esperantism, the underlying philosophy of Esperanto. The idealistic forms of Esperanto of Ludwig Zamenhof and others were rejected by the majority, in favour of explicit neutrality.⁴⁶

44 Higuchi (1904) p.327.

45 For example, Rōdōundō-shi Kenkyū-kai (1960) p.51, Higuchi (1904) p.326. Futabatei Shimei also made reference to the pre-Esperanto history of planned languages in his article in *Fujin Sekai* (1906a), whilst Kuroita placed planned languages within a history of general language development ('*Sekaigo*', *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 16th-17th May 1906), and Higuchi (1904, p.317-335, p.333) drew upon the history of national language creation, in particular the case of Norwegian.

46 Deklaracio Bolonja, <http://en.hades-presse.com/languages/declaration-boulogne.shtml> (accessed July

Intense debates along similar lines to that of the European debates would be fought in Japan in subsequent years, but in 1905-6, whilst the basic grounds for these debates were being settled in Europe, they appear to have been largely absent amongst the activities of the first Japanese Esperantists. In later years, many Japanese Esperantists motivated their language along moral and idealistic terms, arguing for linguistic fairness and equality, or with a vision of world peace. However, in the first wave of Japanese Esperanto, arguments focused on the pragmatism of a simpler, more regular language as a tool for practical use.

This formulation of Esperanto as apolitical technology was what Fred Halliday referred to as the analytic side to internationalism: a 'sober, non-utopian internationalism' which recognised the growing interdependence of modern world society.⁴⁷ These first articulations of the early Japanese Esperantists (as well as that of the Volapük advocates before them) were essentially descriptive, or what I would describe as presumptive forms of internationalism – the international community or society to which they made call was a current society, rather than some imagined future.

If one *Sekaigo* were to find long term support in Japan, it is not surprising that it should be Esperanto and not Volapük – it would be odd indeed were the majority of Japan's international language movement to persist with Volapük in the face of the global preference for Esperanto, not least because the major criterion for the success of a international language is less some external measure of its perfection as a language than its realisation in a network of actual usage. However, this does not explain why, in the

2013).

47 Halliday (1988), p.187, p.190.

much shorter term, where Esperanto did get started within the first year or two of its discussion in the mainstream national press – groups did form, and an organisational base was established from which further growth could develop – Volapük's introduction to a Japanese audience met with little to no enthusiasm and too few interested individuals to give rise to any broader movement. Despite the similarities in the ways in which the two *Sekaigo* were promoted and conceptualised, and the unchanging nature of the problem of language in engaging with the wider world, the timing of the two events was markedly different and it was this domestic context which led to the dramatic differences in the size and scope of the two *Sekaigo* moments.

My interpretation would be that the vast difference between the reception that the two languages received in Japan was due to two factors, one tangible, the other less so. The first factor was the expansion of the overall level of international activity in Japan. Although the 'opening' of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century had led to a rapid expansion in interest in the world beyond Japan's borders, the period between the two *Sekaigo* moments only saw further growth, and whilst the run up to the Sino-Japanese war may have seen a resurgence in national pride,⁴⁸ this by no means obviated the need to access overseas technology and knowledge.

In a sense, Volapük's failure in Japan laid the path for Esperanto's success. In addition to individuals, such as those mentioned above, who went to the effort of learning Volapük, there was a wider range of others, such as Edward Gauntlett, who were made

48 See Pyle (1969), for example p.188:

'Somewhere in the terrain of the late 1880s and early 1890s there lies a major watershed... On the other side [of the watershed, i.e. the 1890s] lies a Japan with a renewed sense of order and discipline... a self-esteeming Japan, advertising her independence and destiny; above all a Japan with a heightened sense of her own unity and exclusiveness.'

aware of the idea of an international language by Volapük, and so were relatively more open to the concept in advance of Esperanto's spread.

Burgeoning networks of transnational contact not only enabled Esperanto to enter Japan in more and different ways, they also helped establish a deeper population who could directly perceive the advantages of an international language, in perhaps unexpected fields. In promoting Volapük in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* in 1888, Tani's analysis of the uses to which an international language could be put stressed principally trade and diplomacy, with religious missions, the arts, and finally scholarship as a second tier.⁴⁹ However, when Esperanto took off in 1906, this ordering was almost exactly reversed. It was amongst scholars and writers that Esperanto most immediately took hold, religion and diplomacy were of secondary significance, and examples of Esperanto furthering trade are relatively scarce.

The second factor was a significant change in Japan's self-image of its position in the world and the international sphere in the period between the introduction of Volapük and the creation of the Japanese Esperanto movement. During the late 1880s, Japan's relations with the west were characterised by unsuccessful efforts to revise the 'unequal treaties'. Japan remained very much intellectually and culturally, as well as diplomatically, subordinate to the western nations.

By contrast, in 1906, Japan's position in the international sphere was much stronger. Victory in the Russo-Japanese war, despite its 'high costs and the precariousness of the

⁴⁹ *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 15th, 16th, 18th February 1888.

victory',⁵⁰ marked a symbolic point in Japan's rebirth as a modern nation-state and its ascent to equality within international relations. It was the culmination of the Meiji project of establishing and securing Japanese national sovereignty. The period between 1890 and 1906 saw two military victories, including one over a European power, as well as recognition of the Japanese rise through the dismantling of the 'unequal treaties' and the signing of the Anglo-Japanese treaty of 1902.

Whilst the period from the late 1880s may have seen a rise in nationalism within Japan as Pyle (1969) suggests, I would suggest that the solidification of Japanese sovereignty and the (at least partial) escape from hierarchical relationships with the west also allowed the rise of ideas of internationalism within Japan, through a re-imagining of the world and of Japan's position within it.

In the 1890s, Saionji Kinmochi, who was twice Education Minister during the decade, sought to reframe the education system along more international lines, arguing for a '*Sekai no Nihon*' (Japan of the world), and publishing a magazine of the same title.⁵¹ Likewise, Katō Misao wrote in the introduction to his Esperanto textbook that:

Our people who, having won the laurel crown of victory [in the Russo-Japanese war], should launch out into the world, have a duty to take the lead amongst the great powers, and research and use this [Esperanto].⁵²

Japan's ascendancy to a position as a civilised nation, even one of the great powers, meant that Japan now could and should play a role in the creation and steering of the international world and its intellectual currents, of developing the new ideas rather than simply adopting them.

50 Wells & Wilson (1999) p.19.

51 Lincicome (2009) p.19.

52 Katō (1906) Introduction.

This was also the period in which both Okakura Tenshin's *Book of Tea* and Nitobe Inazō's *Bushido: the Soul of Japan* were first published. Whilst these were articulations of Asian and Japanese values, they were both written for a foreign audience – to articulate these values to the wider world; thus we can see them within the same urge as the rise of Esperanto – the desire to engage with the wider world and to contribute to the development of a plural world culture. The *Yomiuri Shinbun* pointed out that, its European origins notwithstanding, Esperanto's flexible grammar (most obviously the lack of a pre-determined order of subject, object, and verb) meant that through it the nations of the world met on equal terms – 'English people can use an English style, French people a French style and Japanese a Japanese style'.⁵³

Linguistically, this represented a shift from a Japan which was obliged to learn and to interact in the European languages to a world in which all nations, Japanese and European alike, learned Esperanto in order to trade and to exchange knowledge. This would not only simplify the Japanese position, it would also impose something of a burden upon the western nations – the need for them too to change their language teaching and policies – and thus I believe that it was only in a more confident Japan, out of the shadow of the unequal treaties and threatened national sovereignty, that ideas of the international world as one of collaboration and cooperation featuring a linguistic burden more equally distributed might flower and find a following. In this way, it was the very rise of the Japanese nation which allowed the rise of internationalism within it.

⁵³ *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 20th July 1906.

The Early Japanese Esperanto Community

Supported by richer and more complex networks of connection to the west than ever before, and reaching a critical mass at a moment of unique significance for Japan's self image in relation to the wider world, Esperanto's introduction succeeded on a scale that dwarfed the brief Volapük moment of 1889.

The organisations and resources that were created from 1905-6 onwards established a community of Esperantists who sought to spread the language more widely across Japan. After the first meetings were reported in the press, the newly formed JEA established an office in the buildings of the publishing company Yūrakusha. As mentioned above, this firm was the workplace of Abiko Teijirō, one of the founders of the JEA, and had also imported copies of O'Connor's English language Esperanto textbook. In 1906 it published Edward Gauntlett and Maruyama Juntarō's textbook for Japanese Esperanto students, *Sekaigo: Esuperanto*. 1906 and 1907 saw the creation of branches of the JEA in Yokohama & Yokosuka (1906) and then Osaka, Kyoto and Okayama (1907). A study group was founded in Nara, and a summer school took place in Hakodate in 1907, attended by 22 people.⁵⁴ The *Asahi Shinbun* described Esperanto, along with *Naniwabushi*, a form of folk song, as the two *Ōzeki* of 1906's fashions.⁵⁵

In addition to regular monthly meetings, the typical activities of the new Esperanto community involved promotional lectures. Driven by the fervour which typified the first

⁵⁴ Hatsushiba (1998) p.22-3.

⁵⁵ *Asahi Shinbun*, 2nd October 1906. *Ōzeki* being the name of the (then) top rank in Sumo wrestling. This quote has occasionally been ascribed to the long running column 'Tensei Jingo', but in fact came from another column with similar content, 'Kanjimoku' (閑耳目), by Shibukawa Genji. This column is also available in collected form in the National Diet Library digital collection: <http://porta.ndl.go.jp/Result/R000000008/I000107686>.

couple of years of organised Esperanto in Japan, these attracted audiences in the hundreds – for example, 190 people who attended a short course in Esperanto run by Gauntlett between the 30th July and mid August at the Eigakkai Kaikan in Kanda, 300 people who attended a public meeting on the 13th August in the Hitotsubashi Kyōiku Kaikan and another 200 who listened to Asada Eiji speak at the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages.⁵⁶

Membership of the JEA reached some 780 over the course of its first year.⁵⁷ The early Esperanto community in Japan was a general mix of students, scholars in various fields, educators, journalists, engineers, scientists, a few foreign residents in Japan, and others. One group which represented, par excellence, the newly emergent awareness of the wider world and Japan's relations to it, and who were early adopters of Esperanto, were the first Japanese socialists. Tracing many roots to the freedom and people's rights movement of the early/mid Meiji period, the first Japanese socialist party was formed in 1901 and, on the same day, banned by the state. Following this, socialist organisations emerged from a series of study groups aimed at exploring the suitability for Japan of various western ideas of socialism and social democracy, and faced regular harassment and interference from the police and government.

The Russo-Japanese war was a seminal moment for the fledgling Japanese socialists, placing many of the members of these groups in direct opposition to the state and the war effort. The Heiminsha, publisher of the *Heimin Shinbun*, was formed by two journalists on the eve of the war, Sakai Toshihiko and Kōtoku Shūsui, when the paper they had worked for to date, the *Yorozu Chōhō*, abandoned its editorial position opposing military

56 JEI (1956) p.11.

57 Hatsushiba (1998) p.23.

engagement. In March 1904, the *Heimin Shinbun* published an open letter to their Russian counterparts expressing sympathy for the peoples of both nations as, for socialists, 'there are no boundaries, race country or nationality'.⁵⁸ The Russian magazine, *Iskra*, published a reply; this exchange at a time of war was heralded by other socialists from other nations.

Sakai Toshihiko's interview with Kuroita Katsumi ran in the magazine *Chokugen*, which replaced the *Heimin Shinbun* when the latter was banned. The interview was Sakai's first introduction to the language. However, as the other early Esperantists in Japan began to make connections with one another, the language quickly became very popular in socialist circles. The early socialist movement in Japan had an eclectic mix of influences, and Tolstoy's links to Esperanto were one notable attraction.⁵⁹ Many of the young socialists began learning it, and Sakai, writing of the era, later recalled that brief Esperanto conversations could often be heard whenever groups of socialists came together.⁶⁰

At around the same time, Sakai became friends with Bronisław Piłsudski. Piłsudski had been exiled to Sakhalin by the Russian state for his part in a plot to assassinate the Tsar in 1887; whilst there he conducted research on the Ainu, eventually marrying an Ainu woman. He spent a short time in Japan in the wake of the Russo-Japanese war, and according to Sakai was outspoken in his dislike of Esperanto, refusing to learn it.⁶¹ Possibly

58 Trans. from 'The socialists of Japan to the socialists of Russia', *Arena*, vol. 32 (1904), p.332, quoted in Kublin (1950) p.330.

59 The *Yomiuri Shinbun* ran a translation of an earlier letter Tolstoy had written some years previously in support of Esperanto (15th June, 1906). Moreover Sasaki Tadasu mentioned the links to Tolstoyanism as one of the aspects of the language which first intrigued him ('Omoidasu Hitobito', *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936, p.228).

60 'Esu-go to Watashi no Inroku', originally published in *Esperanto Bundai*, No.1, 1927. Reprinted in *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936 p.219-220. The conversation Sakai used to recall the period's Esperanto was: 'Ĉu vi havas monon?', 'Ne', ['Do you have any money?', 'No'].

61 *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936 p.220. Piłsudski and Futabatei Shimei also became friends – this may have had some impact upon Futabatei's lack of interest in Esperanto.

influenced by this, Sakai's personal engagement with Esperanto never progressed far, but other of the young socialists took it much further. Sasaki Matsue and her husband Tadasu, for example, sister and brother-in-law of Yamakawa Kikue, were life-long Esperantists. However, the most high profile early socialist-Esperantist, both in terms of his impact on the Japanese socialist movement as well as his engagement with Esperanto, was Ōsugi Sakae.

Ōsugi is often described as one of the founders of the Japanese Esperanto movement, but strictly speaking he was in prison at the time of the first JEA meeting, as result of the protests against fare increases on the Tokyo tram lines. Whilst the JEA was forming outside, within the prison Ōsugi was learning Esperanto, establishing a principle of *ichihan, ichigo* (一犯一語, 'one crime, one language'). As he later explained:

That is, for each crime, I would learn one foreign language. The first time in prison [1906] I did Esperanto. Next, at Sugamo, I did Italian. The second time in Sugamo, I chewed on a little German. The next time, from arrest, I carried on with German... From my experience to date, the basics take up the first three months, and by six months I can read well without a dictionary... It is my habit for the morning to be my language time.⁶²

Ōsugi wrote letters to many of his friends, often making reference to his progress in Esperanto, mentioning it featuring in his dreams, his preference for the Esperanto translation of Hamlet over the French, and making the most of his time. For example:

To start with, in the morning I read 'Feuerbach's 'On Religion' [*Das Wesen der Religion?*], and Albert's 'On Free Love' [*aruberu* - Joseph Albert?]. In the afternoon, I focus on Esperanto. Last month I only practised reading, but now I do half that, half writing. Diligently going through boring grammar exercises one by one is the sort of thing that if one were not in prison, one would not be able to do at all, I think.⁶³

He was released from prison in June 1906, and together with Sakai went to the July

62 Ōsugi (1964b) p.309.

63 Ōsugi (1964a) p.390.

meeting of the new JEA. From there, he participated enthusiastically in the development of the new organisation, including the part that he played in the first annual congress, as mentioned at the start of the chapter.

In September of 1906, Ōsugi founded an Esperanto night school. It was held in a primary school in the Hongō district of central Tokyo. Several other leading Esperantists attended the ceremonial opening of the first term, and some forty students of varying backgrounds took the course. There were five ninety minute classes a week, an intense course of study which only twelve students saw through to completion in December of the same year.⁶⁴ The school ran for a second term, this time in Kanda, starting the following January, but Ōsugi was back in prison later that year and a proposed third term saw far fewer sign-ups.⁶⁵

In 1908, in between two further spells in prison, Ōsugi introduced Esperanto to a group of Chinese students in Tokyo. This group, based around Liu Shiwei, his wife He Zhen and others, went on to be one of the sources of both Chinese Esperanto and anarchism (the other main one being a parallel group studying in Paris).⁶⁶ Sino-Japanese anarchist links ran throughout the Taishō period, helped by the mutual interest in Esperanto, which had both ideological and practical use. Ōsugi himself made ongoing use of Esperanto – he wrote some articles for the European Socialist Esperanto journal, *Internacia Socia Revuo*, as well as featuring Esperanto in several of his own magazines.⁶⁷

64 'Nihon de Saisho no Esuperanto-go Gakkō', Koyama Eigo, *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936.

65 JEI (1956) p.48.

66 Muller & Benton (2006a) p.47-48.

67 Letters from 1908 (*Internacia Socia Revuo*) and 1914 (*Heimin Shinbun*) available in Ōsugi (1964, vol.4) or in Miyamoto (1988, p.23-33).

Ōsugi used Esperanto as one tool for forging transnational connections between the fledgling socialist groups in Asia and Europe. However, it was potentially more. Whilst the socialists of Japan looked to Europe for ideas in much the same way as the other professions, and so had much the same desire to reduce the language barrier, they also were developing a critique of the nation-state which looked to transnational solidarity to resist a repeating cycle of national wars that they saw as axiomatic to the western international system. As mentioned above, the Russo-Japanese war was critical in the development of this line of thought, just as it was critical for the emergence of Esperanto in Japan. This coincidence is certainly thought provoking. If the dominant line of thinking within the early Esperanto community in Japan expressed the language as an apolitical form of technology, then the socialists represented one locus where more ideologically charged conceptions of the language could be found, blended with the sort of socialist internationalism that they were developing. Whilst the majority of the articulations of Esperanto, as presented here, represented the language as apolitical technology, the association of the radical thinkers such as Ōsugi, Fukuda Kunitarō (an Esperantist who helped to fund some of the early anarchists and who later appealed for Japanese Esperantists to 'cast off their neutrality')⁶⁸ or Kōtoku Shūsui, who asserted to the Tokyo based Chinese anarchists that an international language would come into being,⁶⁹ help to indicate the presence of a broader, more revolutionary imagination of Esperanto. These radical ideas, which represented one stream of Japanese Esperanto thinking, became more significant over time, most notably with the emergence of the proletarian Esperanto

68 Miyamoto & Oshima (1978) p.24-27.

69 Scalapino & Yu (1961) p.31, cited in Konishi (2013).

movement in the late 1920s, as explored in chapter five.

The rapid emergence and size of the Esperanto community in Japan in 1906 was a symbolic measure of the powerful appeal of the idea of an international language at that moment in Japanese history. By contrast to the Volapük moment of 1888-9, it is clear that the timing of Esperanto's introduction played a significant role in the welcome which it received within Japan. The enthusiasm for Esperanto within early twentieth century Japan reflected a new-found confidence in the Japanese position within the wider world and the role that Japan might take in participating in developing the intellectual and political currents of international culture.

Although the nature of the Japanese Esperanto community would change over time – becoming larger, more sophisticated, and more geographically distributed, as well as embracing a wider range of ideas of Esperanto's underlying meaning – several of the first individuals involved would remain significant figures within the movement for years to come. These included Kuroita Katsumi, the founder of the JEA and driving force behind the first generation of Japanese Esperanto, and Osaka Kenji, who was influential in the creation of the body which eventually replaced the JEA, the Japana Esperanto-Instituto (the JEI). Moreover, in the way that the early socialists, conservative academics such as Kuroita, and even the foreign minister Hayashi Tadasu came together in 1905/6, it can be seen that the political diversity which was to be a hallmark of the Japanese Esperanto community during the inter-war years was present from the very start.

2. The Rise of Esperantism

The boom of 1906 which marked the emergence of Esperanto into the Japanese public sphere was dramatic, but it was also somewhat short lived. The initial popularity of Esperanto persisted for a couple of years, but by 1908 it was beginning to wane. Although the JEA continued to exist and to hold regular meetings, membership fell, publication of the magazine *La Japana Esperantisto* was intermittent at best, and there was decline in overall levels of organised activity.

This lull was dramatically ended in the years following the end of the First World War, when a second great surge in Japanese Esperanto activity took place. Unlike the first generation of Japanese Esperanto, in which an initial boom was not sustained, this second wave of growth established a movement and a level of activity which persisted throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s.

However, whilst really rapid growth took place only after the end of the First World War, during the war years Japanese Esperanto had already begun to recover from its low point. Craig Calhoun has suggested that troughs in the cycles of activity in social movements are often where much of the groundwork is done, developing the ideas and the frameworks by which the next peaks are achieved.¹ Thus the mid to late 1910s were instrumental in shaping the forms of Japanese Esperanto which found such an enthusiastic following in the years after the war finally came to a close, and which determined the shape of the movement for the subsequent decade and beyond.

¹ Craig Calhoun, *Social Movements and Social Change*, LSE public lectures, 27th November 2012, available online at <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/publicEvents/events/2012/11/20121127t1830vOT.aspx> [accessed June 2013].

Both the practical and the intellectual sides developed during the early Taishō era. With Europe at war, Esperanto was present in the development of increasing networks of transnational activity across Asia, whilst the neutral Esperantism which had been characteristic of Esperanto in Japan in 1906 was gradually overshadowed by the rise of more overtly normative and idealistic forms, particularly those related to the *Interna Ideo*. These (often interconnected) changes reveal then how the Japanese Esperanto movement of the inter-war period differed from that of the first stage: larger, increasingly more internationally connected, and more engaged with an optimistic vision of a world transformed by language.

The Early Taishō Era Esperanto Community

Between 1908 and 1910, Kuroita Katsumi, the head of the JEA, was absent from Japan, travelling across Europe and America. Although in his absence there remained a number of eager and active Esperantists who in later years were to play significant roles in the movement's leadership, between 1908 and 1910 no one was successful in continuing to coordinate activity, and so organised Esperanto became much more sporadic.

Upon his return in 1910, Kuroita sought to reinvigorate the movement: meetings were held in Tokyo on a regular basis once again, he repaid accounts owed by the JEA, and he went on a promotional lecture tour of southern Honshu and Kyushu.² However, although Kuroita's return from study in Europe led to a resumption in the regular activities of the JEA, there was still no decisive increase in the number of its members.

The Yūrakusha printing company which had previously housed the JEA offices

² Hatsushiba (1998) p.29.

went bankrupt in 1910, so Kuroita established a new headquarters, renting a small building near Hibiya park. It held a meeting room and a library on the first floor and a mother and son working as housekeepers lived in the basement. Yamaga Taiji, a young printer and Esperantist who served as an unpaid secretary of the JEA, also stayed there, on the second floor.³

Other attendees at meetings in Tokyo in the early 1910s included Hayashi Tadasu, the ex-foreign minister who had been present at the first JEA congress in 1906, and who was the honorary chairman of the JEA until his death in 1913. Although he appears to have had a prolonged interest in the language, he confessed to spending too little time studying it to make significant progress.⁴ Another regular was Nakamura Kiyō, who was head of the Meteorological Office. Nakamura picked up Esperanto whilst in Paris in 1907. After an initial period of self study, he went on to become an active member, senior figure, and significant supporter of the Japanese Esperanto movement. He also introduced Esperanto to his scientific and meteorological co-workers, most notably Ōishi Wasaburō, who would later become the head of the JEA's successor, the Japana Esperanto-Instituto.

By 1915, the JEA offices had relocated once again, from Hibiya park to Kuroita's own house in Shibuya; Esperanto meetings were held in Ginza cafés and, through Nakamura Kiyō, in the Tokyo physics school. Beyond Tokyo, the presence of Esperanto was heavily reliant on motivated individual Esperantists to sustain a local club. There were noteworthy groups in places such as Hiroshima, Yokosuka, Okayama and

3 JEI (1956) p.18.

4 'Esuperanto Monogatari', *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 19th June 1910.

Kanazawa.⁵ One example is that of Kodama Shirō and the Taiwanese Esperanto movement. Kodama, a JEA member, moved to the Japanese colony in 1913. There he took out adverts and began to publish his own magazine, *Esperanta Libreto*. Using this he began to recruit new students, both from the native and the expatriate Japanese populations. He ran classes and even a correspondence course which attracted seventy subscribers. The authorities were reportedly somewhat dubious of the language especially given its popularity in Russia; however, Nakamura Kiyō, visiting Taiwan on professional business, helped to lend some credibility to the language and ensure the position of the fledgling Taiwanese Esperanto movement.⁶

Two noteworthy new faces in the Taishō Esperanto scene were those of Akita Ujaku, an aspiring playwright, and Vassily Eroshenko, a blind Russian. Akita Ujaku was born in Aomori prefecture in 1883, and moved to the capital in the early years of the twentieth century, graduating from Waseda University. He was involved in the Shingeki ('new theatre') movement and Waseda University literary circles. Although he was in Tokyo during 1906 and the first wave of vigorous Esperanto activity (and indeed he knew of the language through his school friend Narumi Yōkichi, as discussed in chapter four), he did not become involved personally at the time.⁷ The catalyst for Akita's engagement with Esperanto was his meeting with Vassily Eroshenko.

Eroshenko arrived in Japan in 1914. He was already an Esperantist, picking it up whilst in a blind school in Moscow. Eroshenko lived in Tokyo between 1914 and 1917, and

5 Hatsushiba (1998) p.34.

6 JEI (1956) p.22-23.

7 'Watashi no Seikatsu ni Yūki wo heta Esuperanto', Akita Ujaku, *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936 p.108-9.

then again between 1919 and 1921, in between travelling across other parts of Asia. Whilst in Japan, he was active across a number of different cultural spheres, not least of which was the Esperanto community.

When the two met in 1915, Akita was in a spiritual slump. Although he was established within the Tokyo literary scene, he was struggling to make ends meet, with a wife and two children to support. His introduction to Eroshenko had an immediate and profound influence on him, as he recalled in his postwar autobiography:

To talk of austerity – from March that year we lived for six months on almost no regular income. My two infants waited for me like fledglings waiting for their parents to return carrying food in their mouths... Perhaps, at that time had not two or three friends not encouraged me, and given a boost to my living, I might even have found occasion to commit suicide...

...At a time when I was absolutely despairing of life, becoming extremely nihilistic, I came to know Eroshenko who, whilst blind, was fervently working for the cause of world Esperanto. I immediately began to study Esperanto. Within three months I had grasped the language. Thanks to learning it, I was able to look on life with different eyes.⁸

Akita Ujaku was only one amongst many who was drawn to Eroshenko's good-natured optimism, but the two became firm friends. Akita Ujaku's father was also blind which perhaps gave them one point of shared experience; in addition to this the two shared literary, political and ideological interests. They first met on the 21st of February 1915; on the 22nd Akita began to study Esperanto.⁹

By the time Akita took up Esperanto, the Japanese Esperanto community was, if not yet experiencing a rapid resurgence, perhaps past its low point. In addition to attending the JEA meetings, at which he came into contact with figures such as those discussed

8 Akita Ujaku (1953) p.50.

9 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.11.

above, some of Akita's previous friends and contacts were interested in the language, for example the journalist and *Romaji* poet, Toki Zenmaro, and the translator and author Uchida Rōan.¹⁰ At least within literary and journalistic circles, Esperanto in 1915 was once more beginning to attract attention.

Taishō Era Transnational Networks

During the Taishō period, Esperanto was at the heart of developing networks of transnational exchange. Chapter one explored how the deepening of transnational connections assisted Esperanto's introduction to Japan by providing multiple streams of contact, enabling more and different modes of introduction. However, if in 1906 these threads firstly led chiefly to Europe, and secondly were responsible for the introduction of Esperanto to Japan, during the Taishō period the networks developed more extensively into Asia, and were responsible for enabling the use of Esperanto, rather than merely awareness of it. Kuroita Katsumi's trip to Europe and Nakamura Kiyō's encounter with Esperanto there are perhaps typical of transnational activities within the first wave of Japanese Esperanto; whilst this sort of elite European encounter continued, the Taishō period also saw the creation of more complex connections to China, to Persia, and to elsewhere in Asia.

These connections were being established even during the early 1910s when the JEA was relatively inactive. One example is the magazine *Oriente Azio* ('East Asia'). Prior to 1914, the JEA magazine *Japana Esperantisto* was published only irregularly, but *Oriente Azio*,

¹⁰ Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.12, p.20. Toki Zenmaro (who also used the pen name Toki Aika) wrote an early collection of *Romaji* poetry, *Nakiwarai*, published in 1910; during the postwar era, he wrote a popular biography of Ludwig Zamenhof, Toki (1948). Uchida Rōan was likely first introduced to Esperanto through his friendship with Futabatei Shimei.

which was the work of Harada Yubi, an Esperantist based on the outskirts of Tokyo, ran from 1911 to Harada's death in 1916.¹¹ It was a small mimeographed magazine, featuring some pen sketches with sparse colouring.

Although it was very much a result of Harada's own dedication, other leading Japanese Esperantists including Osaka Kenji and Fukuda Kunitarō contributed articles. The magazine was intended for a foreign audience – although there was some Japanese language content, it was mostly in Esperanto, and the most common topic was Japanese culture, craft, and arts. Over time it did indeed attract an international readership.¹² A column for Esperantists seeking pen pals included requests from places including China, Russia, India, Brazil, and across Europe, as well as the USA.¹³ There were also articles contributed from abroad – translations from Chekov, as well as articles about the state of the Esperanto movement in China, for example.¹⁴ By late 1914, with war breaking out across Europe, the European names disappeared from the magazine, but Siberian, Chinese and American presences remained. In addition to the transnational content of the magazine, Harada himself was involved in cross-border transactions, selling Japanese fans and dolls in order to cover the costs of printing *Oriente Azio*, as well as becoming a member of the Internacia Ĉekbanko Esperantista, an international bank that transacted in an experimental currency, the Spesmiloj.¹⁵

There was also an intermittent flow of Esperanto tourists who came to Japan, keen

11 JEI (1987) p.2-3.

12 For example, copies remain within the British Esperanto Association library, showing that the magazine reached Europe.

13 'Fako de Korespondo', *Oriente Azio*, November, December 1913.

14 'Fako de Korespondo', *Oriente Azio*, November 1913.

15 JEI (1956) p.20.

to make practical use of their language and to visit fellow Esperantists in other countries. These often either grew out of existing correspondence-based relationships, for example in the case of the visit of an Esperantist named Fereire (フレイレ), a Portuguese resident in Manila, who came to Yokohama and Tokyo in the summer of 1909;¹⁶ or led to reciprocal visits, as in the case of the Russian Kostin, who visited Kobe from Harbin in 1914.¹⁷ These visitors slowed during the war years, although there remained the occasional arrival, such as the visit of an American army officer, Major Bush, with his wife in 1916.¹⁸ There were also a number of non-Japanese Esperantists who were permanent or long-term residents in Japan, Gauntlett (who was relatively uninvolved with Esperanto after the first few years) and Vassily Eroshenko, of course, but others, too. During the period to the end of the First World War they included Emil Junker, a German lecturer at the First Higher School in Tokyo, and R.H. Dick from Switzerland.

Japanese Esperantists made trips abroad, too. In 1915, Takahashi Kunitarō and Nakanome Akira visited Harbin and Vladivostok together at the invitation of Kostin, the Russian Esperantist who had visited Kobe the year before. It was Takahashi's second trip to Harbin – the previous time, eight years before, he had failed to find any Esperantists but in 1915 the two were welcomed by a vibrant Esperanto group. Its leader, Kazi-Girej, was a Russian engineer who worked for the China Eastern Railway.¹⁹ In addition to meeting Esperantists in Vladivostok, Takahashi then continued on to Beijing, where he was unable to meet up with either of the only two Beijing members of the *Universala Esperanto-*

16 Mukai (1974) p.22-3.

17 'Nichi-Ro-Eki Chokugo Manshū de Esu-go wo Manabu', Takahashi Kunitarō, *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936, p.209.

18 Akita & Osaki (1965) p.56-7, May 1916.

19 'Omoide', Nakanome Akira, *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936, p.226-7.

Asocio (the UEA, the major international Esperanto organisation, based in Geneva). The following year, Takahashi visited Shanghai where he met K Ĉ Ŝan (盛国成), a noted Chinese Esperanto translator who had written for Harada's magazine, *Oriente Azio*.²⁰

However, more significant than these visits was the ongoing relationship between the socialist-Esperantists in Japan and China. As mentioned in chapter one, Ōsugi Sakae introduced a group of Chinese students in Tokyo to both Esperanto and anarchism in the immediate post-Russo-Japanese war period. The fledgling groups that were created when these students returned to China formed the basis of both anarchism and Esperanto in China; as they did so they continued to maintain contacts with Ōsugi and the socialists in Japan.

Ōsugi remained at the heart of Japanese-Chinese anarchist links, as was one of his close associates, another Esperantist, Yamaga Taiji. Yamaga was the young print-worker who had served as secretary for the JEA when it was housed in Hibiya. He was brought into contact with Esperanto whilst working at the Yūrakusha. He came to look to Kuroita Katsumi as a mentor but also encountered anarchism around the same time.²¹ Struck by how anarchist ideas had 'changed the ways in which [he] viewed the world before his very eyes' and aware of their shared interest in Esperanto, Yamaga made contact with Ōsugi Sakae and arranged to meet him at the Mitsukoshi department store. The two talked until it was dark, moving at some point to Hibiya park.²² Yamaga's relationship with Ōsugi remained fundamental to him until Ōsugi's death at the hands of the police in the wake of

²⁰ Takahashi Kunitarō, *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1936, p.209.

²¹ Prior to his interest in anarchism, Yamaga had been a member of the Salvation Army. Although he had met a number of anarchist Esperantists, such as Ishikawa Sanshirō, he was actually introduced to it by some other printers, at the firm he worked for after the Yūrakusha folded (Mukai 1974, p.26).

²² Mukai (1974) p.27.

the Kanto earthquake of 1923.

Yamaga undertook a number of projects for Ōsugi, several of which had transnational elements. In 1914, Yamaga Taiji went to Shanghai in order to help out with a small anarchist magazine. *La Voĉo de la Populo* (known in Chinese as *Minsheng*, 民声) was first published in 1913 in Guangzhou, but it relocated, first to Macao and then to Shanghai, under pressure from suspicious authorities.²³ The magazine was mainly written in Chinese, but featured regular Esperanto articles and columns.

Voĉo de la Populo was the brain child of Liu Shifu (who took the Esperanto name, Sifo). Shifu studied in Japan in the late Meiji period but was introduced to anarchism and Esperanto through some of the Chinese anarchists who had originated in Paris.²⁴ He was in contact with both the Esperantists and the anarchists in Japan, sending letters and articles to both Harada's magazine, *Oriente Azio*, and Ōsugi's *Kindai Shisō*.²⁵

When Yamaga arrived in Shanghai, the magazine was being printed in secret in a residential area. Shifu had a group of perhaps twenty associates, including his daughter. Yamaga helped with the printing and the Esperanto content.²⁶ Money was scarce and Shifu's personal values were ascetic (he was influenced by Tolstoy as well as anarchism, and created a moral association which forbade eating meat, drinking alcohol, tobacco, slavery, riding in rickshaws, marriage, the use of family names, holding of government office, militarism and religion), so they lived simply.²⁷ However, before the end of 1914,

23 Muller & Benton (2006a) p.57.

24 Muller & Benton (2006a) p.56.

25 *Oriente Azio*, November 1913, December 1914; Mukai (1974) p.36.

26 Mukai (1974) p.38-9.

27 Muller & Benton (2006a) p.55; 'Biografio de Sinjoro Sifo', *Oriente Azio*, December 1915, p.12.

Ōsugi called Yamaga back to Tokyo to help with the relaunch of the *Heimin Shinbun*.²⁸

Yamaga made a number of further trips to China – twice in 1922 he travelled to Shanghai in order to help Ōsugi in his attempts to visit Europe for an anarchist congress, then in 1927 he again visited Shanghai, where he taught Esperanto at the Shanhai Rōdō Daigaku (Shanghai Labour University, 上海労働大学) for four months.²⁹

At the same time as Japanese Esperantists were looking to make contacts with Esperanto groups in other parts of Asia, Tokyo was developing its own international character, with Esperanto at the heart of much of the activity. When Akita Ujaku was introduced to Esperanto by Vassily Eroshenko in 1915, his engagement with the language became part of a set of practices and activities with distinctive transnational characteristics.

At the same time as Eroshenko introduced Akita Ujaku to Esperanto, he also introduced him to Agnes Alexander and the Persian religion, Bahá'í.³⁰ Alexander was the granddaughter of two of the most important Christian missionary families in the history of nineteenth century Hawaii, although she took up Bahá'í whilst travelling in Europe. Together with another Bahá'í, Dr George Augar, she established a mission in Tokyo in 1914, at the recommendation of the leader of the religion, Abdu'l-Bahá.³¹

Bahá'ism originated in Persia in the mid-nineteenth century. The religion teaches both of the unity of mankind – equality of men and women, and all nationalities – as well as the equal validity of the prophets of other religions as different manifestations of one

28 Shifu died in 1916; *Voço de la Populo* ceased publication in that year, too (Muller & Benton, 2006a, p.58). although it re-emerged briefly in 1921.

29 Mukai (1974) p.221.

30 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.16.

31 Troxel (1998).

same faith. Furthermore, it embraced the idea of an international language, and advocated the use of Esperanto, as one plank in the goal of achieving a united human race.

Alexander began to hold Bahá'í meetings in Tokyo. An assortment of different Japanese natives and resident foreigners began to get to know her and some to attend the meetings, either brought by mutual acquaintance or seeking her out after learning about her and the Bahá'í in the press. Vassily Eroshenko was one of Alexander's first new friends in Tokyo; he attended the Bahá'í meetings as well as making the connection between the Bahá'í and the Japanese Esperanto community. Through him, others such as Akita Ujaku and Eroshenko's closest blind Japanese friend, Torii Tokujirō, came to know of Bahá'í.

Torii was one of the first to convert to Bahá'ísm in Japan.³² Whilst neither Akita nor Eroshenko seem to have adopted the faith as such, they nevertheless retained close links to it and to Alexander, helping to spread knowledge of the religion and its teachings across Japan – Eroshenko by translating some of the teachings into Esperanto, and Akita by publishing articles on Bahá'í in the Japanese press.³³

Alexander was a permanent presence at Tokyo Esperanto meetings, as well as receiving many Esperantists at her own Bahá'í sessions. Through Torii, she also found a number of supporters within the Japanese blind community, learning Esperanto Braille and publishing some pamphlets in Japanese Braille. Harada Yubi published articles on the Bahá'í in *Oriente Azio* whilst Aibara Susumu, one of the first Esperantists in Keio

32 There were a few Japanese converts on the Pacific coast of the United States of America prior to Alexander's mission to Tokyo.

33 Alexander & Simms (1977) p.15, p.21.

University, wrote a thesis on the faith.³⁴ She also published a journal of her own, *Higashi no Hoshi* ('Star of the East') in 1920-22.³⁵

Alexander remained in Japan until 1937. She travelled both within Japan, and elsewhere in Asia, seeking to spread Bahá'ism: she visited Korea in 1921, and Beijing in 1922, the latter as a result of a contact she had made with some Chinese students visiting Japan.³⁶ In addition, other Bahá'ís visited Alexander in Tokyo from time to time; one such was Aida Finch, who was noteworthy for her role in introducing Esperanto to the religious group, Ōmoto-kyō (see below).

Eroshenko too, of course, was a source of interest to Japanese who wanted to connect to the wider world. He was gregarious, moving in many different circles, and often demonstrating Russian culture, singing and playing instruments, for example.³⁷ But it was probably literature which was the most significant Russian influence upon intellectual life in Japan (prior to the October Revolution) and so his language and literary knowledge were also in demand. Through them he became involved with a group known as the Nakamura-ya salon.

Centred upon Sōma Kokkō and Aizō, the owners of the Nakamura-ya bakery in Shinjuku, which housed the salon in a western-style studio behind the main building, the salon was a literary and artistic group with interests in western sculpture, painting, and literature. The couple had taken on the bakery in the belief that bread products were a

34 Alexander & Simms (1977) p.65.

35 Simms (2000) p.38.

36 Alexander & Simms (1977) p.64-67; thanks to a family connection with Shibusawa Eiichi, the Meiji era businessman, she held a meeting with the Governor-General of Korea whilst she was there.

37 For example, Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.21, 23, 57, 62.

western foodstuff likely to grow in popularity amongst the '*interi-zō*' and '*hai-kara*' intellectuals,³⁸ over time they also introduced a number of other foreign foods to the Japanese consumer, such as Indian curries, Russian-style chocolate, Borscht and choux pastry.³⁹

Selling international foods at the front, and studying western arts in the back, the Nakamura-ya is indicative of the growing international character of Tokyo during the 1910s. Both Eroshenko and Akita joined in the activities of the Nakamura-ya. Eroshenko helped Sōma Kokkō and a number of others in studying Russian in order to better understand Russian literature and with a view to making a visit to Russia.⁴⁰ In the autumn of 1915, he took a trip to Hokkaido with Katakami Noburu, a teacher from Waseda University and one of Kokkō's fellow Russian language students, in order to concentrate on their language study.⁴¹

Although neither Sōma Kokkō nor her husband Aizō seem to have been ardent Esperantists, there was a degree of overlap between the salon members and other circles such as Esperanto and Bahá'í. In 1920, Eroshenko sat for a pair of portraits by artists who were members of the salon. Both 'Blind Eroshenko' by Tsuruta Gorō and particularly

38 They had initially thought of opening a coffee bar, for similar reasons. The original bakery was in Hongō, near the Imperial University, but they later expanded to a second store in Shinjuku, which became the more successful, and which still exists on the same site today (Sōma A 1996, p.14; Takeda 1972, p.6). Both Sōma Kokkō and Sōma Aizō wrote books which feature discussions of the establishment of the Nakamura-ya and the events which took place surrounding it. Most notable are Sōma A (1996) and Sōma K (1996,) but see Takeda (1972, p.14-15) for more details of others.

39 See, for example, <http://www.nakamura-ya.co.jp/company/hist01.html> [accessed January 2012].

40 Sōma K (1996) p.215.

41 Sōma K (1996) p.216. The trip didn't go well – Katakami reportedly wished to tackle complex texts from the outset, whereas Eroshenko advised starting with the basics. Akita received a postcard from Eroshenko on the 12th August which apparently contained no suggestion of a falling out; by the 28th Eroshenko was back in Tokyo (Akita & Osaki, 1965, vol.1 p.28). Katakami and Eroshenko later tried again, with a visit to Kansai (Sōma K 1996, p.215).

'Portrait of Eroshenko' by Nakamura Tsune, were hailed as examples of Japanese success at emulating western style painting when they were exhibited at the 1920 imperial art exhibition.⁴²

Eroshenko even moved into the studio at the Nakamura-ya, firstly for a brief period in 1916, and then again when he returned to Japan in 1919.⁴³ He was only one of a number of foreign residents there – his first stay came after an Indian, Rash Behari Bose, had lived there in secret there for 4 months whilst evading extradition back to India to face charges of terrorism,⁴⁴ and when he moved back to the Nakamura-ya in 1921, there was a Korean staying there.

There were other international connections, too, such as a meeting of an Asia-Africa-Europe-America-Siam Society, attended by Akita Ujaku and people from the Philippines, India, China, Korea, Burma and elsewhere,⁴⁵ but the most high profile Asian visitor to Japan of 1915-16 was the Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore.

In 1913, Tagore was awarded the Nobel prize for literature, the first Asian to win the award. His 1916 lecture trip to Japan was sponsored by the *Asahi Shinbun*, who reported his passage across the country in detail. His lectures were packed – as many as

42 'Kanten-Hyō – Seiyōga (1), (3)' *Asahi Shinbun*, 23rd, 25th October 1920.

43 Neither exactly when during the period 1915-16 Eroshenko first met Sōma Kokkō nor when he moved into the Nakamura-ya is entirely clear. Takasugi (1982) suggests that Eroshenko was first introduced to Sōma Kokkō in the autumn, after giving a speech for students of the Imperial University entitled 'Roshia no Minwa ni tsuite'. I have been unable to corroborate this – Akita's diaries, for example, do not seem to record it. As to his move into the Nakamura-ya, Akita Ujaku recorded in his diary that Eroshenko moved into new lodgings in December 1915 and then again in February 1916, the second time together with a Korean friend, into a house which Akita described as making 'unpleasant noises, thereby scaring everyone present' (Akita & Osaki, 1965, vol.1 p.46). Since Rash Behari Bose was resident in the studio until March 1916, it seems unlikely that Eroshenko would have moved in until after then, but certainly by May 1916, Eroshenko was living there (Akita & Osaki, 1965, vol.1 p.57).

44 Hotta (2006) is an account of Bose's time in Japan. He was introduced to Sōma Aizō through Tōyama Mitsuru, the nationalist.

45 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.48.

3,000 turning up to hear him speak in Osaka, for example. In addition a number of his (translated) speeches were printed in full in the *Asahi*.⁴⁶

Although I am not aware of any involvement in Esperanto on the part of Tagore, his visit was of intense interest to many within the Japanese Esperanto movement; Akita Ujaku in particular was swept up by it. Akita began reading Tagore's work in advance of his landing in Kobe, and followed reports in the newspapers of Tagore's speeches. When Tagore arrived in Tokyo station, Akita was there (along with a crowd estimated at 25-30,000).⁴⁷ Akita, together with other members of his Akai Bōshi-kai (the Red Hat Society, seemingly named after the Turkish fez which Eroshenko had taken to wearing, most likely inspired by the Bahá'í) shouted an Esperanto greeting for Tagore across the platform.⁴⁸ Other Esperantists, including Agnes Alexander and Vassily Eroshenko as well as Akita, were at Tagore's most high profile talk, at the Imperial University.⁴⁹ A transcript of another meeting, on the 2nd July for students at Keio and other of the private universities, was published by the India-Japan Association (Nichi-In Kyōkai) and distributed in the United States of America.⁵⁰

In truth Tagore's reception was mixed. Although his Nobel prize marked him out as a symbol of a rising Asia, and the *Asahi Shinbun* promoted him such that his arrival was met with huge crowds everywhere he went, his message was one curiously at odds with the prevailing current of Japanese opinion. Tagore saw Japan in a position of dangerous uncertainty. On the one hand, he experienced a Japan that was almost uniquely in touch

46 Nokuko (2003) p.42.

47 Hay (1970) p.62.

48 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.59.

49 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.60; *Asahi Shinbun*, 12th June 1916.

50 Tagore (1916).

with itself, with 'a vision of the beauty in nature', with 'the hills of her country, with the sea and the streams, with the forests in all their flowery moods...'⁵¹ However, this Japan was threatened by a looming danger: that of artificial modernisation through the imitation of the west. Tagore cautioned against shallow modernisation, arguing that:

One must bear in mind, that those who have the true modern spirit need not modernise, just as those who are truly brave are not braggarts. Modernism is not in the dress of the Europeans; or in the hideous structures, where their children are interned when they take their lessons; or in the square houses with flat straight wall-surfaces, pierced with parallel lines of windows, where these people are caged in their lifetime; certainly modernism is not in their ladies' bonnets, carrying on them loads of incongruities. These are not modern, but merely European. True modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters. It is science, but not its wrong application in life...⁵²

This critique of Japan's embrace of western modernity puzzled much of the Japanese audience.⁵³ Akita's reaction was decidedly ambivalent, returning to Tagore in his thoughts over the summer of 1916, convincing himself that Tagore had western culture right,⁵⁴ but also writing that:

I must admit that I cannot say that I agree with most of his ideas, but I feel a strong sympathy with him as a poet, and also with the leitmotiv of his philosophy... For example... his judgement on contemporary civilization from the standpoint of a monistic view of the laws of the universe or of human society seem to me very suggestive.⁵⁵

Akita was perhaps more impressed with his exposure to Indian thought and philosophy, than Tagore's own ideas. He studied further, aided by a French poet and scholar, Paul

51 Tagore (1916) p.8, p.9.

52 Tagore (1916) p.12-13.

53 Hay (1970, p.83) evaluates 87 individual assessments of Tagore's views, of which 35 were critical, and 26 positive (the remainder being either a mix of both, or offering no view either way), but the general tenor of the public reception was probably better seen as more negative than this.

54 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.56-64.

55 'Sanjō no Tagoru', *Waseda Bungaku*, July 1916, quoted in Hay (1970, p.89).

Richard, who had spent time in India.⁵⁶ After Tagore left Japan, Akita took up the Upanishads, concluding that 'my own philosophy may have been born from the Upanishads'.⁵⁷ Vassily Eroshenko, on the other hand, was reportedly in outright disagreement with Tagore's message.⁵⁸

In July 1916, in the midst of Tagore's visit, Eroshenko set off on a trip of his own, desiring to learn about other parts of Asia.⁵⁹ He visited first Siam, then Burma, and finally India, making use of the transnational connections he had established in Tokyo. In Siam, he made contact with a relative of a blind friend from Kyoto, then in Burma he stayed with a local Bahá'í group.⁶⁰ He was in Burma when news of the Russian revolution began to come through. Intending to return to Europe via India, Eroshenko made two trips to Calcutta but was unsuccessful in making further progress. After the first trip, in March 1918, he returned to Burma, where he had been teaching in a school for the blind. On his second trip to Calcutta, in September 1918, he was put under house arrest by the British authorities, before being deported back to Japan in June 1919.⁶¹

From the anarchists in China, to the trips to Manchuria by Takahashi Kunitarō, the

56 Richard was an acquaintance of Tagore's who seems to have been involved with pan-Asian ideas. Akita described him as an 'Oriental utopianist' (Akita & Osaki 1965, vol.1 p.66); Hay (1970, p.126) as a 'mystic and vagabond'.

57 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.66. Akita's initial exploration of Indian philosophy was interrupted by the unexpected death of his daughter; although he later returned to it, it was with less intensity.

58 Takasugi (1982) p.142. I have personally been unable to find a contemporary mention of Eroshenko's views on Tagore. Takasugi (1982) is more popular in its presentation than scholarly; nevertheless the author was a respected historian of the Esperanto movement in Japan and cites a list of sources including works by Eroshenko to which I have not had access, so I would regard it as a credible, if not categorical source. Akita Ujaku mentioned in his diary returning to the Nakamura from Tagore's speech at the Imperial University and 'arguing/debating [*giron*, 議論] with Eroshenko about civilisation' (Akita & Osaki 1965, vol.1 p.60). There are also some references to a meeting between Tagore and Eroshenko, although would I regard these as speculation, barring corroboration.

59 Akita (1953) p.55.

60 Takasugi (1982) p.150, p.164.

61 The most detailed account of Eroshenko's trip to Thailand, Burma, and India is Takasugi (1982), Chapters 19-22.

Bahá'í mission to Japan, Akita and his colleagues standing at Tokyo station to greet Tagore's arrival, and Eroshenko's journey to western Asia, Esperanto was deeply involved in the spread of transnational ties across Asia.

One function of intra-Asian connections was in seeking to foster cooperative resistance to the western presence in Asia. Particularly in the wake of the Russo-Japanese war, Japan served as a symbol of hope for many that Asia might be able to throw off the western imperialism. A good example of this was Vassily Eroshenko's immediate predecessor in the Nakamura-ya studio, Rash Behari Bose. Bose was involved in attempts to resist British rule in India – his presence in Japan was an attempt to evade British authorities following an attempted assassination. In Japan, he took up with Pan-Asianists such as Tōyama Mitsuru and Inukai Tsuyoshi, who identified common cause with the Indian revolutionary.⁶² Selçuk Esenbel describes similar Japan-Islam connections as 'an alternative pattern of international relations'.⁶³ Indeed, with Europe engaged in a war of hitherto unimagined destructive power, it is unsurprising that the years 1914-1918 in particular saw Asians looking to one another.

However, I think that the presence of Esperanto reveals another strand within the networks. Rather than a vision in which east and west were an irreconcilable opposition of tradition and modernity, spirit and materialism, one in which Japan had to choose whether to be Asian or to be western – a vision that has come to be associated chiefly with Fukuzawa Yukichi's Meiji era *Datsu-A Ron* – the transnational networks forged using Esperanto were a blend of both east and west. Whilst the Nakamura-ya housed the Asian

62 Hotta (2006).

63 Esenbel (2011) p.16.

revolutionary Bose, their circle also brought together Russian literature, Vassily Eroshenko, western artistic styles, Persian Bahá'í, and the Upanishads and Indian philosophy, in a rich mix of eastern and western culture.

When the First World War ended, the resumption of European contact was brought together with the transnational Asian connections which had developed in its absence and both continued to develop further. Whilst the vision of universal Esperanto adoption remained a more a dream than an expectation, these growing networks within Asia and beyond nevertheless represented a partial realisation of the goal of the Esperanto movement: enabling cross border communication, exchange, and mutual understanding where otherwise issues of language might prevent them, and thereby working towards a greater, more inclusive world.

The Second Boom in Japanese Esperanto and the Rise of Idealistic Esperantism

War in Europe had an unsurprisingly heavy effect on European Esperanto, so it is all the more noteworthy that Japanese Esperanto developed and recovered during the years between 1914 and 1918. However, the end of the war, and the resulting wave of international optimism and hope gave a dramatic boost to Esperanto both internationally and in Japan. This following wind helped to turn modest expansion into a second great explosion of growth. During the years from 1918 into the early 1920s, Esperanto in Japan transformed into a genuinely popular movement.

The rapid growth in interest in Esperanto gave rise to new demands for promotion of the language, which in turn exposed weaknesses in the movement's organisational

structure. In 1919, the JEA's relationship with its long time printer, Daidō-sha, broke down over unpaid bills.⁶⁴ The JEA's financial resources were inextricably confused with Kuroita Katsumi's own personal finances; this was compounded by Kuroita's absent mindedness – reportedly he would occasionally depart on academic trips, forgetting to give his family and household any money with which to support themselves whilst he was gone.⁶⁵ The result was that the JEA was poorly organised, unable to find another cheap printer for the magazine, *La Japano Esperantisto*, and with finances that were too confused and inadequate to support the sorts of activities that were increasingly required to take advantage of the wave of interest in Esperanto and other global ideas.

An initial attempt to reform the JEA failed – Kuroita was prepared to step down as the chairman, but objected to some of the proposals, whilst (to the surprise of many) Nakamura Kiyō, one of the elder statesmen of the movement, refused to become head of the JEA on the basis of the damage to his reputation to be official head of so financially disorganised a body.⁶⁶ The leading advocates of reform – Osaka Kenji, Fujisawa Chikao, and Asai Erin – concluded that the only alternative was to form a new body that would be free of the constraints which were limiting the JEA.

On the 20th of December 1919, the three held a meeting of the JEA, at which they put their proposals. There were thirty-nine people present, although neither Kuroita nor Nakamura attended. After an intense debate, the meeting agreed unanimously to the creation of a new organisation, the *Japano Esperanto-Instituto* (the JEI). The JEI

64 JEI (1956) p.41.

65 JEI (1956) p.45.

66 JEI (1956) p.42-3.

constitution established organisational principles which were responses to the perceived problems with the JEA, but which can also be seen as reflective of a more open, plural age: published accounts, no single dominant 'head' (*chō*, 長) but instead a committee (*iin*, 委員) to run regular operations with limits on the length of individual terms and major decisions to be made by a board of trustees (*hyōgiin*, 評議員).

The *Yomiuri Shinbun* reported that the JEI had been formed 'in rejection of Kuroita Katsumi'.⁶⁷ In truth, however, the change was more consensual: Kuroita visited Osaka Kenji on the evening of the 23rd; Kuroita was apparently enthusiastic about the prospects for the new JEI.⁶⁸ And rightfully so. There were around 280 members of the JEA in 1918; this had risen to 460 a year later and by the end of 1921 there were over 700 members of the new JEI. In 1922 the figure reached nearly 1500.⁶⁹

There was a sharp change within the make-up of the Esperanto community. The new wave of Esperantists was largely made up of a new, younger generation: 13% of JEA members recorded their occupation as being a student in 1919; in 1922 this figure was 43%. Although the main figures who led the transformation of the Esperanto organisations were not from the same generation as this new influx, they did represent a transition of sorts. The likes of Kuroita Katsumi (b.1874) and Nakamura Kiyō (b.1855) remained influential figures within the Esperanto community, but the main leaders of the new organisation were a group of Esperantists in their late twenties and thirties – Osaka Kenji (b.1884), Asai Erin (b.1894) and Fujisawa Chikao (b.1893).

67 *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 21st December 1919.

68 JEI (1956) p.44-5.

69 JEI (1922) p.24.

When Vassily Eroshenko returned to Japan from India in 1919, it was to discover this resurgence in the Esperanto scene already under way. His arrival back in Tokyo was a surprise, but he fell in with old friends fairly rapidly, as well as making new ones. To support himself, Eroshenko began to write essays and children's stories that were published in a number of Japanese journals such as Hasegawa Nyozeke's liberal-democratic *Warera*, the *Asahi Shinbun*, *Kaizō*, and *Tane Maku Hito*, a forerunner of the proletarian literary movement.⁷⁰ He attended an ever-growing set of groups and movements in Tokyo, including the radical student group the Shinjinkai, led by the lecturer Yoshino Sakuzō, one of the great figures of Taishō era liberalism, who themselves were experimenting with Esperanto as a means of better including Chinese and Korean students in their activities.⁷¹

Esperanto, then, was not only spurred on by international trends in the early 1920s, it was also wrapped up in the transformation of Taishō era society, one aspect of the growth of more and increasingly diverse and popular forms of urban and middle class culture and social movements. The new, younger generation were more drawn to ideas of idealistic Esperantism than had been the case with the 1906 wave. The growing influence of the *Interna Ideo* and other ideological forms of Esperantism can be seen even prior to 1918 and the postwar effect.

Akita Ujaku's introduction to Esperanto was as a language associated with the peace movement: on their first meeting he described Eroshenko as 'a peace activist and

70 Miyamoto & Oshima (1973) p.123.

71 Miyamoto & Oshima (1973) p.102.

Esperantist',⁷² and he was impressed by the works of Zamenhof. Similarly, Bahá'í involvement with Esperanto was based on the understanding that global adoption of Esperanto as a second language would help to develop global peace and harmony; thus Agnes Alexander's mission in Tokyo helped to spread the idea of Esperanto as a tool for peace amongst Japanese Esperantists.

Yamaga Taiji recalled a meeting of Tokyo Esperantists in 1914 at which the subject of motivation was discussed. Five present expressed the view that they participated in the Esperanto movement with the sole goal of spreading Esperanto as language: Osaka Kenji, Chifu Toshio, Nakamura Kiyō, Kuroita Katsumi, and Takusari Kōki. In contrast, three present were of the view that Esperanto should be used for the liberation of human society: Fukuda Kunitarō, Vassily Eroshenko, and Yamaga himself.⁷³

The three who expressed more idealistic views are all Esperantists associated with forms of socialism, although the likes of Agnes Alexander would no doubt have sided with them.⁷⁴ As suggested in the introduction, forms of socialist Esperanto and *Interna Ideo* related idealism are not necessarily synonymous. This became more clear during the post-1918 boom, when the rise of idealistic forms of Esperantism in Japan were as closely associated with what can be termed liberal internationalism – the wave of optimism regarding new forms of diplomacy associated with Woodrow Wilson's 'fourteen point plan' and the creation of the League of Nations in particular.

72 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.1 p.10.

73 Mukai (1974) p.59-60.

74 When Eroshenko was later expelled from Japan on the grounds of 'dangerous thought', his friends claimed that he was not a proponent of socialism; however elsewhere he is recalled as the originator of the suggestion the 'all Esperantists should be socialists, and all socialists should be Esperantists' (Miyamoto & Oshima 1973, p.119).

The new leaders of the Japanese Esperanto movement, too, were perhaps generally more idealistic in their outlook than had been the case five or ten years earlier. The banner of *La Revuo Orienta*, established in 1920 as the magazine of the JEL, featured at times the word *Homaranismo*, and Osaka Kenji (notably one of the neutral Esperantists in Yamaga's story from the pre-war years) published an Esperanto textbook, together with Akita Ujaku, *Mohan Esuperanto Dokushū* (Memlernanto de Esperanto in Esperanto), the very first phrase of which read: 'That which we call an Esperantist is not simply a person who practices Esperanto', in explicit refutation of the Declaration of Boulogne's definition of neutral Esperantism.⁷⁵

The shift in the centre of balance in Japanese Esperanto (and the ongoing presence of advocates of linguistic neutralism, despite this shift) is best seen in an ongoing debate on Esperantism and the Declaration of Boulogne which took place in the early 1920s. There was a small group of Esperantists who sought the explicit repudiation of the Declaration. They planned to submit a motion doing so at the 1922 Japanese Esperanto congress, but held back when it became clear that there was a weight of opinion against them.⁷⁶ However, the following year, the Kansai based magazine, *Verda Utopio*, devoted an issue to the debate. *Verda Utopio*, an all-Esperanto magazine, was published by Fukuda Kunitarō, both an Esperantist with a strong interest in socialism and a proponent of Zamenhof's *Homaranismo*.

Despite the leanings of Fukuda, he gave space in the magazine to both sides of the

⁷⁵ Osaka & Akita (1923) Introduction. The main text included an influential essay by the idealistic European Esperanto supporter, Romain Rolland, as a reading exercise.

⁷⁶ Editorial, *Verda Utopio*, January 1923.

argument, printing the text of a speech by Chifu Toshio, the most vocal supporter of neutral Esperantism. Chifu was an Esperantist of long standing – he was a graduate of Ōsugi Sakae's original Esperanto school,⁷⁷ as well as being the author of several significant early Esperanto texts. Although he was also significantly involved in the reforms which led to the creation of the JEL, Chifu had already caused controversy in November 1914 when, as editor of *Japana Esperantista*, he published an editorial titled 'Banzai', celebrating the Japanese capture of the German colonies in Asia including the Shantung territory. This was met with disapproval within much of the Esperanto community of the time.⁷⁸

In 1923, Chifu published a pamphlet which outlined the content of the Declaration of Boulogne, arguing that a lack of understanding of the declaration amongst many (new) Esperantists was leading to a mistaken understanding of the essence of the movement. He characterised Homaranismo as a shallow ideology, part of a cult of Zamenhof, decrying attempts to characterise pure linguistic Esperantists (i.e. politically neutral ones) as second class, or 'not true', advocates of the language and calling Esperantists who did not respect the nationalist views of their fellow Esperantists Esperanto chauvinists.⁷⁹

Remember that the Esperantismo is not religion, nor moral instruction; it is a pure linguistic movement, which must be absolutely neutral for all religion, for all moral instruction, and for all ideas; likewise for all nations and peoples.⁸⁰

Another Esperantist of long standing, Takahashi Kunitarō, also wrote in *Verda Utopio* defending the Declaration of Boulogne, suggesting that as admirable as Homaransimo was,

77 Given Chifu's steadfast adherence to politically neutral Esperanto, Miyamoto & Oshima (1973 p.20) describe his introduction to the language through the radical anarchist Ōsugi as a 'historical irony'.

78 By contrast, on 16th December 1914 the German Esperantist and First Higher School teacher, Junker, made a highly regarded speech at an Esperanto meeting in Tokyo suggesting that, were Esperanto more successful, then the war in Europe might have been avoided (Hatsushiba 1998, p.37; JEI 1956, p.25).

79 Chifu (1923).

80 'La Esperantismo estas pure lingva movado', Chifu Toshio, *Verda Utopio*, January 1923, p.14.

history proved it an unachievable goal. These two articles were countered by another, 'La Interna Ideo sola estas vera Esperantismo', ('The Internal Idea alone is the true Esperantism'), which considered the historical context to the Declaration of Boulogne and argued that its time was passed.

After 1922, the suggestion of a formal repudiation of the Declaration of Boulogne was never raised in Japan, marking perhaps a victory on paper for Chifu and other neutral Esperantists. However the supporters of the Interna Ideo were in the ascendancy. Chifu resigned from the committee of the JEI, complaining that the organisation's directors were equating Esperantism with Homaranismo.⁸¹ At the 1924 congress, held in Sendai, a group of jubilant young idealists, calling themselves the '*Aĉuloj*' (roughly, 'the wretches')⁸² held an off-congress event, drunkenly celebrating the rise of the *Interna Ideo*.⁸³ Ishiguro Yoshimi recalled that thirty or so young Esperantists met at the Cafe Brazil. Kawahara Jikichirō was the chairman of the meeting; Ishiguro himself the vice-chairman. The group embraced the slogan '*Aĉa Aĉulo Aĉe Aĉas*' ('the awful wretches will awfully be awful') and wrote a 'hymn of the wretch', making merry in a raucous, alcohol fuelled evening.⁸⁴

One sub-part of the Esperanto community in Japan which combined a strong interest in the more idealistic forms of Esperantism to their own specific perspective was the group of blind Esperantists. Vassily Eroshenko was, perhaps unsurprisingly,

81 'Gakkai Iin wo Jisuru ni tsuite', *La Revuo Orienta*, September 1923; 'Reviviĝo kaj Marŝo', JEI (1934).

82 'Aĉ' - awful, terrible, 'uloj' – people; Ishiguro (n.d.) translated it to *Gujin*, 'fools'.

83 Itō (1932) p.91-93, Hatsushiba (1998) p.63.

84 Ishiguro (n.d.) p.46. It should be noted that Ishiguro placed the *Aĉuloj* meeting at the 1923 congress, in Okayama, rather than in 1924 in Sendai. Portelli (1990, p.15-16), a work on oral history, considers how memory can lead to such chronological misplacing, arguing that an event may be located inaccurately at a time of greater importance or significance than when it actually took place. Towards the end of the 1923 Okayama congress, news filtered through of the great Kantō earthquake, which caused great destruction to Tokyo and Yokohama; this caused the congress to remain large in the memories of the attendees, perhaps explaining Ishiguro's apparent inaccuracy.

instrumental in inspiring many of his fellow students and blind and partially sighted friends to take up Esperanto.⁸⁵ After arriving at the Tokyo school for the blind in 1914, he volunteered to teach a class in Esperanto at both the government school, as well as in another, private school for the blind in Tokyo the following year. Other groups, however, sprang up largely independent of Eroshenko – such one in Osaka, for example (where Kumagai Tetsutarō was instrumental). Indeed, the interest in Esperanto amongst the blind continued to grow and develop even during the period 1917-19, whilst Eroshenko had left Japan.

Just as was the case in wider Japanese society, many of the blind Japanese drawn to Japanese Esperanto were students. Thus much of the blind Esperanto movement took place in schools; different institutions had different attitudes towards the language. After Eroshenko was expelled from Japan in 1921, the authorities at the Tokyo Blind School in particular became somewhat suspicious, seeking to discourage its spread amongst the students, with only mixed success.⁸⁶ By contrast, elsewhere the popularity of Esperanto amongst the blind was actively supported by school authorities. It was placed on the syllabus of the Osaka School for the Blind and Deaf (later the Osaka Municipal Blind School) and the Okayama Blind and Deaf School, both around 1922.⁸⁷

85 One notable exception was Kumagai Tetsutarō, who was introduced to Esperanto in 1905 by Iida Yūtarō at the Sapporo Agricultural School, whilst studying at the nearby Sapporo School for the Blind (Kataoka, 1997, p.69-70).

86 Kataoka Yoshiki entered the school as a student in 1923, two years after the Eroshenko scandal, and recalled:

'The school authorities looked at students who studied Esperanto with an unpleasant face. However, I wasn't too bothered about that. I visited Akita Ujaku, and became close to Alexander, and Gauntlett, Abe Isō and so on.' Kataoka (1997) p.76-7.

Kataoka's introduction to these Esperantists came via the Esperantist Yui Chūnoshin (由比忠之進) who was married to the daughter of a Tokyo Blind School Teacher.

87 Suzuki (1990), p.18. The first teacher in the Osaka school was Iwahashi Takeo, a blind Esperantist who

Blind Esperantists organised a special sub-group meeting at the 1922 Esperanto congress, and again at each congress thereafter. There were periodic Braille-Esperanto publications, such as *Mōjin Esuperanto Kōshū Dokuhon* (a Braille translation of an Esperanto textbook written by Yagi Hideo, published in 1922 by Kaniya Shoten); Osaka Kenji and Kishimoto Shigetarō's *Tenji Esuperanto Kyōkasho* (1923, Nihon Esuperanto-sha); a Braille dictionary, *Tenji Esu-Wa Jiten*, by Torii Tokujirō (1923, Kaniya Shoten); Nakanishi Yoshi's *Jiten Esuperanto Kōgi* (1929, Bukkyō Zaiyogun Jiten-Bu) and two books by Ishiguro Yoshimi, *Mōjin'yō Esuperanto Dai Ippō* and *Mōjin'yō Shotō Esuperanto Kōshū Dokuhon* (1931, Kibō-sha). The Japana Asocio de Blindaj Esperantistoj (JABE, 日本盲人エスペラント協会, Japanese Association of Blind Esperantists) was formed in 1928.

The blind students who were drawn to Esperanto were, after all, students: it is therefore unsurprising that they were drawn to Esperanto in the same way as those other students who formed a significant portion of the new influx of Japanese Esperantists as the First World War came to a close. But in addition to this, blind Japanese seeking greater freedom and a wider range of roles to play in society had their own particular reasons for being drawn to a movement which articulated a vision of equality for all. Torii Tokujirō, Vassily Eroshenko's closest blind friend in Japan, expressed his hopes for Esperanto from a specifically blind perspective in an essay entitled 'Gazing up at the green stars' in the inaugural 1928 edition of a magazine, *Oriente Blindularo*:

What is it that those oppressed by the darkness seek to grasp? What is the ultimate goal of the various movements of the blind world that result from their struggle? It is

was a graduate of Kwansai Gakuin and a significant figure in the wider Esperanto community in Kansai. In 1925, with assistance from John Brailsford, a fellow Kobe-based Esperantist, Iwahashi went to study in Edinburgh. His role as the Esperanto teacher at the Osaka School for the Blind was taken on by Itō Saburō, an influential left wing Esperantist and poet.

a joint share in culture, equal opportunity with respect to society, and then to achieve the same happiness as sighted people. At present, all those across the world who share the same fate are uniting to struggle for respect to that lofty goal, that bitter basic human need. And yet, the cloud obstructing their prospects is the prejudice of ordinary people towards the condition of 'sightlessness', and the inability of groups of people to understand blind people as people.

...What is it that we have invested the new light of hope in, in this deadlocked current oriental blind world of ours, in this acute need of ours? It is the international auxiliary language, Esperanto; we deeply believe in Esperantists. ... It is the sole key to achieve the realisation of the principle of world brotherhood, further, it is the driving force to make the blind people of the world, and the sighted, one whole family, to realise a utopia drenched in the light of human love and humanism. There, the gap between sighted and blind might, even if not small, be smaller than it is in the present world. We truly feel that the light of the new age for which we struggle can only be seen in the flag of the green star.⁸⁸

Idealistic forms of Esperantism emerged as a significant element of Japanese Esperanto at the same time as the likes of Torii Tokujirō and Iwahashi Takeo were going from being students within the system of education for the blind to its next generation of teachers and leaders. Both went on to be significant figures in the blind community during the 1920s, 1930s and on into the postwar period. Schools for the blind (as well as for the deaf) had emerged during the Meiji period alongside the creation of the full state education system, teaching (the innovation of) Japanese Braille and the traditional blind skills of massage and acupuncture. The generation that reached adulthood during the early Taishō period were educated within this system but they went on to build upon it – seeking to participate in the various emerging new cultural movements and to find new roles in society. In Esperanto, and specifically in *Homaranismo*, they found a message that all people, irrespective of their nationality, were members of the human race. Torii Tokujirō and others latched onto this message and saw in it the possibility to transcend barriers – of nationality and language, but also that between the blind and the sighted.

88 Torii Tokujirō, *Oriente Blindularo*, 1928, quoted in Kataoka (1997) p.83-84.

One final development which encapsulated well the changing forms of Esperanto in early 1920s Japan – its spread, its growing diversity, its transnational elements, and the growing importance of idealistic forms of Esperantism – was the adoption of Esperanto by the Japanese 'new' religion, Ōmoto-kyō. Ōmoto was one of a number of religious movements established during the Bakumatsu/early Meiji period which drew upon Shinto and other religious traditions; it was notable for its popularity during the Taishō period, not only amongst the rural poor, but also a growing presence amongst the middle classes.

Ōmoto's head, Deguchi Onisaburō, was introduced to Esperanto in the early 1920s by an encounter between his wife and the Bahá'í, Aida Finch. In 1921 the state cracked down on Ōmoto: its premises were raided and vandalised, and a number of leading figures, including Deguchi, were charged with crimes of *lèse majesté*. Suppressed at home, Ōmoto looked overseas to re-establish itself; one part of this was the engagement with Esperanto.

Ōmoto-kyō began to actively spread Esperanto amongst their members, as well as using Esperanto to promote the religion itself. In Japan, they held courses within the Ōmoto headquarters, and created an organisation, the Esuperanto Fukyū Kai (the EPA, Esperanto-Propaganda Asocio in Esperanto) to publish Esperanto related materials, including a magazine *Verda Mondo* ('Green World').

The existing Esperanto community, especially in Kansai, Ōmoto's base, was receptive to the new source of members, despite the overhanging shadow of state suppression and forthcoming prosecution. Yagi Hideo, a student at the Third Higher School, wrote a number of articles introducing Ōmoto-kyō to the Esperanto community,

including one published in the UEA magazine *Esperanto*, in 1924 which led to a vigorous show of interest from Europe.⁸⁹ In 1925, an Ōmoto follower, Nishimura Kōgetsu, attended the UEA Esperanto congress in Geneva, and thereafter established an overseas office in Paris from which he published an Esperanto magazine, *Oomoto Internacia*.

Between 1922 and the religion's second, more comprehensive, suppression by the state in 1935, Ōmoto was a distinct presence within the domestic Japanese Esperanto community, participating at the JEI congresses and other JEI activities, featuring non-Ōmoto Esperantists in their magazines and through the EPA publishing, as well as continuing to promote Esperanto through their own followers, and by establishing their own network of courses and local clubs.

At the same time they continued to be active in creating transnational connections, both within Asia and touching Europe. The Paris mission remained in place from 1926 until 1932; a European Esperantist, Josef Major, who worked there during the late 1920s later moved to Japan where he was involved with Ōmoto-kyō and the wider Japanese Esperanto movement. Although the link with the Bahá'í, which introduced Ōmoto to Esperanto, does not seem to have produced a lasting relationship, Ōmoto made connections with a number of different Asian new religions, as well as establishing a network of missions in Manchuria, focusing upon charity and humanitarian work as much as, if not more than, religious endeavours.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ EPA (1973) p.8.

⁹⁰ Ōmoto's Esperanto specific activities are detailed in EPA (1973), whilst Stalker (2008, Chapter Five) outlines Ōmoto's international engagement (including Esperanto) from the perspective of the religion's own history. The historiography of Ōmoto-kyō has typically divided the period between the two government interventions into two phases: an 'internationalist' phase in the wake of the 1921 suppression that eventually gave way to a 'nationalist' phase in the 1930s. It is noteworthy, however, that many of the

Conclusion: Eroshenko's Expulsion from Japan

The Esperantism which rose to prominence with the second generation of Japanese Esperantists was expressly normative – articulating a vision of Esperanto as a tool for not only the elimination of linguistic barriers, but by doing so for unifying mankind and/or establishing a lasting peace between the nations of the world. However, this ideological Esperantism was neither monolithic, nor exclusive within the Japanese Esperanto community. Those who held to neutral apolitical conceptions of Esperanto remained within the movement, and even amongst those who embraced ideological forms of Esperantism there were a range of different views, from the religious idealism of the Bahá'í or Ōmoto-kyō, through more mainstream liberal internationalism, to the radical socialists, all of whom advocated forms of Esperantism which shared something in common with the *Homaranismo* idea of a world united through Esperanto. Moreover, whilst there were those who articulated an explicit conception of their internationalism, for many, if not most, new Esperantists, their idealism was perhaps less a fully worked out and intellectual vision of what the future world should look like than it was a more vague sense of accord with the *Interna Ideo* and other ideas and institutions such as the creation of the League of Nations.

Writing of the diversity within Japanese Esperanto in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* in 1921, Kizaki Hiroshi argued that:

I do not wish to say ...that the JEI is certainly not an organisation of socialists, or that it is not an organ for the spread of dangerous thought. No, the JEI contains many socialists. Not just that, there are anarchists and nihilists, too. And more, there are cosmopolitans, Nationalists [*Kokkashugi-sha*], Japanists, capitalists and labourers.

Just count the literary man, Akita Ujaku, the journalist Ōba Kakō, and the Shōtoku Taishi-*shugisha* ['Prince Shōtoku-ist'] Dr. Kuroita Katsumi and you will understand

transnational activities established during the first phase continued during the second.

quite how each person's school of thought differs. However, they are all united in their agreement over the Esperantism of the now-departed Zamenhof, and come together to speak friendly. ⁹¹

Indeed, whilst the *Homaranismo* debates show that the Esperanto community was capable of intense disagreement regarding Esperantism, it is also striking how they were generally able to find sufficient common ground within their advocacy of Esperanto to override other differences. From Yamaga Taiji the anarchist, to his Esperanto mentor, the conservative Kuroita Katsumi; including figures such as biologist Oka Asajirō and Ōsugi Sakae, who clashed over their interpretations of Darwinian evolution,⁹² the religious leader Deguchi Ōnisaburō and the blind activists such as Torii Tokujirō, as well as the advocate of strict Esperanto neutralism, Chifu Toshio, the various different members of the Esperanto community each brought their own interpretation to what it meant to be an Esperantist, but nevertheless they were mostly united by Esperanto.

Of these striking examples of the diversity of the community of Esperantists, perhaps the strongest symbol of the rise of both idealistic internationalism, and the growing transnational ties through Esperanto was Vassily Eroshenko. However, he also served to highlight the potentially problematic ongoing presence of socialism within the Japanese Esperanto movement. Japanese socialism had emerged from the 'winter period' which resulted from the trial of Kōtoku Shūsui and his fellow alleged conspirators in 1911 at the same time as Esperanto's second wave. The Japanese state remained highly suspicious of socialism and the threat it posed to society. In 1921, with Esperanto growing as never before, Eroshenko was summarily deported from Japan on the grounds that he

⁹¹ 'Eroshenko-kun wo Okuru: Bankokugo ni taisuru Tōkyoku no Mōmoku', *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 3rd June 1921.

⁹² Stanley (1982) p.49.

was a dangerous radical associated with the left.

Eroshenko had been the subject of police scrutiny from his original arrival in Japan,⁹³ and his expulsion from India marked him as a proponent of 'extremist thought' (*kageki shisō*);⁹⁴ however, it was his arrests, first at the labour march of 1st May 1921 (which attracted particular controversy),⁹⁵ and shortly afterwards at the second annual meeting of the Nihon Shakaishugi Dōmei (the Japanese Socialist League) on the 9th of May, which caused the state to act.⁹⁶ The deportation order was grounded in the claim that he had engaged in 'secret contact with intellectual groups engaged in dangerous thought and promotion of socialism and anarchism', making it clear that 'his presence in Japan has a bad impact on Japanese social conditions and endangers the maintenance of public security [*chian'iji*].'⁹⁷

With what would turn out to be bitter irony, the very same newspaper editions which reported Eroshenko's deportation order also gave details of plans for a Franco-Japanese art exchange, through which Nakamura Tsune's 'Portrait of Eroshenko', painted

93 Tokubetsu Yōshisatsujin Jōsei Ippan #6, a watchlist of individuals deemed worthy of special attention by the Tokkō police, GSS (1982a) p.487, also quoted in Fujii (1989) p.4. In London, Eroshenko had met Kropotkin, one of the chief inspirations of Japanese anarchism.

94 Tokubetsu Yōshisatsujin Jōsei Ippan #9, GSS (1982a) p.699, also quoted in Fujii (1989) p.8-9.

95 The May Day events were widely reported, for example see 'Shibaura to Ueno kara rōdō shukufuku no keiha', *Kokumin Shinbun*, 'Mēdē no uta takarakani rōdōsha kozotte', *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun*, both 2nd May 1921. After his release, Eroshenko was quoted by the *Asahi Shinbun*:

What on earth can I do? I simply went with only four friends who had visited to see what was going on. But the police, picked me up forcibly, entirely innocent as I was... The police chief was a good man – when it became clear that there were no grounds to hold me, he soon let me return home. Arresting people suddenly without their doing anything, this is an awful way of acting, I think. (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, 2nd May 1921)

96 *Rokokujin Tsuihō Shobun ni Kansuru Ken* ('On the matter of the deportation sentence of a Russian'), Home Ministry files, quoted in Fujii (1989) p.16. The file was opened on the 6th May, five days after Eroshenko's first arrest.

97 Home Ministry statement, quoted in 'Mōshijin E-shi wo Taikyō sasu Wake', *Asahi Shinbun*, 29th May 1921.

at the Nakamura-ya, would receive glowing appreciation in Paris the following year.⁹⁸ Whilst his image in oils stood as a symbol of modern Japanese artistic and cultural achievement, Eroshenko himself was deported at little notice and with no recourse for appeal, too dangerous to allow to remain in the country.

Eroshenko was arrested at the Nakamura-ya the very day that the order was released.⁹⁹ There was an immediate and widespread popular reaction. The *Asahi Shinbun* featured a large picture of Eroshenko being consoled by friends, entitled 'Kare ha Naita' ('He cried'). Akita Ujaku, together with others went to Yodobashi Police station to try to see Eroshenko, but were denied access. On the 3rd June, eight of Eroshenko's more prominent friends, including liberal/left wing writers such as Akita, Eguchi Kan and Hasegawa Nyozeikan, but notably also the more establishment figures Kuroita Katsumi and Nakamura Kiyō from the Esperanto community, appealed to the Minister for Home Affairs to seek the right to visit him.¹⁰⁰ They learned that he had been smuggled from Yodobashi onto a train to Kobe two nights before, 'from darkness into darkness', in the words of the *Asahi Shinbun*.¹⁰¹

Eroshenko's friends and colleagues in Japan were left reeling. In the midst of the furore surrounding Eroshenko's arrests and eventual expulsion, the *Tokkō* thought police gave a warning to the practitioners of Esperanto in Japan. In an article reporting 'rumours that the eyes that glared at socialism are staring at the Esperanto association', the *Yomiuri*

98 'Nichi-Futsu Bijutsu Kōkan Tenrankai', *Yomuri Shinbun*, 29th May 1921; 'Pari de Hyōban ni natta 'Eroshenko no Zō'', *Yomirui Shinbun*, 16th June 1922.

99 'Nakamura-ya Shujin E-shi wo Rachi shita Yodobashi-Shōchō wo Uttau', *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 8th June 1921.

100 'Taikyo-mae no E-shi ni Kokubetsu wo Yūjintachi ga Naishō ni Mōshideru', *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 3rd June 1921; 'Mōseinen to Betsuri no Gansho', *Yamato Shinbun*, 3rd June 1921, quoted in Fujii (1989), p.26.

101 'Yami kara Yami ni Tsuihō', *Asahi Shinbun*, 4th June 1921.

Shinbun quoted a source within the *Tokkō* as wondering whether the JEA might be using the cover of a 'cultural movement' to spread socialism, and warning that should organisations emerge as the replacements to the now banned Shakai Shugi Dōmei, they too would be banned.¹⁰²

Expelled from Japan, Eroshenko made use of Esperanto's transnational network to find another home, in China. The Japanese press retained an interest in his whereabouts, tracking his 'eternal wandering' to Harbin, en route to Shanghai,¹⁰³ and then to Beijing.¹⁰⁴ Between 1921 and 1923, Eroshenko taught at Beijing University, and was a close associate of the writer Lu Xun and his brother Zhou Zhuoren (周作人, *Shū Sakujin* in Japanese). In 1923, he finally returned to Russia.

Eroshenko was unusual in that he came to Japan not to teach or to trade but to learn and to experience Japanese culture. Once there, he became a human manifestation of many of the more idealistic conceptions of Esperantism. His wanderlust took him across Europe and Asia, making exactly the sort of borderless connections and friendships imagined by many of those who looked to the *Interna Ideo*. Moreover, for those Japanese Esperantists unable to travel abroad, he was a cosmopolitan presence that served to substantiate an ethic which could otherwise only be realised through the written word.

Whilst the independence of his actions appealed to more than just the blind, he was also reliant upon the support of others – first Russian Esperantists, then Nakamura Kiyō,

102 'Shakaishugi wo Niramu', *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 30th May 1921.

103 'Sono Ato no Mōshijin', *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 9th October 1921.

104 'Pekin Daigaku ni Manekareta Eroshenko-kun wo Shū Sakujin-shi Hō ni Otonau', *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 27th March 1922. Eroshenko's initial intention was to return to Russia, but ironically given his expulsion from both India and Japan on the grounds of his alleged radical socialism, he was denied entry to Russia, unable to prove his revolutionary credentials. (Muller & Benton 2006b, p.176).

who helped him financially, just as he would rely upon others to guide him when he struck out to explore new parts of town, or to visit new groups. This straightforward faith in the willingness of others to help him on his way and its fulfilment – his independence born of interdependence – was a powerful proof of Esperanto's message of common brotherhood. Eguchi Kan, writing shortly after Eroshenko had been expelled from Japan, described him as follows:

Eroshenko was an anarchist. A cosmopolitan. A poet. A musician. But the world in which he lived was not at all the contemporary world. It was a beautiful future country, a 'utopia freeland' [*'yūtopia furiirando'*]. A world of poetry close to a fairytale. His anarchism and cosmopolitanism, too, can only have been born from that beautiful world of poetry.¹⁰⁵

105 'Eroshenko Washirii wo Omou', *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 21st June 1921.

3. Language and Diplomacy: Japan and Esperanto at the League of Nations

The end of the First World War precipitated not only a rapid expansion of Japanese Esperanto activity and a resumption of the dormant European Esperanto scene, but a broader international set of events and movements linked by a sense of optimistic hope for the establishment of a longer, more lasting peace. Within the world of international relations, the idealism that came to be known as 'Wilsonianism', after President Woodrow Wilson, was a combination of principles of free trade, military disarmament, national self-determination, and transparent, multilateral diplomacy. The centrepiece of this was the creation of the League of Nations. The League was a classic example of diplomatic internationalism: seeking to promote cooperation between nation-states and the creation of lasting norms of international behaviour, based upon the nation-state as the fundamental actor in the international system.

Given that they were linked by this postwar optimism, it is unsurprising that Esperanto, reaching new heights of world-wide popularity, came into contact with the League of Nations, a new forum for international diplomacy and cooperation. In fact the League, as the pinnacle of a move towards multilateral diplomacy, exposed the emergence of an 'international language problem' in foreign affairs, further proof of the Esperanto cause.

When Esperanto and the League met, in a set of events in and around the debating chamber, there was a Japanese presence. In particular, three figures are noteworthy: Nitobe Inazō, as Under-Secretary General, perhaps the Japanese figure

most closely associated with the League; Fujisawa Chikao, a young Esperantist who worked with Nitobe in the League's Secretariat; and Yanagita Kunio, the ethnographer and folklorist, who spent two years on the League's Permanent Mandates Commission. The events were not only Esperanto's closest contact with official international recognition, they were also the most sustained period of interest in Esperanto showed by the Japanese state. Whilst domestic officials were casting a suspicious eye over the Japanese Esperanto movement at home, wary of its links to socialism, some within the Foreign Ministry was showing a cautious interest in the language.

The events at the League of Nations, then, represent Esperanto in a mainstream diplomatic setting. In doing so they represent an example of the complex relationship between national interest and internationalist impulse, as well as the difficulties of realising ideas of internationalism within the messy reality of practical diplomacy. For Japan, ideas of linguistic equality or justice might have real national advantages, whereas other nations saw Esperanto as either a threat, or as unworkable. The events also reveal that different conceptions of internationalism could clash with one another. For whilst the presence of Esperanto at the League of Nations was striking proof of its sudden rise, in the end Esperanto did not find the sort of support in the League that many thought it might.

The idea of linguistic equality, perhaps unsurprisingly, appealed more to smaller nations and marginal linguistic identities, and to unconventional actors in the sphere of international relations, rather than to the larger nations who spoke the major languages, or to career members of the diplomatic corps. Thus, Japan's cautious embrace of

Esperanto at the League casts the nation in a different light: rather than a conservative member of the great powers, it reveals a Japan willing to side with smaller, less powerful allies, and to at least give consideration to potentially radical proposals.

Language in general and Esperanto in particular were raised as topics in the first year of the League of Nations. The League's founding covenant and basic operations used French and English, however there was a rapid appreciation that this new, radical experiment in diplomacy revealed new questions, of both practicality and fairness regarding the use of language. In one of the early sessions, several nations raised the possibility of Spanish being adopted as an official language of the League. They ultimately withdrew their motion, a decision involving 'a spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to the common welfare' from the Spanish language bloc.¹

The subject of Esperanto was raised at the same time as Spanish, but by contrast, the proposal put to the First Assembly made no immediate claims to official usage. Rather the motion, proposed by a broad range of nations including Persia, South Africa, Belgium, and Brazil, sought to formally recognise the existence of an international language problem, and to give credit to the efforts of some member nations in the field of education:

The League of Nations, well aware of the language difficulties that prevent a direct intercourse between the peoples and of the urgent need of finding some practical means to remove this obstacle and help the good understanding of nations,

follows with interest the experiments of official teaching of the international language Esperanto in the public schools of some members of the League,

¹ Nitobe (1921) p.9. Nitobe remarks that English and French were not explicitly official languages of the League, as such, but their use in the founding covenant gave them quasi-official status.

hopes to see that teaching made more general in the whole world so that the children of all countries may know at least two languages, their mother tongue and an easy means of international communication,

asks the Secretary General to prepare, for the next Assembly, a report on the results reached in this respect.²

Despite being accompanied by a broadly favourable report from one of the Assembly subcommittees,³ when the motion reached the full chamber it was deferred without significant debate.⁴ This was largely the work of the French delegation, jealous of their language's status as the chief language of European diplomacy.⁵

The Second Assembly, in 1921, saw the Esperanto motion resubmitted, substantially unchanged from the previous year.⁶ Edmond Privat, later the head of the *Universala Esperanto-Asocio* (the UEA) and separately a vice-delegate to the League for Persia, had led efforts in the intervening twelve months to promote Esperanto within the League and its member delegations. Chief amongst these efforts was an invitation extended to the Secretary General to send a representative to the UEA congress, held in Prague in the summer of 1921. Nitobe Inazō, Under-Secretary General, attended along with Fujisawa Chikao, fellow Japanese and the only active Esperantist working for the Secretariat (the League's permanent staff). Nitobe submitted a report on his return, the

2 Draft resolution, League of Nations, document number 20/48/194, December 1920 (via Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR) document B06150936600, Foreign Ministry file on International Language Problems).

3 Report presented to the Assembly by Committee II, 'International Language', Assembly document 20/48/253. The report suggested dropping the third paragraph of the draft resolution regarding the hopes of the Assembly that Esperanto teaching be spread more widely.

4 *League of Nations 1st Assembly Plenary Meetings*, 31st Plenary meeting, 18th December 1920, p.753-4.

5 For a fuller account of Esperanto as considered by the League of Nations, see Forster (1982), chapter 6.

6 The only significant difference was a footnote remarking that 'international language is understood as a practical auxiliary language which will in no way prejudice the rights and traditional prestige of the French tongue as the international language of diplomacy' (League of Nations document A.74.1921).

bulk of which was later distributed to member delegations.⁷

In considering the second Esperanto motion in 1921, the committee compiling the agenda for the Assembly recommended that full consideration of Esperanto be postponed, but that a survey be conducted of Esperanto education in member countries, as suggested by Nitobe in his report. This was agreed by the Assembly, so the Secretariat prepared a report on Esperanto teaching which was then submitted to the Third Assembly, in the autumn of 1922.

However, in 1922 Esperanto met with more serious opposition. The French delegation was more hostile than ever, whilst other nations came out in support of English, or merely against Esperanto.⁸ Eventually the question of Esperanto was referred to the Committee for Intellectual Cooperation (Committee VI) for further consideration. French influence on this committee was great, so it essentially represented a victory for those hostile to the language. The end result was that in 1923 the committee rejected Esperanto in favour of finding a natural language best suited for international communication.⁹ There, the major presence of Esperanto at the League of Nations come to a close, after four years of consideration, only in the final one of which was Esperanto debated in any detail, and then with a negative outcome.¹⁰

7 Nitobe (1921).

8 Forster (1982) p.177.

9 'THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS: Esperanto Spurned', *Time Magazine*, 13th August 1923; *League of Nations Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, Report of the Second Session*, League of Nations document A.31 1923.XII, p.12-13. For Akira Iriye (1997), the Committee for Intellectual Cooperation and Esperanto represent two examples of 'cultural internationalism', so there is a slight irony that it was the committee which dealt the final blow to the hopes of Esperantists for League support.

10 There was one final twist in 1924, with the passing of a proposal by the Persian delegation that Esperanto be accepted as a 'clear' language for use in telegrams, thereby reducing the cost of sending them.

It has been suggested that Esperanto's experience with the League of Nations was something which 'her apologists refer to as a "success" and her opponents call a "failure"'.¹¹ The end result was little in the way of official acceptance by the League as a whole, but a generally positive reception outside of the debating chamber and committee rooms, for example in Nitobe's internal report. However dissatisfying, that Esperanto was considered at all at the League was itself a mark of the degree to which it merited recognition as a popular movement. To characterise it as a failure, then, is in part fair, but misses the significance of the events as a symbol of Esperanto's wider popular success. Indeed, perhaps it was the Esperanto activity amongst the peoples of different nations around the League of Nations which was the most noteworthy endorsement of Esperanto's popularity, rather than the official proceedings.

Bringing Japanese Esperanto to the League of Nations

As one of the diplomatic great powers and a permanent member of the Council of the League of Nations (the equivalent of the United Nations Security Council), Japan was the most significant non-European member of the League. As a non-European nation, and indeed a relative newcomer to conventional western diplomatic circles, Japan felt the presence of the international language problem more closely than did perhaps other nations of a similar status. Thus it is perhaps of no great surprise that Japan was closely involved with the debates over language at the League, but also that Japan occupied a position that was, at once, both that of an insider and yet also that of a more marginal player.

11 Harlow (1995) chapter 7, 'History in Fine'.

Japan's permanent seat on the Council marked it out as a member of the elite circle of international politics – only France, the United Kingdom and Italy shared the honour (the United States of America, Germany, and the Soviet Union all being absent from the League). It was a symbol of the rise to great power status that had begun with victory in the Russo-Japanese war. From a position of endangered sovereignty in the mid nineteenth century, Japan had not only secured its independence and emerged into contact with the wider world, it had done so with unprecedented success.

However, Japan's rise in the world was not unqualified. During the First World War, Japan's opportunistic twenty-one demands on China led to a backlash from the United States and the United Kingdom, revealing that Japan could not act without regard for the European and American powers, even in Asia. Moreover, there was a perception that not all great powers were equal. Japan's efforts to achieve a racial equality clause in the Versailles Treaty negotiations proved unsuccessful.¹² This, as well as racial laws in California and elsewhere in the United States of America were received poorly by the Japanese public and media, seen as designed to deliberately exclude them. For all that Japan might be called a great power, there was a sense that Euro-American racism still stood as a barrier between Japan and real equality on the international stage.

Within Japan, the creation of the League of Nations was regarded, even by leading liberal intellectuals, as at least partially hypocritical – as a tool for the maintenance of Franco-Anglo-American hegemony, rather than a search for true

¹² See Shimazu (1998) for further details.

internationalism.¹³ Within the Foreign Ministry, there was a struggle between two impulses when the idea of the League first began to circulate. Institutional conservatism resisted the idea of a new alternative to conventional forms of bilateral diplomacy. However, contrasting this was a long-running desire within the ministry to remain in step with emerging international consensus – a principle of conformity to the majority, usually referred to as *Taisei Junnō*.¹⁴

When it became clear that the League was to be a reality, the Japanese state committed wholeheartedly to it. The government established an office under the auspices of the embassy in Paris, and sent Baron Megata Tanetarō from the House of Peers to attend the first session as honorary head of delegation. In the years which followed, Japan would prove to be a diligent, albeit perhaps not particularly inspiring member of the League. Within the Foreign Ministry, a term on the delegation to the League often led to further, high profile positions and career success, suggesting that the League was considered an important part of the diplomatic firmament, and one to which should be sent talented members of the diplomatic corps.¹⁵

The general public and government attitude towards the League of Nations, then, was one of cautious optimism: not uncritical, but committed to trying to make it work nonetheless. However, the Japanese Esperanto community was perhaps more positive, on the whole, than the general public. Just like the global Esperanto organisation, the UEA, the JEI in Japan saw the League of Nations as an opportunity to advance the cause

13 For example, see Barshay (1988) p.72-3.

14 Burkman (2008) xiv.

15 Burkman (2008) chapters 2 & 3 (p.29-59) contains a more detailed outline of bureaucratic responses to the emergence of the League of Nations movement and its subsequent creation.

of Esperanto. Prior to the first sessions of the League, Osaka Kenji, president of the JEL, and Ga Morizō, another influential Esperantist, went on a round of meetings to promote the international cause of Esperanto amongst those with influence on the forthcoming delegation to the League. They met with several leading members of the Japan Association for the League of Nations, such as Shibusawa Eichi, Prince Tokugawa Iesato, and Tagawa Daikichirō; as well as Baron Megata, head of the first Japanese delegation to the League.

The Japan Association for the League of Nations, was a quasi-governmental organisation, set up and funded by the Foreign Ministry in advance of the official launch of the League, modelled upon similar organisations in the United Kingdom and the United States. Its goals were initially to raise consciousness of the role and aims of the League; later it played an important role in disseminating information around Japan regarding the League's activities, for example sponsoring domestic lecture tours by Nitobe Inazō.¹⁶ It attracted widespread support from politicians, statesmen and businessmen.

Although official Japanese interest in international Esperanto activity can be traced back to the 1907 World Esperanto Congress, held in Dresden, when Shinmura Izuru, a linguist then studying in Germany, attended as an observer on behalf of the state (making Japan one of the earliest nation-states to engage with the international Esperanto organisations),¹⁷ after that there had been little or no official engagement with

¹⁶ Burkman (2008) p.xiii, p.139.

¹⁷ Forster (1982) p.170.

Esperanto.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the outlook for the JEI representatives seemed very positive – their efforts were well received and several of the League of Nations Association members had prior knowledge of, and positive opinions regarding, Esperanto: Prince Tokugawa knew of Esperanto well, Soeda Juichi had studied Esperanto himself, and Megata 'listened attentively... and promised that he would consider the problem of international language at the League'.¹⁹

In addition to these efforts at lobbying the Japanese League of Nations delegation, there was another, more direct voice of Japanese Esperanto at the League: Fujisawa Chikao. Fujisawa was the son of Fujisawa Rikitarō, one of the first to study western mathematics in post-*Ishin* Japan. He was something of a linguistic prodigy – learning French, German, English, Russian, Italian and Dutch whilst still a student, then going on to graduate from the Imperial University's Law Faculty and joining the Ministry of Agriculture, where he often acted as a translator.²⁰

The exact details of Fujisawa's introduction to Esperanto are somewhat unclear, but he was one of a younger generation who began to take on leadership of the Japanese Esperanto movement at the close of the First World War, closely involved with Osaka Kenji in the creation of JEI in 1919.²¹ Around the same time he visited Vladivostok, writing a series of articles on his experiences in *La Revuo Orienta*.²² He left the Ministry of Agriculture in 1919, but later travelled to Europe as a member of a

18 One partial caveat to that is the interest in Esperanto shown by Hayashi Tadasu, two-time Foreign Minister, mentioned in chapters one and two.

19 *La Revuo Orienta*, October, November and December, 1920.

20 Usui (2010) p.5.

21 Usui (2010) discusses a number of different accounts of Fujisawa's introduction to Esperanto.

22 JEI (1956) p.44.

government delegation to a conference in Genoa. Although the delegation then continued on to America, Fujisawa remained behind, travelling around Europe and eventually obtaining employment within the information section of the League of Nations Secretariat.²³

Fujisawa brought with him an optimistic and idealistic attitude towards both the League and Esperanto – the former would 'open up a new epoch... in a world still full of injustice' and he took pride in the opportunity to play a central role in that task and to advocate Esperanto and Esperantism whilst there.²⁴ This rather more wholehearted embrace of the ideals of the League of Nations than the sort of cautious, qualified optimism described above as common amongst even liberal Japanese intellectuals was perhaps typical of the new generation of Japanese Esperantists, especially those for whom *Homaranismo* was a compelling message.

However, Fujisawa overlaid this perspective with a more personal point of view, derived from his experiences of working for the state. Fujisawa's direct experience of Japanese efforts to use foreign languages in government business tempered his enthusiasm about the potential impact that Japan could play at the League of Nations, and reinforced the potential advantages to Japan of the use of Esperanto:

'I fear that the delegation recently sent from Japan will repeat the same failure [as that of the Genoa conference] – due to inability at French and English. Thus the adoption of Esperanto as the sole language of international communication would be very a opportune proposal for the interests of Japan.'²⁵

23 It is possible that Nitobe Inazō was instrumental in Fujisawa's employment at the League – Nitobe was headmaster at the First Higher School in Tokyo while Fujisawa was a student there, so they had some prior history (Usui 2010, p.6-7).

24 *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1921, p.2.

25 *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1921, p.2.

Despite, or perhaps because of, his own linguistic prowess, Fujisawa's opinion of the overall abilities in foreign languages of even those Japanese within the diplomatic service was dismal, and he thought that this was a real and concrete barrier to wider international success. But Esperanto might present a possible solution. Not only was Esperanto a great project that sought equality for all mankind, it was a tool of real and practical advantage to a nation such as Japan, revealing a coincidence of internationalist ideals with (Japanese) national interest.

Fujisawa sent letters back to his colleagues at the JEI, revealing details of the Esperanto related activity at the League. Given the positive impressions given by the senior members of the Association for the League of Nations, it seemed likely that, should the language receive consideration by the League, the Japanese delegation at least would be in support of the language. Indeed, Fujisawa was not the only JEI member at the League – another, Usami Toshihiko, was a junior member of the delegation itself. So expectations were running high.

However, when news began to be received in Japan of Esperanto's failure to gain recognition at the First Assembly of the League, what they learned was as puzzling as it was disappointing. Not only was the 1920 motion rebuffed by the League, the Japanese delegation were reported to have played a key role in its rejection. It took some time for the full picture to become clear, but it turned out that the Japanese delegation had supported the French in their desire to reject the Esperanto motion.²⁶ Unsurprisingly,

²⁶ *La Revuo Orienta*, February 1921, p.1. The verbatim record of the plenary session mentioned in footnote 5 makes no reference to Japan, but Fujisawa Chikao's on-the-spot account makes it clear that, if the Japanese delegation was not particularly instrumental in preventing the Esperanto motion from being passed, they were nevertheless opposed to it.

the response from the Japanese Esperantists was angry and confused. In a set of open questions posed to the Japanese delegation, published in *La Revuo Orienta*, Takahashi Kunitarō pointedly highlighted the issue of diplomacy and language: 'Which national language did you use when you expressed your opinions against Esperanto... Whose is the blame, that Japan cannot free its diplomacy from some or other foreign language?'²⁷

Matters were further confused when the offices of the JEI began to receive telegrams from Esperantists around the world, congratulating them on their success in recruiting the Japanese delegation to the League in support of the language. The Japanese delegation in Paris, too, was the recipient of these messages. Eventually this was revealed to have been a misunderstanding whereby an article written by Fujisawa Chikao for the *Yomiuri Shinbun* on the 'Urgent Need for the Introduction of Esperanto' was translated and included within a League-published collection of international articles related to League activities, incorrectly indicated as coming from within the Japanese delegation and indicating official Japanese support.²⁸

Rather than fall into despondency when faced with this set back, Fujisawa joined the major Esperantist in Geneva, Edmond Privat, in reinvigorating their efforts at promoting Esperanto to the League participants, seeking to set the stage for a resubmission of an Esperanto motion at the Second Assembly, to be held in the autumn of 1921. Fujisawa organised study groups and an internal magazine for the Secretariat, as well as lobbying delegations to support the Esperanto motions, and writing articles

²⁷ *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1921, p.8.

²⁸ *La Revuo Orienta*, February 1921, p.2.

on the League's Esperanto activities for newspapers at home.²⁹ In addition, he joined Nitobe Inazō as an official League representative at the 1921 UEA Esperanto congress in Prague.

Nitobe Inazō is perhaps the single Japanese statesman most associated with the League of Nations. His time at the League was spent as Under-Secretary General of the Secretariat – that is, as the assistant head of the League's administrative staff, an employee of the League itself, rather than as a member of the Japanese delegation. This placed him in a somewhat ambiguous position, one perhaps reflective of both Nitobe's entire career and the very nature of the League's attempt to reform international relations. On the one hand, Nitobe's appointment would have been impossible without Japanese state approval, his position was both a symbol of Japanese status and a useful position for the furthering of Japanese aims, and Nitobe himself had a keen sense of Japanese national interest and achievement. On the other, in the words of the Balfour report of 1920:

The members of the Secretariat, once appointed, are no longer in the service of their own country, but become for the time being exclusively officials of the League. Their duties are not national but international.³⁰

Nitobe encountered Esperanto, then, not in a private capacity, nor as a representative of the Japanese state, but on behalf of the League of Nations itself. Nitobe and Fujisawa attended the 1921 congress at the invitation of the UEA. Nitobe remained very keen to avoid making a firm statement in favour of Esperanto. He stressed that he was at the

29 *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1921; also 'Kokusai Renmei ni okeru Esperanto Mondai', *Asahi Shinbun*, 16th – 22nd March 1923.

30 Quoted in Forster (1982), p.184.

congress '*not* because it was Esperantist, but because it was international',³¹ and suggested that any effort on behalf of the League of Nations to find and adopt a common international language would be slow work.³² Nevertheless, he noted that the Esperanto community looked to the League of Nations as a body which shared many of their goals. He described them as 'victims of derision and indifference from principalities and powers... in search of an authority to endorse their cause', who, 'feeling a common bond... look to the League as their most probable patron and protagonist'.³³ In these terms, Nitobe's very presence in Prague was a potent symbol in and of itself, especially given his seniority within the League hierarchy.

Returning from the congress, Nitobe wrote a report on his experience. He expressed great regret that somehow the press had reported him suggesting that the League would be adopting Esperanto shortly.³⁴ Such an enthusiastic statement sounds much more like Fujisawa Chikao, the idealistic young Secretariat employee and Esperantist, than the more circumspect statesman, Nitobe. It seems likely, then, that this misunderstanding arose from another case of mis-attribution involving Fujisawa Chikao – the ebullience of the junior League employee ascribed to the senior.

Whilst he was unwilling to make an outright endorsement of Esperanto, Nitobe did recognise and admit the presence of a real and pressing international language problem. This was not insignificant. Indeed, his analysis of the problem was in many respects fairly radical. It has been suggested that Nitobe used his report to further the

31 Nitobe (1921) p.9, Nitobe's own emphasis.

32 Nitobe (1921) p.1-2.

33 Nitobe (1921) p.5.

34 Nitobe (1921) p.2.

Japanese government's interest in the issue of racial inequality.³⁵ I would question to what extent this is true, preferring to suggest that Nitobe's Asian origins gave him a perspective in which the racial elements of the language problem were more readily apparent than they might be to a European: I think that the bulk of his report carries a fairly clear sense of genuine internationalist spirit and a sense of responsibility as a servant of the League, rather than an instrumentalist attempt to use the issue for national advantage, for all that the national and international coincided in the ways identified by Fujisawa Chikao.

One of the most striking things about Nitobe's generally positive take on artificial languages and Esperanto in particular was the lack of any evidence that he learned the language himself at all. Despite his neutral official stance, Nitobe was widely reported to be privately in favour of Esperanto – Fujisawa Chikao and Yanagita Kunio suggested he supported the language in their personal relations with him, and Nagata Hidejirō, mayor of Tokyo during the 1920s, recalled him advocating it in Japan, too – yet he appears not to have gone so far as to study it himself.³⁶

Nitobe's analysis was a solution to a practical problem that nevertheless gave consideration to normative elements. The practical side was pressing: not only in the fields of commerce, science, and labour was there a need for a language of international communication, the field of diplomacy too was faced with problems. The new era of multilateral relations pressed upon the League of Nations an unprecedented

35 Bilotft (2010) p.90.

36 Fujisawa: *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1921, p.2; Yanagita: Yanagita (1967a) p.311; Nagata: 'Nihon Kokumin to Esuperanto', *La Revuo Orienta*, December 1934, p.342.

requirement for translation into and out of a rapidly growing number of different languages.

Nitobe argued that the answer to these problems must include an element of 'justice'.³⁷ Whilst acknowledging that English and French had their own respective advantages, not least of all being the languages of the Covenant of the League, he argued that they should not be considered as acceptable answers to the problem – he claimed that Norwegian was the only national language to have been proposed convincingly, based on its simplicity and uncontentious position. He suggested, however, that 'a neutral language claiming no nationality' represented the best option.³⁸

The emergence of the question of international equality and justice within the problem of language in international relations was a post-First World War phenomenon. In arguing for a neutral international language, the 1906 Esperantists in Japan focused upon the major nations – no powerful nation would cede to another's language the position of common international tongue, and so the result would inevitably be squabbling and discord. By contrast, Nitobe's analysis reflected a focus, not upon the powerful, but upon the minor, and used a language not of power, but of justice.

Within Nitobe Inazō's life, there is much that can be seen as examples of what might be termed a benevolent paternalism – an elitism that 'included a sense of responsibility for those in less fortunate circumstances'.³⁹ Thus we see Nitobe the progressive colonial administrator, improving the agricultural techniques of the native

37 Nitobe (1921) p.10.

38 Nitobe (1921) p.6.

39 Howes (1993) p.8.

subjects; Nitobe the moralising headmaster leading his students; or Nitobe the League Under-Secretary giving consideration to those nations outside of the great powers. The idea of less civilised nations helped along the path of development by more advanced ones has a long presence within the history of imperialism, but in considering solutions to the international language problem, Nitobe was not merely arguing for the support of minor nations by the great powers, he was arguing that there was a principle of justice by which the major (linguistic) nations owed an obligation to treat those nations on the peripheries as equals.

Whilst Nitobe's support for the idea of at least opening the question of the appropriate language of international diplomacy were at odds with the stance taken by the Japanese delegation to the League in the First Assembly, 1921 saw a complete about face in the official Japanese position. After playing some form of active role in the rejection of the first year's motion, the Japanese were amongst the list of the nations proposing the motion to the Second Assembly. Fujisawa Chikao was in no doubt as to the cause of the about turn – the personnel involved. Japan was represented in the League chambers by various ambassadors to European nations, chief amongst them Ishii Kikujirō, ambassador to France (thereby the head of the embassy in Paris, where the delegation's offices were located). However, it was Adachi Mineichirō, ambassador to the United Kingdom, who was the Japanese signatory on the Esperanto motion of 1921.

Fujisawa described Adachi as 'that strange thing in the Japanese diplomatic world: a competent French speaker', who, as a result, fully understood the difficulties

involved in Japanese efforts to learn European languages. By contrast, the ongoing rejection of Esperanto by Ishii Kikujirō and Hayashi Gonsuke (the third major ambassador to represent Japan at the League) was made all the more inexplicable given their inability to master French, English, or German.⁴⁰

From 1921 onwards, the general stance from Japanese diplomatic officials towards Esperanto remained more positive. The Japanese Association for the League of Nations expressed the view that '*Esperantismo* wholly accords with the purpose of League of Nations';⁴¹ Japan was an advocate of Esperanto in its further contacts with the League;⁴² and in the next couple of years the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce all engaged with the international and domestic Esperanto movements to some extent.⁴³ Elsewhere, the Japanese representative to the International Labour Organisation was a co-sponsor of a motion to have the ILO increase its internal and external use of Esperanto.⁴⁴

If Adachi Mineichirō was the prime mover in the Japanese switch on the Esperanto question at the League, nevertheless it seems unlikely that he had a free hand to determine official policy on the issue, so there remains the question of how he was able to persuade the other major figures in the delegation and Foreign Ministry

40 *La Revuo Orienta*, November 1921, p.130.

41 *La Revuo Orienta*, September 1921, p.100. *Esperantismo* being the Esperanto language form of Esperantism; precisely whether they meant by it some specific form of Esperanto ideology, or a more general sense of the goals of Esperanto is unclear.

42 Forster (1982), p175.

43 JACAR B04122523300, Foreign Ministry files on International Esperanto meetings. The Foreign Ministry and the Education Ministry were involved in questions of Esperanto within schools that resulted from the League of Nations questionnaire, whilst the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce collected correspondence regarding Esperanto and trade sent to various Japanese state institutions from overseas groups.

44 Forster (1982), p178, *La Revuo Orienta* February 1922.

hierarchy to accept the change in policy. The events during the period 1920-21 may have helped sway others with a say in the issue – for example, Nitobe's report, Fujisawa's own work in promoting Esperanto around the League, a petition by a number of Japanese individuals in and around the League in favour of Esperanto which was eventually presented by Yanagita Kunio to the Diet,⁴⁵ and perhaps even the confused telegrams received by the delegation in the wake of the First Assembly.

In the absence of documentary evidence, I think that the most convincing explanation for the change of stance can be made by drawing upon the twin motivations for Japanese foreign policy referred to earlier. Just as the Japanese view on the creation of the League of Nations changed as initial conservatism gave way to an embrace of an emerging international consensus, so too perhaps did an initial position on Esperanto which resisted a potential threat of change within conventional diplomatic norms and supported the position of France, a fellow great power, give way in the face of what seemed like a wave of international enthusiasm for a neutral language.

In making the shift, the Japanese were not following the lead of fellow great powers, but rather siding with another group of countries entirely. As a vision of equality between all nations, Esperanto as articulated at the League of Nations appealed more to smaller, more marginal linguistic groups than to the diplomatic powerhouses. In his report to the Secretary-General, Nitobe identified a postwar trend towards the growing proliferation of smaller, niche national languages – such as Gaelic, Czech and

⁴⁵ *La Revuo Orienta*, February 1922, p20.

Flemish – and remarked that it was amongst these 'smaller nationalities, eager to develop their own national tongue', that a core base of Esperanto support was found.⁴⁶

When Japan moved to embrace Esperanto, then, it was adopting a position, not of a great power, but of a diplomatic outsider. The proposers of the motion at the First Assembly in 1920 were a mix of smaller European, south American and Asian nations: Brazil, Belgium, China, Chile, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, India, Haiti, Italy, Persia, and South Africa. South Africa's presence on the list was the result of the British citizen Lord Robert Cecil, the head of their delegation, a 'staunch liberal internationalist', and something of a thorn in the side of the British government.⁴⁷ The following year, Japan was joined by Romania, Finland, Albania, Venezuela, and Poland in adding their names to the list of proposing nations.

There were other nations with minority national languages who opposed Esperanto – for example Norway and Sweden,⁴⁸ but chief in opposition to the group was France. The position of French as the language of diplomacy had been dealt a blow at the Versailles conference, the result of both Lloyd George and Wilson's reliance on English. The Versailles Treaty and the Covenant to the League of Nations were published in both English and French, with equal authority given to both, so the French language's traditional role in European diplomacy was in a position of greater risk than ever before. Likewise, the British had no great incentive to embrace an international

46 Nitobe (1921) p.11.

47 Biltoft (2010) p.100. The British government eventually co-opted him into the British delegation to the League, with the hope that he would feel a greater obligation there to tow the party line than he had in representing South Africa.

48 Biltoft (2010) p.102.

language, seeing it as holding the potential for undermining national interests.⁴⁹

Yanagita Kunio and Esperanto

For all that the question of Esperanto at the League was a meeting of (various forms of) national interest with internationalist spirit, and of various different institutional bodies with their own motivations and goals, it was also an encounter that involved individuals who brought their own personal perspectives and experiences to bear on it. The final Japanese individual significantly involved with Esperanto at the League, Yanagita Kunio, played little direct role in the major outcomes, but his personal experience of the question of language at the League was an intense one, which inspired an immediate interest in Esperanto. For Yanagita, Esperanto represented a possible solution to a language problem which he experienced in the most direct way, and thereby a means of ensuring a greater involvement in the new international society.

Yanagita Kunio is famous as the father of a Japanese school of folklore studies which sought to record and preserve the different patterns of rural life in Japan's regions. He spent two years at the League, working on the Permanent Mandates Commission between 1921 and 1923. Whilst there, he became involved with Esperanto, an interest which he continued upon his return to Japan.⁵⁰

Yanagita came to the League at the suggestion of Nitobe Inazō. The two had met through their shared interest in rural affairs in 1910, forming a study group called the

49 Bilstoft (2010) p.29, p.101.

50 Okamura Yoshio published a series of articles on Yanagita at the League of Nations, 'Junēbu no Yanagita Kunio', between July 2010 and January 2011 in *La Revuo Orienta*. Although these came after this section was substantially completed and are not directly cited here, they were nevertheless helpful as a second perspective on the events.

Kyōdo-kai (usually translated as the Native Place Association). Yanagita also published the first edition of his seminal work, *Tōno Monogatari*, in 1910, although he continued his career within the Japanese bureaucracy until 1920, when he left to join the *Asahi Shinbun*.

Yanagita came to the League in 1921 to serve on the Permanent Mandates Commission. The PMC was set up to monitor the workings of the League's new mandate system; formed from colonies seized from the losing powers of the First World War, the mandates were a compromise between new ideals of national self-determination and the colonial ambitions of the winning powers.

Major member nations took over the administration of the new mandates, but they did so in the name of the League. The mandates themselves were classified into three categories – A, B, and C – according to the degree of development of the resident population and potential for becoming independent nations, the ultimate goal of the mandate process. Japan received control of the southern Pacific mandate – a set of islands seized from German control and classified in band C, the lowest level of development.

Whilst it was suggested that the mandates represented an innovation in colonial rule whereby, for the first time, territories were administered from abroad in the principle interests of their own people, rather than in the interests of the colonisers,⁵¹ the formation and administration of the mandates retained similarities of an older imperial colonialism.

51 Wright (1930) p.240. This view emerged in the PMC proceedings, and was not universally endorsed.

The PMC was established to monitor the administration of the mandates by the member nations such as the United Kingdom and Japan. Yanagita represented a perfect choice for Japan. The PMC nominally represented the interests not of the administrating nations but of the mandate's peoples, so government employees were expressly excluded from serving as members on the commission. From the perspective of the Japanese government, Yanagita, only recently removed from the bureaucracy, was one of their own who, whilst known for being outspoken, still understood the systems of priorities and compromises involved in running the Japanese nation.

The PMC was a small, intimate body; Yanagita immediately found that his language skills were not sufficient to allow him play a full role on it. Despite an elite education and being a voracious reader of European scholarship throughout his life, Geneva proved to Yanagita that there was a great deal of difference between reading a foreign language and using it in a live setting. The inability to contribute significantly to the sessions of the Commission was intensely frustrating to him: although his contributions increased over time, the result of significant efforts to improve his language skills, he ultimately resigned from the post as a direct result of the issue.⁵²

Right from his arrival in Europe, Yanagita Kunio saw Esperanto as a potential solution to his, and others', language problems. In a letter written shortly after his arrival in Geneva, Yanagita mentioned the language in a letter to his collaborator, Sasaki Kizen, suggesting that Sasaki, too, should take it up. He later wrote:

[For Esperanto], it is not simply the grammar, but as regards the language, 'simplicity', 'clarity', even 'good sound', are particularly important; perhaps more

⁵² Yanagita (1967a) p.313.

than important, they are fundamental. The text which I admire most is a biography of Zamenhof, written by a young scholar here in Geneva called Privat. If it is hard to obtain in Japan, perhaps I should send you a copy now. I even think that through Esperanto, the Japanese language might also improve its style.⁵³

Yanagita recommended Esperanto to Sasaki, advising him to make contact with their mutual acquaintance, Akita Ujaku. That Yanagita already knew Akita was an Esperantist reveals that he was acquainted with the language already, but he had not previously been involved with it: it was Yanagita's direct experience in Europe which convinced him of the need and value of an international language. Yanagita engaged with the Esperanto community enthusiastically:

'At just that time there was a movement for the recognition of Esperanto underway in the League, and the reason for the greater than usual interest I had in it was straightforward. If adopted, I too could express what I thought. Further, it valued the smaller nations: because those [League] representatives who were not diplomats were all suffering, even if it were not to reach the level of [usage of] English, or French, I thought it might be more freely used [in international circles].'⁵⁴

In addition to offering smaller, non-European nations the chance to participate more fully in diplomatic circles, Yanagita Kunio also saw Esperanto as a way of allowing the voices to be heard of those from beyond the diplomatic profession. Although as graduates of Tokyo Imperial University, and one-time bureaucrats, neither Fujisawa nor Yanagita (nor indeed Nitobe) can really be considered as outsiders, it is noteworthy that neither were they career members of the Foreign Ministry. An unconventional idea, Esperanto appealed more to the unconventional diplomats.

Fujisawa Chikao saw use of Esperanto as a potential solution to Japanese incompetence in foreign languages. Yanagita's experience on the PMC was this

53 Yanagita (1966a), p.477.

54 Yanagita (1967a) p.311.

observation writ large in personal terms. However, whilst Fujisawa and Yanagita looked to a neutral language for the solution, others were less open to radical change. Ishii Kikujirō, ambassador to France and, as described above, one of the chief recipients of Fujisawa's scorn on the Japanese delegation to the League of Nations, was no less aware of the problem of language in Japan's diplomacy than his fellow Japanese at the League. In his memoirs, he cited the language barrier as one of the chief causes in Japanese diplomatic failure.⁵⁵ Yanagita recorded that, when he went to Ishii to resign his position on the PMC, citing his struggles with language, Ishii replied that everyone suffered from the problem.⁵⁶ However, Ishii's solution was not wholesale change within the diplomatic system, but rather improvements to a Japanese foreign language education system which Nitobe Inazō described as prioritising the written word to the almost total exclusion of the spoken.⁵⁷

Like Fujisawa Chikao, Yanagita's overseas experiences shaped his perspective on Esperanto in ways which differed from the typical ones shared by many of the new Esperantists taking up the language in Japan at the same time as he was in Geneva. Although he shared the sort of ideas of fairness and equality expressed by Nitobe and he spoke of the language as a means for the inclusion of a wider range of participants in diplomatic discussion, he did not seem especially drawn to ideas such as the *Interna Ideo*.

Yanagita's Esperanto-related activities were extensive in Japan, as well as in Geneva. After his first session at the PMC, in the autumn of 1921, he returned to Japan

⁵⁵ The other being lack of experience due to Tokugawa policies of seclusion (Ishii 1931, p.436). Ishii (1931) was also published in partial translation in 1935 as *Diplomatic Commentaries* (Johns Hopkins Press).

⁵⁶ Yanagita (1967a) p.313.

⁵⁷ Ishii (1931) p.436; Nitobe (1923).

briefly and there he met with many leading domestic Esperantists. Back in Europe for the next set of meetings, he was very active within Esperanto circles there, holding meetings at his own house and engaging a private tutor.⁵⁸ His letters to Sasaki include accounts of the larger meetings he went to in Geneva and Venice, and he was instrumental in the submission of a petition to the House of Peers from Japanese in Geneva, advocating serious consideration of Esperanto.⁵⁹ He went on to be an active member of the Japanese Esperanto community upon his return to Japan in 1923, acting as the chair of the annual congress in 1926, and serving the JEI in various capacities from when it incorporated in 1926, at least until the early 1940s.⁶⁰

It has been suggested that Yanagita's experience in Geneva helped to form his image of Japan as an isolated 'island nation', and that he 'longed for a space where he could communicate in his native tongue', writing entries in his diary such as 'I did not see a single Japanese face the whole day',⁶¹ but in his letters he wrote of his adventures in Esperanto – of the vast numbers of nations represented at a meeting to celebrate Zamenhof's birthday, of his teacher, a Russian woman named Umansky, and of his trip to the Esperanto club in Venice.⁶²

However, despite the rapid growth of his interest in Esperanto, Yanagita made no mention of it in the context of his work on the mandates and their inhabitants. Indeed, he even addressed the question of language in the mandates without bringing

58 Yanagita (1967b) and Yanagita (1966b) contain details of Yanagita's appointments and activities at home and in Geneva. Nara (1973) features a thorough account of the Esperanto related entries.

59 *Asahi Shinbun*, 21st January, 1921; *La Revuo Orienta*, February 1922.

60 Nara (1973) p.157; Hatsushiba (1998) p.68-9, p.79, p.131.

61 Oguma (2002) p.183.

62 Yanagita (1966a) p.475, p.480.

Esperanto into the frame. In his most extensive contribution to the PMC, a report entitled 'The welfare and development of the natives in the mandated territories', submitted to the 1923 sessions of the PMC, Yanagita explored what languages were most suitable within the context of the educational system of the mandates.⁶³ Yanagita compared two cases – one where the French had imposed French upon the territory, and another where the German administration had sought to make use of a local language, Ewe. Although he regarded both as failures, Yanagita argued that the latter was the preferable choice because, whilst it potentially involved a difficult choice of one local language amongst many, this was less divisive than the split that resulted within a local population from the use of a European language – the creation of 'two mutually incompatible classes of natives – the class which is in contact with civilised people and the class which is not'.⁶⁴

It is perhaps possible to make too much of an absence, but there is something intriguing in the concurrence of Yanagita's embrace of Esperanto as a tool of great potential for cross-cultural communication at the League with his failure to make even a passing reference to it in the context of his consideration of languages in the mandates. Perhaps Esperanto would be just another foreign language, the imposition of which would be as divisive as in the French case.

But equally I would suggest that it represents an example of the internal tensions within the League of Nations, seen as an attempt to realise principles of

63 Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission 1922-1938, League of Nations Publications, Vol.1, pp.279-286.

64 *League of Nations: Permanent Mandates Commission Minutes*, p.284-5.

internationalism within the messy realities of international relations, especially in an era of colonies, mandates, and notable non-members of the League. Linguistic equality was one potential aspect of a new, idealistic system of international relations that was centred upon a League of Nations in which all members could have their voice heard. However, a necessary condition of membership of this club was statehood – only those people who could form a nation-state capable of retaining their own sovereignty could participate – it was a league of nation-states, not of humans. Those peoples who could not form a viable nation-state were not able to speak, and thus had no need of Esperanto.

Just as the principle of national self-determination seems to have been applied in Europe but not in other parts of the world, for all the popular appeal that Woodrow Wilson's speeches may have inspired,⁶⁵ so too is it possible to read Yanagita's silence on Esperanto in the context of the mandates as revealing an implicit assumption about the necessary conditions of development for joining the international community: the mandates were as yet not developed sufficiently for full statehood and membership of the League, and thus they as yet had no need of an international language.

A more concrete illustration of the complexities of internationalism within a setting less straightforward than that of an autonomous sovereign nation-state can also be seen in the ambiguous presence of Esperanto in Japan's colonies. Although Esperanto clubs formed in both Taiwan and Korea with mixed-nationality memberships, they had something of a troubled existence. As briefly mentioned in chapter two, the

⁶⁵ See Manela (2007) for a history of the experience of the 'Wilsonian Moment' from a colonial perspective.

first clubs in Taiwan faced opposition from governing officials until Nakamura Kiyō intervened whilst on a visit in 1915.⁶⁶ Even in 1922, with League-centred international optimism at its peak, *La Verda Ombro* ('Green Shadow'), the magazine of the Taiwanese Esperanto association reported the opinion of a Japanese official in Taiwan, revealing the potential power of language as a political issue:

Despite studying the same Esperanto, whereas for the Japanese the choice is undoubtedly simply as an international language of world exchange, a symbolic language of the inevitable rise of racial harmony, or perhaps a result of the love of the Japanese language; in the case of a Taiwanese the conditions are different. For them it is not the case of doing a world language as one of the peoples of the world; quite the opposite, it is fully imbued with the meaning of opposition to the Japanese language. Since language and thought have a relationship of connection, rejecting the Japanese language must be seen as rejecting Japan itself. The Japanese colonial policy must not tacitly allow such rebels.⁶⁷

It is tempting to read into ideas of internationalism and (particularly) cosmopolitanism a universalism which admits all humankind within some concept of equal status. However, as the example of Taiwan and the mandates potentially show, they nevertheless inevitably run into practical questions of membership and inclusion, and by extension, of exclusion.

Gustav Ramstedt and the Åland Islands

For all that they found easy sympathies between Esperantism's wider ambitions and the goals of the League of Nations, the advocates of Esperanto at the League of

66 Fukuda, Katō & Sakai (1967) p.72. The previous year a government official, Matsuoka Masao had attended some Esperanto meetings and argued with an Esperantist of Taiwanese ethnicity, So Hekki (蘇壁輝, Japanese reading taken from Hatsushiba (1998, p.36)). Nakamura's visit was for the purposes of meteorology, but his high status meant that he was welcomed by officials in Taiwan. When he learned that the Japanese authorities there were acting to oppose Esperanto, he reportedly threatened to only attend Esperanto meetings during his visit.

67 *La Verda Ombro*, April 1923, quoted in Miyamoto & Oshima (1973) p.94-5 (cited there in error as April 1922). Miyamoto & Oshima note that, perhaps unsurprisingly, this passage attracted the attention of the censor.

Nations struggled to gain wider acceptance for the language's potential. Although the motions in favour of Esperanto proposed at the League of Nations were fairly modest in their explicit goals – articulation of the potential of Esperanto within the sphere of education, and recognition of the existence of an international language problem – even these failed to gain significant approval from the League's members. This was in part because many of the participants on both sides of the debate clearly saw in the motions the potential to open a door to a wider issue – that of the potential of Esperanto to fulfil some role within mainstream international relations.

Whether for questions of national prestige and advantage, a threat to their own position, innate conservatism, or scepticism regarding the more aspirational, utopian visions of Esperanto's potential, the majority of the diplomatic mainstream at the League seem to have remained reluctant to engage with the language. Nevertheless, despite the eventual failure of Esperanto to make significant inroads within the League's official bodies, Esperanto activities led to the development of real, tangible connections, and possibly contributed to real diplomatic outcomes.

The concrete value of these links which emerged between smaller nations, in part through Esperanto, can be seen in the case of the Finnish diplomat, Gustav John Ramstedt and the dispute over the Åland Islands. Ramstedt was appointed the first Chargé d'affaires to Japan and East Asia for the newly independent Finland, arriving in Tokyo in 1920. His background was as a linguist specialising in the Altaic family: he was pressed into diplomatic service because of his experience in Asia, specifically through field trips to study the languages of Mongolia.

Ramstedt's linguistic skills rapidly gave him a proficiency at Japanese which stood out from the diplomatic norm. As a result of this, and perhaps the shared perspective between Finland and Japan of an uneasy relationship with Russia, both Finland and Ramstedt became rapidly popular in Japan.⁶⁸ Although this popularity was widespread, Ramstedt was particularly well regarded in the Esperanto community. He was one of the first Esperantists in Finland, something that became known to the Japanese Esperanto community prior to his arrival in Tokyo. He was visited by Fujisawa Chikao and others almost immediately upon making landfall,⁶⁹ and throughout his time in Japan he spoke to Esperanto groups nationwide, often on the subject of his home nation and its literature and culture.⁷⁰ Ramstedt was also popular within the foreign relations community – he helped teach Finnish to Tōyama Kiichi, secretary to his uncle, Megata Tanetarō, on the first Japanese delegation to the League.⁷¹ He also met with Yanagita Kunio in 1922 during Yanagita's brief return to Japan from Geneva. Ramstedt was a popular presence in Japanese Esperanto until his return to Europe in 1929.

These contacts proved of use when Sweden and Finland brought the issue of the Åland Islands to the Council of the League of Nations. The islands had a Swedish speaking population, but were traditionally held by Finland, with Russia as a third interested party given their strategic significance. Japan took particular interest in the issue, having documents translated into Japanese in order to give more serious consideration to it. Japan ultimately sided with the Finnish cause, which indeed

68 Halen (1998) p.212 et seq.

69 Halen (1998) p.257.

70 Hatsushiba (1998) p.51.

71 Heiskanen (2007) p.103.

emerged successful: Finland remained in control of the islands, subject to conditions preserving its language and culture and preventing military fortifications. Both Ramstedt and other Finnish observers were in no doubt that the Japanese delegation as well as Nitobe, presiding on the Council sessions as Under-Secretary, played key roles in determining the outcome.⁷²

Whilst it would be too much to suggest that either Ramstedt or Esperanto was decisive, nevertheless they can both be seen to have contributed to the forging of the somewhat unlikely links between Finland and Japan, and, in doing so, to have helped to determine the destiny of the Åland Islands, bringing a concrete outcome to the common cause found by these, and other, linguistic outliers.

Conclusion

The Wilsonian moment which occurred at the end of the First World War was a confusion of lofty goals, real politik, disappointed aspirations and genuine attempts to fashion a new way of conducting international politics. The principle of national self-determination was both an embrace of the idea of the nation-state and a threat to those states who ceded control of regions and populations to their neighbours. It also cast a shadow across the colonial holdings of imperial states such as the United Kingdom, France and Japan. The League of Nations brought together nations in an attempt to 'establish new global order in which the word would replace the sword'.⁷³ However, not all nations were invited, nor were all peoples deemed capable of forming a nation that could stand as equal with the other members.

72 Heiskanen (2007) p.103 and Halen (1998) p.219-220.

73 Bilstoft (2010) v.

The ideology underpinning the establishment of the League of Nations – diplomatic or conventional internationalism in the setting of mainstream foreign relations – and the linguistic or cultural internationalism of Esperanto had much in common. However, for all their shared ground, the encounter between Esperanto and the League of Nations was an uneasy one which ended closer to an explicit rejection than a substantial endorsement.

The reasons given for this failure include Esperanto being too radical an idea for the conservatism of major power relations to adopt;⁷⁴ the result, chiefly within France, of the resistance to the League's more lofty goals;⁷⁵ or the result of a clash in the underlying conceptions of internationalism which were represented by Esperanto and the League.⁷⁶ All three of these have some power in explaining the events: whilst the ideas of justice which were used to motivate Esperanto at the League found a clear degree of harmony with the ideals of the League and many of the actors involved, nevertheless it was exactly the more powerful nations and the better established diplomats who stood to lose the most with the adoption of a new, fairer language for diplomacy, and thus, with this intransigent force at the centre of international relations, the adoption of Esperanto was ultimately improbable.

The Japanese participants in these debates, as well as Gustav Ramstedt in Tokyo, reveal that it was not only nations from outside the linguistic and diplomatic mainstream who most readily embraced Esperanto, it was also unorthodox diplomats

74 Lins 1975) p.18.

75 Forster (1982) chapter 6, especially p.182-3.

76 Bilstoft (2010) p.101.

who were most easily drawn to it. Adachi Mineichirō was the only Japanese career diplomat to come out explicitly in favour of the language; Fujisawa Chikao, Nitobe Inazō, and Yanagita Kunio all came to the League by unusual paths, and indeed none of them was strictly there to represent the Japanese government. Likewise, Ramstedt's diplomatic career was the result of his linguistic specialism, and he appears to have remained an unusual, if effective, diplomat.

Membership of the Council of the League of Nations was a key symbol of Japan's presence amongst the major international powers, whilst several of the Japanese actors involved in Esperanto's involvement at the League are significant figures in Japanese historiography. However, the events surrounding Esperanto and the League present them all in unusual situations: Japan not as great power but as linguistic outsider; Nitobe Inazō acknowledging an obligation on behalf of the great powers to include less powerful nations rather than to lead them; Ishii Kikujirō, another of Japan's great interwar internationalists,⁷⁷ resisting the rise of international language; and Yanagita Kunio, often seen through a purely domestic perspective, enthusiastically engaging with ideas of the international. The history of Esperanto, then, reveals new perspectives to actors and events within the existing historiography of Japan; but it also uncovers sites of international engagement that have hitherto remained absent from the historical narrative. Some of these are the subject of the next chapter.

⁷⁷ Burkman (2003).

4. Tōhoku Modern: Esperanto Beyond the Centre

The changes in Japanese Esperanto during the First World War and after its close left the movement larger, and with a higher profile than ever before. One consequence of this was the Japanese presence at the encounter between Esperanto and the League of Nations. However, another was that Esperanto in Japan became a genuinely nationwide phenomenon, with clubs and members spreading to all of the prefectures across the Japanese islands, as well as to overseas territories and settlements. In particular, the presence of Esperanto in rural communities, far from the metropolitan centre, reveals that it was by no means necessary to have direct contact or experience with the wider world to take part in the act of 'thinking and feeling beyond the nation'.¹

This chapter, then, changes focus: from the halls of the League of Nations to a number of rural towns and villages in Japan's deep north, and from global politics to local and individual identity, exploring the experience of doing Esperanto in the Japanese regions. By investigating the practitioners of Esperanto in Tohōku, in the north of the main island of Honshū, I show an example of how local context shaped the nature of how Esperanto was imagined and practised.

I explore three specific cases of Esperanto in 1920s Tōhoku. The first example is that of a group: the Esperanto clubs which formed in Aomori prefecture, in particular in the small town of Kuroishi. The other two examples are principally of individuals: firstly Sasaki Kizen, a disciple of Yanagita Kunio who was introduced to Esperanto in 1921, and who continued to study and practice Esperanto for the remainder of his life in

¹ Robbins (1998).

his home town Tōno; and secondly the children's author Miyazawa Kenji, who sought to introduce Esperanto into his experimental farming collective, the Rasu Chijin Kyōkai.

In his article, 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism', Mitchell Cohen seeks to argue for a form of cosmopolitanism which finds a union between a multicultural respect for difference and a sense of a common humanity. He draws upon an image of a 'cloth of many threads', articulating a human community 'which accepts a multiplicity of roots and branches and that rests on the legitimacy of plural loyalties, of standing in many circles, but with common ground'.² In this thesis I have resisted characterising internationalism and nationalism using a model of universal and particular, chiefly because I argue for a multiplicity of forms of internationalism (each reflecting its own specific context) rather than a single articulation of universal values.³ At the same time, I think that to recognise the particular in the form of the nation or the nation-state risks ceding the nationalist claim that national identity is somehow intrinsically more fundamental than other of the 'many circles'. The cases of the Tōhoku Esperantists reveal another layer of identity mingling with the national and the international – the regional, or local.

The Esperantists in Kuroishi engaged with Esperanto and other global ideas in a (broadly left wing) effort to rejuvenate local culture; Sasaki Kizen practised Esperanto as one of a number of different influences which he brought to his life and work in his home town; and Miyazawa Kenji's literary sensibilities were a complex blend of the global, or cosmic, and the concrete local landscape, with Esperanto playing a part. Each,

2 Cohen (1992) p.483.

3 Stegewerns (2003, Introduction) presents the universal and particular as a possible model for the international and the national, albeit not uncritically.

in separate ways, represents an exploration of the intermingling of different forms of identity – local, national, and global – in motivating Esperanto. In studying the language, the Esperantists of Tōhoku sought not to throw off their local identity in pursuit of a modern set of (likely European) universal values, but expressed ways in which the embrace of the global could fit not only with being Japanese but also more specifically still, from coming from the north of Japan.

The geographic spread of Japanese Esperanto in the early 1920s was a combination of recruitment from the centre out together with increasing organisation and networking between existing Esperantists. Efforts by the JEI and others to help the spread of Esperanto not only brought new speakers to the language, they found members of local communities who were already interested in the language or sometimes even learning it, but perhaps had not yet organised or connected into the broader national movement. By forming clubs and taking advantage of publicity from high profile visitors such as Vassily Eroshenko or Gustav Ramstedt, existing regional Esperantists were able to attract more people to take up the study of the language, developing the network still further.

The early 1920s boom also saw the introduction of a new, younger generation into Japanese Esperanto. Students accounted for a large proportion of the new influx of Esperantists. One result of this was that university towns and urban centres (most notably of course, Tokyo) predominated in the initial surge in Esperanto activity. However, this was then followed by the take-up of Esperanto by non-students as well as students in smaller schools and colleges outside of the major metropolises. Looking at registers of JEA/JEI membership during the Taishō period, the proportion of members

recorded as being residents of Tokyo/Kyoto/Osaka peaked in 1921 at 69%, as growth was at its most rapid. By 1922 (prior to the great Kanto earthquake, which led to a substantial move out of Tokyo) it had already fallen to 49% and by 1929, although the absolute numbers of members in the three major cities had grown, the proportion was down to 39% of the total, reflecting the growth of Esperanto beyond the centre.⁴

There were other cities, such as Kobe, which as the major port of western Japan was itself a hub of cross-border exchange and had an Esperanto community of long standing prior to 1920, or university towns such as Sendai, which were perhaps unsurprising locations for the spread of Esperanto. However, from 1922 onwards the JEI was represented nationwide, across all the prefectures, colonies and outposts of Japan. Esperanto had truly become a nationwide practice.

As discussed in the introduction, it is important to remain aware that membership of the central Esperanto organisation is only one, fairly narrow, measure of the Esperanto community. Whilst the size of these groups forms a useful proxy for the national presence of Esperanto and trends in its size, it by no means captures the overall number of people who were engaged with the language. Throughout this chapter there are examples of active Esperanto groups of whom only a fraction were members of the JEI, highlighting that, as a popular movement, Esperanto's influence went well beyond the JEI membership.

Esperanto in Taishō/Shōwa Tōhoku

Tōhoku is one name given to the northernmost region of Honshū, the main island of Japan. It is usually defined as encompassing the prefectures Aomori, Akita,

⁴ *La Revuo Orienta Jarlibro* data, 1922, 1926, 1929.

Iwate, Miyage, Yamagata and Fukushima. Until the large scale settlement of Hokkaido to the north by the Meiji state in the late nineteenth century, Tōhoku was the traditional northern frontier of Japan. Its severe winters and short growing seasons made for a hard life and widespread rural poverty. The far north of the region in particular was a laggard in terms of late nineteenth and early twentieth century modernisation, in the spread of both material and intellectual modernity. The image of Tōhoku was constructed as not only a harsh region, but one that retained traditional ways of life, even as Japan joined the leading modern powers. For example, Iwate prefecture was where Yanagita Kunio found the stories that formed his *Tales of Tōno*, evoking an earlier, more authentic, Japan; whilst today Aomori's regional dialect is still known as perhaps the most difficult for Japanese from other regions to understand.

Thus, whilst other parts of Japan might also lay claim to being Japan's most remote region, Tōhoku certainly represents one part of Japan that was seen as both far from the metropolitan centre and far behind the core of the nation along the path of development. However, as suggested, during the early 1920s, Esperanto groups sprang up even in this inhospitable region, revealing just how widespread was the desire to engage with the international and the cosmopolitan, and perhaps giving something of the lie to Tōhoku's image as an extreme cultural backwater.

Akita Ujaku, as mentioned in chapter three, was a native of Aomori, the furthest north of the prefectures of Tōhoku. However, his encounter with Esperanto only occurred in 1915: whilst he was an influential Esperantist throughout the inter-war period, he was by no means one of the first Esperantists with links to the north. In fact, there were two early Esperantists who came, not only from Akita's home prefecture, but

also from his hometown, Kuroishi. The first, Takahashi Kunitarō, was an engineer mentioned briefly in chapters one and two. Although he did retain some links to his home town, Takahashi's interest in Esperanto was sparked whilst he was working in Manchuria and he later settled in Shizuoka, to the south of Tokyo.

By contrast, the other early Esperantist to come from Kuroishi retained stronger links to Aomori and Tōhoku. Narumi Yōkichi (also known as Narumi Uraharu) was a school friend of Akita Ujaku.⁵ When Akita moved to Tokyo in 1902, Narumi stayed in Aomori to train as a teacher. It was whilst training at Aomori Normal School that he took up Esperanto, revealing how Esperanto's influence stretched to the rural regions even then.⁶ In 1909, he moved to teach in a high school in Hokkaido, where he also began to teach Esperanto to the students, painting the classroom windows green.⁷ By 1911, when the government was cracking down on socialism, he came to the attention of the authorities, in particular for his association with the Tōhoku anti-war poet, Ōtsuka Kōzan,⁸ and a case of *lèse majesté* over the treatment of an imperial portrait, resulting in a period of suspension from his work. Eventually, in 1913, Narumi left Hokkaido, forced out of his position, moving to Tokyo.⁹

Narumi was one of the first Japanese poets to experiment with the use of the Roman alphabet in writing Japanese, publishing his collection, *Tuti ni Kaere* ('Return to

5 Kuroishi Shi (1991) p.146-159.

6 Kuroishi Shi (1991) p.152.

7 Kuroishi Shi (1991) p.154. [Green is the traditional colour of Esperanto; Narumi also named his first daughter Midori ('green').]

8 Ōtsuka Kōzan was an Aomori native who became involved in the non-war movement that arose during the Russo-Japanese war. He was resident in Aomori from 1905 before returning to Tokyo as a vocal critic of the trial of Kōtoku Shūsui and others in 1911 (Kuroishi Shi 1991, p.5).

9 In 1915, Akita Ujaku wrote a play, *Midori no Ya*, ('Field of Green') based on Narumi's Hokkaido experiences, soon after Akita himself had taken up Esperanto (Akita & Osaki 1965, Vol. 1, p.27).

the Soil'), in 1914.¹⁰ He went on to publish a magazine, *Shinryoku* ('new green'), and further poetry, including the following, recalling his efforts during the first Esperanto boom: 'For man, and for the world, I preached Esperanto, in the towns of the peninsula'.¹¹

Leaving apart these early participants and the informal activities that the likes of Narumi's experiences hint at, more regular, organised Esperanto activity first took place in Tōhoku in the 1920s. According to the local Esperanto historian and Sendai resident, Gotō Hitoshi, the first clubs in Sendai formed in 1920-21 following the transfer of long time Esperantist, Mutō Oto, to work in the Sendai electricity offices. Mutō helped to organise courses, as well as encouraging Esperantists from Tokyo to come to Sendai to promote the language.¹² By 1923, Sendai could boast three clubs – a city-wide JEI branch and student run clubs in the Tōhoku Imperial University and the Second Higher School.¹³ Other Esperanto associations formed in Akita city and Funakawa (1921-2) in Akita prefecture, and in towns such as Aomori, Hirosaki, and Kuroishi, in Aomori prefecture in 1923-4.¹⁴ In 1924, Sendai hosted the Japanese Esperanto congress, marking the completion of Esperanto's formal arrival in Tōhoku.

Although the creation of local clubs in Tōhoku was the work of local residents (or those like Mutō, who came to live in Tōhoku), visitors from Tokyo helped to provide a

10 The first famous *romaji* poetry collection published was Nakiwarai, by Toki Zenmaro, also an Esperantist. Narumi's poetry collection was later republished in Japanese script in 1925 (Miyamoto, 1999, p.5-12). There was a good deal of overlap, both intellectual and in terms of personnel, between the advocates of Esperanto and those who sought to adopt *romaji* Japanese in the early twentieth century, although by no means were all Esperantists members of the *romaji* movement, or vice versa.

11 '人の為、世界の為だと、エスペラントを、宣伝したよ半島の町で。' *Yasashii Sora*, 1932, reprinted in Miyamoto (1999, p.5). The peninsula in question is the Shimokita Hantō in Aomori.

12 Gotō (2008) p.7-8.

13 *La Revuo Orienta*, February 1923, p.4.

14 'Enlanda Kroniko', *La Revuo Orienta*, various issues, 1921-1923.

boost to Esperanto's profile. Whilst it remained very much a cultural and economic periphery, developing transportation networks made it increasingly easy to visit the region from Tokyo, so it became less physically removed. Consequently, during the early twentieth century, it became somewhat common for those seeking to promote various causes to travel north from Tokyo; Esperanto was but one of these causes.¹⁵ In 1921, a group of students from the Imperial University and other Tokyo universities undertook a tour of Hokkaido and Tōhoku, lecturing in a range of towns throughout the region. In 1922, Gustav Ramstedt accompanied Osaka Kenji and others to lecture in Sendai; and then finally, again in 1923, another group of students toured the north.

The visitors found a warm welcome – small Esperanto groups beginning to form and a large number of people interested in the language and keen to learn more, including local officials and journalists. The tours helped these first groups to expand, to attract new members and to connect with the growing network of Esperanto learners and practitioners across Japan.

The central figures in the 1923 tour were Ishiguro Yoshimi, Sasaki Takamaru, Toyokawa Zen'yō, Okamoto Yoshitsugu, and Nakamura Kikuo. Of the five, only Toyokawa was over 30 years old; Okamoto and Nakamura were both students, whilst Sasaki and Ishiguro represented different publishing houses with interests in Esperanto. Between late May and mid June 1923, approximately 20,000 listeners turned out at a range of schools, churches and meeting halls to listen to lectures on Esperanto and related themes.¹⁶ The tour was an upbeat affair, revealing the sense of excitement amongst the young Esperantists of the early 1920s – hanging a green flag from the

¹⁵ For example, see Crump (1993) p.58-59 regarding anarchism.

¹⁶ *La Revuo Orienta*, July 1923, p.5-9.

window of their hotel, teaching an impromptu class to travellers who shared their train from Akita to Yamagata, and promoting the language in town squares.¹⁷

The group travelled up the main route north, up the inland valleys, talking in Sendai, Morioka, Aomori, and then to Hakodate, Otaru, Sapporo, and Asahikawa in Hokkaido, before returning to Tokyo down the west side of Tōhoku with further stops in Muroran, Akita, Yamagata, Yonezawa, and finally Fukushima. The trip was well organised and funded – they stayed for the most part in hotels and lodges, and had meetings on almost every day. They often split up to cover two meetings during the day, plus another one in the evening, or a dinner with local Esperantists. Daytime meetings were, for the most part, held in middle, high and normal schools, with audiences of often several hundred. Other meetings took place in Methodist and Congregational churches, local meeting halls and, on one instance, a temple. The evening meetings typically numbered around a hundred.

Overall the trip was considered a resounding success.¹⁸ Whilst by no means can all those who attended the speeches made on the tour be considered Esperantists, the turn out in a region where the overall JEI membership was approximately 150 serves to highlight the greater reach of the language beyond those who actively practised it (let alone those who were JEI members), and the level of interest amongst at least the better educated parts of the rural population. Whilst it is impossible to determine whether those students attending the talks held at schools were actively seeking to explore Esperanto, the school authorities at a large number of schools were at least interested

17 Ishiguro (n.d.) chapter 7.

18 *La Revuo Orienta*, July 1923, p.5-9. There does appear to have been some controversy regarding the JEI funding a tour which turned out to be a great success for the publishing companies represented, however (Hatsushiba 1998, p.54).

enough in the language and prepared to allow the young men promoting it to speak to the students. In Aomori, for example, whilst there were no clubs in 1923, and only eight members of the JEI recorded in 1922, several hundred people attended three meetings in schools in Aomori city, the lecturers were met by the mayor, and they held a further meeting in the city hall.¹⁹

Esperanto in Aomori: Esperanto and the Local Arts Movement

The 1923 tour formed a catalyst that helped to accelerate the coming together of the first Esperanto groups in Aomori, as elsewhere in Tōhoku. Whilst it was a genuinely nationwide phenomenon, Esperanto's presence in the more rural areas of Japan was nevertheless uneven enough that the locations of the main clubs and centres of Esperanto activity in a given region were somewhat unpredictable. The coincidence of the three early Esperantists – Narumi Yōkichi, Akita Ujaku, and to a lesser extent, Takahashi Kunitarō – all originating from the same place helped to contribute to the small town of Kuroishi establishing a significant place in the Esperanto movement in Aomori prefecture.

The Kuroishi Esperanto club was not formally established until 1924, the year after the lecture tour (although, as will be described below, the language featured within local activities in the years prior to this).²⁰ In February 1924, Narumi Kanzō, a local resident, taught an Esperanto course using the textbook written by Akita Ujaku and Osaka Kenji.²¹ As mentioned in chapter two, this book was heavily influenced by

19 Ishiguro (n.d.) chapter 7.

20 'Esperanto Kōshūkai', *Hirosaki Shinbun*, 1924 August 15th (Aomori Ken 2004, #643, p.709-710). This section makes use of several articles reprinted in the local history Aomori Ken (2004). For ease of reference, I give the article number in addition to the page numbers.

21 Akita Ujaku Kenkyūkai (1975) p.96. As far as I am aware, Narumi Kanzō and Narumi Yōkichi were

ideas of *Homaranismo*, arguing for an Esperanto that was more than just a language movement.

Some forty people began the course, but only a few of them completed the whole term. This set the trend for an intense Esperanto scene that was centred on a few passionately involved individuals but touched a much wider audience at lower levels of activity. A second term was launched in September, with a beginners' class meeting on Mondays and Thursdays, whilst on Wednesdays and Fridays there was a parallel group for more experienced speakers.²² In between the two courses, Akita Ujaku returned to Kuroishi for the summer, where together with Ishiguro Yoshimi, one of the 1923 lecturers, he lectured on Esperanto. Together, the two also attended an inaugural Aomori prefectural Esperanto congress, bringing together members of three new Esperanto clubs based in Aomori, Hirosaki, and Kuroishi, along with other individuals from around the prefecture.²³

This was the beginning of a local Esperanto community that persisted until the end of the decade. Prefectural Esperanto congresses were held annually until 1929; the Esperanto associations of Aomori, Hirosaki, Kuroishi, and later another one in Goshogawara continued. For example, Akita Ujaku recorded the 1925 prefectural congress, held in Kuroishi, beginning with nearly 100 young Esperantists meeting at the station, and then marching through the town, singing *La Espero*, the unofficial anthem of the Esperanto movement.²⁴

This local Esperanto movement was just one part of a broader range of cultural

unrelated.

22 Aomori Ken (2004), #643.

23 Kuroishi Shi (1988) p.556; Akita & Osaki (1965) Vol.1, p.357.

24 Akita & Osaki (1965) Vol.1, p.391.

activities in 1920s Aomori. The likes of Akita Ujaku, Narumi Kanzō, and Takagi Iwatarō (a young teacher who attended Narumi's first Esperanto course in the spring of 1923 and then helped to teach the second one in the autumn) were deeply involved with a set of literary and social projects that can be grouped together loosely under the title of a 'local arts movement'.

In 1919, author, translator and Aomori native, Yanagita Izumi, writing in the northern publication *Mutsu no Tomo*, outlined his 'Stance Regarding Local Arts'. Yanagita described a common perception that 'Aomori prefecture is inherently both materially and spiritually behind other prefectures'.²⁵ His answer to this, most specifically to the backwardness of the people of the prefecture, was to be found through artistic cultivation and the creation of specifically local arts. This was to form the basis of a *Kyōdo Bungei Shugi*, or *Kyōdo Shugi*, the 'local arts movement', which sought to remedy Yanagita's identification of Aomori's lack of 'material and spiritual' development.²⁶

What emerged built upon an existing tradition of local literary societies, journals and networks within Aomori. Prior to 1919-20, these tended to be purely focused upon poetry, particularly tanka, but at the same time as the articulation of Yanagita's local arts movement they began to expand to other forms of literature, essays, criticism and even social or political questions. Local magazines such as *Reimei* ('Daybreak'), *Taiban* ('Placenta'), and then in 1921, *Kōkyō* ('Reverberations') each continued to expand their

25 'Kyōdo Bungei ni taisuru Taido', *Mutsu no Tomo*, 15th March 1919, in Aomori Ken (2004) #634, p.696-698.

26 *Kyōdo* (郷土) means one's birthplace, or hometown, so a literal translation of *Kyōdo Bungei* would be 'hometown arts'. I believe that 'local arts' is a more natural English alternative and I use this term to distinguish the movement from the *Chihō Undo* discussed later in the text, for which I use the term 'regionalism'.

scope and engage with more political ideas.²⁷ Even prior to the formation of the Kuroishi Esperanto club, Esperanto had a place here – the magazine *Taiban* took an Esperanto subtitle, *La Placento*, for example.

From the mid-1910s until at least the late 1920s, Akita Ujaku was an annual summer return visitor to Kuroishi, and he became intimately involved in this loosely bound cultural movement. He was a regular speaker in a wide range of events, influencing a younger generation of Aomori natives with discussions of a range of subjects, Esperanto included. In 1920, Kuroishi was host to what was to be the first 'summer university', a short course of lectures and classes attended by students, teachers, and others from in and around the prefecture. These ran until 1924, and typically involved a number of visitors from Tokyo – Akita Ujaku, of course, but also others including members of Waseda University, some, such as Abe Isō, fairly high profile Japanese intellectuals.²⁸

The summer universities featured lectures and discussions on a range of themes including those of transnational and international interest, of which Esperanto was but one. Another topic was the European Clarté movement, founded by the writer and Esperanto supporter, Henri Barbusse. Also featured was the Japanese magazine *Tane Maku Hito* ("The Sower", named after a painting by Millet) which was founded in Akita, bordering Aomori to the south, and drew its inspiration directly from the Clarté movement. *Tane Maku Hito*, which had a left wing and international focus, took an Esperanto subtitle (*La Semanto*) and ran an irregular Esperanto column.²⁹ One final

27 Aomori Ken Rōseika (1969) p.656-8.

28 Akita Ujaku Kenkyūkai (1975) p.96.

29 After it was initially founded in Akita Prefecture, it transferred to Tokyo, where a number of left-wing

example was the Russian Famine Relief Movement, an effort undertaken by left wing Japanese citizens to raise funds on behalf of the Russian peasantry. For the residents of Aomori, Soviet Russia was only as far as Vladivostok, facing across the Sea of Japan, so perhaps the plight of the Russian peasantry was an issue keenly felt. However, international issues such as these and Esperanto were an integral part of the local arts movement project to revitalise local culture.

The summer universities, and similar later events, represented a fairly radical exercise in popular education and political engagement. They were a way for the residents of Aomori to access modern learning and to engage with new issues and ideas of the time. They did so through the help of scholars from the centre – from Tokyo – to be sure, but the impetus and organisation of the events came from within the local community, and several of those who came from Tokyo to take part were either Aomori natives (Akita Ujaku), or built up connections with the area over a number of years (Ishiguro Yoshimi).

Akita Ujaku's diaries reveal him attending lectures and talks in Aomori city during his summer visits, but he and others all went to Kuroishi for the summer universities. The location, I would suggest, reveals not only that popular interest in the wider world stretched as far as a small town in the rural north, it also represents a break from dominant centre-periphery relations. Rather than meet in the prefectural capital, say, the lecturers and students from around the prefecture and even from Tokyo, all met in Kuroishi, grounding the event in the place where the organisers and many of those

intellectuals became closely involved with *Tane Maku Hito*. These included Sasaki Takamaru, one of the members of the 1923 lecture tour, Akita Ujaku, and others involved with Esperanto and socialism, such as Ishikawa Sanshirō.

attending lived. Later, in 1930, an attempt to restart the summer universities was planned in a remote temple in the mountains, even further removed from any conventional geographical hierarchies.³⁰

Commemorative photos of the summer universities reveal a varied attendance, dressed in a mix of western dress and traditional summer yukata – unsurprisingly dominated by young men, it is true, but also featuring a reasonable proportion of women and a range of age groups, including even the odd child carried by its mother.³¹ Far from where they might be expected, and featuring a mixed audience of local residents, the summer universities and other elements of the local arts movement explored modern and global ideas such as modern economics, Marxism, Esperanto, and European literature.³²

However, neither the local arts movement, nor Esperanto in Aomori, remained unchallenged. The strongest reaction against both came from another movement focused upon Aomori's local values and literary traditions. This opposing movement questioned the degree to which the relationship between local specificity and the global (be it in the form of socialism or Esperanto) could really be seen to be one of compatibility, and how Aomori might best go about expressing its culture.

The principal voice against the local arts movement was Fukushi Kōjirō. Fukushi was a poet and critic a few years younger than Akita Ujaku. Like Akita, Fukushi left his native Aomori for Tokyo in order to participate in the central literary scene; once there, he appears to have retained weaker connections to his native prefecture than Akita did.

30 Akita Ujaku Kenkyūkai (1975) p.96.

31 Aomori Ken Rōseika (1969) photo pages and p.665.

32 Akita & Osaki (1965) Vol.1, p.257, 321.

However, in 1923, Tokyo was hit by a devastating earthquake, so Fukushi moved back to Aomori. He was concerned by the emergence of the socialist-leaning groups which he found upon his return. As a result, he proposed an alternative solution to local issues. His *Chihō-shugi* ('regionalism'), first outlined in 1924, advocated the expression of 'each of the folks of the world's folk characteristics, and within the nation, each of the nation's local peoples' local characteristics'.³³

There was common ground between Fukushi's regionalism and the ideas of the local arts groups. Fukushi's influences were similar to those he was opposing – he was a translator of Tolstoy (as was Narumi Kanzō), and he was inspired by similar European writers as the likes of Akita Ujaku. Moreover he, too, was interested in the local arts, launching efforts to collect local dialect poetry, with some parallels to Narumi Yōkichi's oral poems. However, the way he related the local values to the global intellectual movements was very different, and brought him into conflict with the advocates of the local arts movement. Whereas the local arts movement participants sought to find a harmonious combination of new trends and local forms, Fukushi saw the two as implacably opposed. Current literary trends, he suggested, 'neglect folk realities, and with them local realities, [thus] the universal spread of culturalism [*bunkashugi*] becomes a slave to the cosmopolitan – universalist, worldist – socialism'.³⁴ To him, the global spread of cosmopolitan socialism was destroying a local tradition which was a response to specific 'local realities'.

Commentators in Aomori took exception, arguing that Fukushi's manifesto amounted to the celebration of a fixed local tradition – perpetuating 'the vice of

33 'Chihō Bunka Undō', *Tōoku Nippō*, 16th January 1924, Aomori Ken (2004) #638 p.701.

34 Aomori Ken (2004) #638 p.701.

uncritical kowtowing to intellectual trends of subservience to power'.³⁵ Where Fukushi sought to capture a traditional local culture in order to challenge the spread of homogenising global ideas, the local arts movement ideal was a harmonious use of those same global movements in order to stimulate the further development of local culture – creating it anew and allowing it to progress beyond the hierarchical relationship between a tradition-bound rural periphery and a modern urban cultural centre.

Fukushi was accused of bringing his ideas from the very metropolitan centre to which he claimed to be providing an alternative.³⁶ This can be compared with the welcome that Akita Ujaku received on his returns to Aomori. Whereas Akita was a regular visitor to Aomori, Fukushi admitted to having remained away from Aomori for 20 years without returning.³⁷ From the perspective of the local arts movement, Akita was one of 'us', someone who 'held a warm sympathy and understanding towards our home town literary standards'.³⁸ When he returned to Kuroishi in 1925, he was met at the station by twenty to thirty schoolchildren, who had been studying Esperanto.³⁹ By contrast, Fukushi remained the voice of an aloof view from the centre, 'looking and listening [to rural conditions] whilst standing in a high place'.⁴⁰

In critiquing Fukushi's view of local values being swept away by the force of cosmopolitan socialism, one commentator suggested that, in order to correct his flawed

35 'Kyōdo Undō no Ryūsei', *Hirosaki Shinbun*, 8th July 1924, Aomori Ken (2004) #637 p.700.

36 Aomori Ken (2004) #637 p.700.

37 'Chihō Shugi no Undō', *Hirosaki Shinbun*, 13th, 15th, 20th July 1924, Aomori Ken (2004) #640, p.703-707.

38 'Kuroishi Taiban-sha no Bungei Kōshūkai', *Hirosaki Shinbun*, 2nd August 1921, Aomori Ken (2004) #635 p.698.

39 Akita & Osaki (1965) Vol.1, p.390.

40 Aomori Ken (2004) #638 p.700.

understanding of global movements, he should look, not to cosmopolitanism, but to *Homaranismo*.⁴¹ Central to Ludwig Zamenhof's articulation of *Homaranismo* was a respect for difference – explicitly in an individual's right to speak any language and follow any religion. Consequently the suggestion that this might open Fukushi's eyes reveals both a fundamental element of the disagreement between Fukushi and the local arts movement, and how the latter might motivate Esperanto to sustain local culture. For Fukushi, cosmopolitanism (and socialism) was a homogenising force which threatened to eliminate local values, replaced by uniform, global ones. *Homaranismo* represented an embrace of linguistic and religious neutrality, not to replace specific cultures with a single, universal culture, but in order to prevent the dominance of one language or culture over others. It was a globally focused ideology that respected difference and local context, rather than one which sought to remove them, and thus Esperanto and *Homaranismo* were entirely in harmony with the local arts movement's goal of a local cultural renaissance.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Fukushi was an opponent of Esperanto, as well as socialism. In 1925, he wrote an essay in the *Hirosaki Shinbun* taking apart, point by point, recent arguments advocating it. For Fukushi, a universal language could be nothing but a challenge to national language; moreover, Esperanto's drive to regularity and consistency eliminated the very elements which allowed a language to truly achieve completion:

That which we call a language can only preserve its complete authenticity [*seikaku-sa*] through connections to history, its classics, its rules of practical use, its customary spellings. Truly Esperanto, which lacks all these things, cannot be said

41 'Chihō Bunka Panfuretto no Hakkan, *Reimei*, 17th January 1924, Aomori Ken (2004) #639 p.701-703.

to be authentic.⁴²

Some inconsistencies seem apparent in Fukushi's critique of Esperanto (his claim that it was innately inferior to natural language, yet nevertheless represented a challenge to it; and his return to speaking of national, rather than local, language and culture) but it, too, attracted an immediate and strong critique from within Aomori.⁴³ Whilst Fukushi succeeded in attracting some Aomori residents to join his project, and so it would be a mistake to consider him a lone voice in articulating an alternative, nevertheless his movement was at best a counterpoint to the more significant local arts movement. Ultimately, the very vibrancy of the local debates surrounding Esperanto and regarding the relationship between local sufficiency and global ideology, serves to indicate the strength of Aomori's cultural scene in the early 1920s.

Esperanto remained a significant part of cultural activity in the town of Kuroishi and wider Aomori prefecture in the 1920s, albeit one centred around a core of dedicated participants. Given the interest in Marxist thought and the left wing ideals of the local arts movement, over time Kuroishi developed a reputation as something of a hotbed of progressive and proletarian cultural activities. This did not escape the attention of the authorities. Neither Aomori prefecture nor Kuroishi in particular avoided the national waves of suppression of socialism that became increasingly severe in the late 1920s and early 1930s. One Kuroishi resident was arrested in the large nationwide arrest of communist party members on the 16th of April 1929 but the most high profile set of arrests in Aomori was in November 1933, when fifty-nine people were arrested across

42 'Esuperanto no Byūken', *Hirosaki Shinbun*, 12th April 1925, Aomori Ken (2004) #645 p.711.

43 'Esuperanto ni kansuru Shoken', *Hirosaki Shinbun*, April 1925, Aomori Ken (2004) #646 p.711-715.

the prefecture, including twenty-four in Kuroishi.⁴⁴ This was a heavy blow to the local arts movement and the Esperantists of Kuroishi.

The members of the early summer universities, magazines, and Esperanto movement went in different directions as the 1920s progressed. Some became less involved in the circle of progressive activities whilst others became heavily involved in left wing causes on a broader scale. For example, in 1929 the then 19-year-old Aizawa Ryō taught an Esperanto course in Aomori.⁴⁵ She was later arrested in Hokkaido by the police as a member of the Japanese Communist Party, and after three years in prison died of tuberculosis at her family home in Tsugaru, Aomori, aged twenty-five.⁴⁶ Takagi Iwatarō, one of the Esperantists and participants of the local arts movement, remained in Kuroishi and was involved with the 1930s attempt to revive the summer universities that was halted by the local police.⁴⁷

By 1935 there was a reformulated Esperanto scene active in Aomori prefecture, in the form of an Aomori Esperanto-Kabineto, with meetings taking place in Aomori city and Hirosaki. This group, centred around a pair of brothers, was keen to stress the discontinuity between their group and the previous incarnation led by Akita Ujaku and others involved with 'thought related activities', i.e. socialism.⁴⁸ This second iteration of Esperanto in Aomori was no less active than the first – taking the language out into public spaces such as a local department store in order to seek recruits, for example. However, it was explicitly politically neutral, and seems to have lacked the keen focus

44 Kuroishi Shi (1988) p.584.

45 *La Revuo Orienta*, 1929, p.325.

46 *Akahata Shinbun*, August 13th 2005. Available at http://www.jcp.or.jp/akahata/aik4/2005-08-13/2005081312faq_01_0.html [accessed October 2012].

47 Akita Ujaku Kenkyūkai (1975) p.100; Kuroishi Shi (1988) p.561

48 *La Revuo Orienta*, 1936, p.409.

on local development, culture and politics of the one a decade earlier.

Despite this later shift, the cultural movement of which the Aomori Esperantists of the 1920s formed a part represents an important example of the interplay between local, national and global identity. It built upon existing local literary networks and engaged with global and transnational movements as an effort to reverse an understanding of local under-development and socio-economic backwardness.

In addition to being a part of this local movement, the Esperantists of Aomori were also a part of the larger national Esperanto movement. Although only a few of the individuals who took part seem to have been members of the JEI,⁴⁹ they were nevertheless in direct and indirect contact with the wider community – through those individuals who were members of the JEI (including the likes of Akita Ujaku, who were not permanent residents but retained strong links), the use of books like Osaka & Akita's *Mohan Esperanto Dokushū*, reporting their activities in the magazine, *La Revuo Orienta*, and by sending individuals to attend the annual Japanese Esperanto congress. A poster created by the Kuroishi Esperantists reveals the complexity of the stance which they were developing:

- For a long time prior to the birth of Esperanto, it lay hidden in the hearts of mankind;
- That we are national citizens, and at the same time individual members of mankind, must never be forgotten;
- Esperanto is the Latin of democracy;
- Esperanto is the standard language [*hyōjungo*], national languages are the dialects.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ The 1923 *Jarlibro* records only eight members of the JEI in Aomori, none resident in Kuroishi. There was no further record of JEI membership until 1929, when there were twelve members in Aomori prefecture, one in Kuroishi. By contrast, a photograph of a meeting of the Kuroishi Esperanto club around 1926 shows at least 30 people attending (including Akita Ujaku) (Kuroishi 1988, photo pages).

⁵⁰ Aomori Ken Rōseika (1969) p.660.

In but a few lines, this poster makes reference to an eternal community of mankind, draws upon European ideas such as democracy and Latin, reiterates national identity as no less important than one's membership of the community of mankind, and then undermines the nation linguistically by drawing a parallel between the relationship between national language and Esperanto and that of (deprecated) dialects and national language.⁵¹ This, then, is the complex mix of loyalties and identities which the residents of Aomori sought to make sense of.

Esperanto in Iwate: Sasaki Kizen and Miyazawa Kenji

At the same time in the early 1920s, as young residents of Aomori prefecture were exploring Esperanto as one part of an effort to develop a blend of the local and the global, using socialist perspectives and locally grounded literary arts in order to catch up with the rest of the nation and bind Aomori to the wider world, in Iwate, another prefecture in Tōhoku, the ethnographer and folklorist Sasaki Kizen was also encountering Esperanto, crafting his own, very different, blend of local and universal values. Though Sasaki, too, was drawn to the idealism of Zamenhof's *Homaranismo*, he did not engage with socialism, but instead formed his own set of connections between local religions, Esperanto, and western ideas, during a period of modernisation for Iwate. A few miles down the valley, Miyazawa Kenji, another Iwate based writer, too, was involved with Esperanto on a personal basis. Miyazawa famously melded together in his work: a universal 'cosmic' vision, an interest in modern science, and specifically

51 Although, as discussed in chapter five, a Marxist theory became popular in Japan which anticipated a teleological process of language in which national languages would give way, as had dialects before them, to the rise of a single world language, this was not introduced until the late 1920s. Rather I think that the comparison given in the poster did not carry a threat of the death of national languages, but rather supported the ongoing existence of both national languages and dialects in their appropriate spheres.

local sensibilities. Sasaki and Miyazawa died within a few weeks of one another, only a few months after they had been brought together by their shared interest in Esperanto. Their shared interest reveals two more ways in which an engagement with the wider world and with the idea of a common mankind could be made real, even in the depths of rural northern Japan. Miyazawa's ideas were idiosyncratic, blending the literary with the realities of local life in a unique and hard to characterise form, whilst Sasaki's engagement with Esperanto was more grounded in the practices of his every day life.

Sasaki Kizen was born in Iwate in 1886; he is best known for his relationship with Yanagita Kunio. The two met in Tokyo whilst Sasaki was studying at Waseda University in 1908. Sasaki was an aspiring writer, but Yanagita and their mutual friend Mizuno Yōshū found in him a link to the folk tales and ghost stories of the rural north. Sasaki was the storyteller whose tales Yanagita compiled and edited to form the *Tales of Tōno*, which was published in 1910 and proved to be the founding classic of Yanagita's school of Japanese folklore. Sasaki returned to Iwate around the time of the publication of *Tales of Tōno*, and under the guidance of Yanagita (whom he referred to always as 'Sensei' in his diaries) he spent the rest of his life collecting local stories and researching local traditions and religions.⁵² Plagued by ill health, and later by financial insecurity, Sasaki died in 1933, at the age of 46.

Yanagita was also Sasaki's introduction to Esperanto. As described in chapter three, Yanagita was immediately drawn to Esperanto as a possible tool for diplomacy and scholarship upon his arrival at the League of Nations in 1921. Yanagita wrote regularly to Sasaki during his time at the League; in his very first postcard from Geneva

⁵² For more details of the period of Sasaki's life surrounding the publication of *Tales of Tōno*, see Figal (1999).

he suggested that Sasaki might look into Esperanto by making contact with Akita Ujaku (a mutual contact from Waseda literary circles). Sasaki received the card from Yanagita on the 26th of October and the following day he sent a letter to Akita.⁵³ This was the start of Sasaki's interest in Esperanto, although it appears as though it took a little time to really engage him. Sasaki mentioned Esperanto in a number of letters to Yanagita in the years after 1921, in particular mentioning tales of Aesop and Grimm in *La Revuo Orienta*,⁵⁴ but in 1924 he wrote (seemingly in reply to another suggestion that he study the language):

As for Esperanto, 2 or 3 three years ago I had a go, but in the countryside there is little interest in this sort of thing, so I eventually left it at that. I, who have a strange interest in language study because of that interest took a look at Esperanto, but because of some doubts, I just dropped it. Because Sensei [i.e. Yanagita] recommended it, yesterday I picked it back up again. When I contacted Akita [Ujaku] for help, he was very happy. If there was just some folklore it would be good – is there any? I stopped [reading] *La Revuo Orienta*, too, but I'll pick it back up again.⁵⁵

From there, Sasaki seems to have remained a keen student of Esperanto for the remainder of his life.

Sasaki practised a very different form of Esperanto than the young ideologues in Aomori. For the most part he remained outside the mainstream activities of the Esperanto organisations, or even the local clubs.⁵⁶ There was an active JEI Esperanto club in Morioka during the 1920s and 1930s, but Sasaki appears to have not visited it until many years after he took up Esperanto, preferring to study at home with friends,

53 Sasaki (1986) p.227.

54 Sasaki (1986) p.13, p.28.

55 Sasaki (1986) p.32, letter dated 20th December 1924.

56 Sasaki was a member of the JEI in 1922-3, but doesn't appear on the 1929 list of members. His diary, reprinted in Sasaki (1986), does not include entries for the year 1923, so it is not clear whether he was involved in the lecture tour of that year, which made a stop in Morioka.

or to teach local children.⁵⁷ He corresponded with various people on the subject of Esperanto – JEI members in Iwate, and Ōi Manabu, an influential Tokyo based Esperantist, as well as his ethnographic/literary friends such as Iwate poet/journalist Okayama Fui, and Mantani Isoko, the wife of Sasaki's Russian co-researcher, Nikolai Nevsky.

But his principal Esperanto practice for the first years of his interest in the language came in the form of books and magazines. He read *La Revuo Orienta* and *Verda Mondo* and others, getting publications from a range of sources – the JEI, the bookstore Maruzen, the Sendai Esperanto Club, and other Esperantists. They formed part of a wide selection of journals that Sasaki read – local and national, from the general current affairs magazine, *Kaizō*, to the 'ero-guro' *Dekameron*. Moreover, as suggested by the quote above, Sasaki used Esperanto to learn of foreign folk tales – he bought collections of Swiss, Bulgarian, and Russian tales, no doubt helping to inform his own work on local legends and stories. Sasaki also studied French for a time, with similar ambitions. Indeed, Yanagita sent Sasaki books in both Esperanto and French. Yanagita's ethnographic studies of Japan have typically been seen through a domestic lens, so it is noteworthy that through Esperanto both Yanagita and his collaborator Sasaki, deep in the Japanese hinterland, were connected to European traditions of folklore studies.

Sasaki Kizen was not only a prodigious reader, he was a prolific author as well. In addition to his articles on folk customs and other miscellaneous topics, which were published in a similarly wide range of publications to those which he read – from local newspapers, to specialist folklorist journals, Keio University's *Mita Hyōron*, and others –

⁵⁷ Sasaki (1986), e.g. entries for 28th June 1924, 14th July 1924, 11th July 1925.

he wrote a number of articles introducing Esperanto to a local audience.⁵⁸

Sasaki's image of Esperanto was not only practised differently to the likes of the Aomori Esperantists, he also expressed his vision of it in different terms to either the mixed sense of pragmatism and international equity of Yanagita Kunio at the League of Nations, or the ideas of the local arts movement of Aomori.

Like the Aomori Esperantists, Sasaki was drawn to Ludwig Zamenhof's *Homaranismo*, but he interpreted in his own way. Sasaki saw Zamenhof's ideals – his 'whole-worldism' (*zensekaishugi*, 全世界主義) – as the core of Esperanto, and thus was explicit in his preference for the name *Sekaigo* ('world language') for Esperanto. He deplored the use of 'international auxiliary language' (*Kokusai hojogo*, 国際補助語) by contrast, describing 'auxiliary' as an artless and vulgar term which did not appear in the thought of Zamenhof, one that rendered a 'profound and subtle, precious language' with the resonances of 'a coarse factory owner's word'.⁵⁹

Sasaki described Esperanto as one of the world's great inventions, to be considered with the likes of wireless communications, the theory of relativity, Buddhism and the steam train.⁶⁰ Whilst this list echoes those of other advocates of Esperanto who sought to stress its modernity – most notably the Esperantists writing in 1906, as discussed in chapter one – its idiosyncrasies also reveal something of the

58 Tōno-shi Museum (2004), p.102-113. Even prior to taking up Esperanto, Sasaki had written for *Romaji*, the magazine of the movement which sought to spread the use of the Roman alphabet for writing Japanese. Whilst Esperantists such as Toki Zenmaro and Narumi Yōkichi experimented with the use of *Romaji* in their poetry, Sasaki's articles appear to have been less a result of personal conviction or interest in the *Romaji* movement than a personal favour to his old friend Mizuno Yōshū, who was heavily involved with the movement. Certainly, Sasaki's interest in *Romaji* was far less than his interest in Esperanto.

59 'Sesso Kandan' (雪窓閑談, 'Snowy window musings') *Tōhoku Hyōron*, January 1923, reprinted in Sasaki (1986) vol. 2, p.418-422.

60 Sasaki (1986) vol. 2, p.419.

specific historic and cultural moment in which Sasaki encountered Esperanto, one in which encroaching modernity was meeting with existing ways of rural life in Iwate, as well as his own views and beliefs.

The Taishō and Shōwa periods were an age of modernisation for Tōno and surrounding towns. The railway reached Tōno in 1914, Yanagita sent Sasaki a camera in 1921, and a phonograph in 1926, he recorded hearing the radio for the first time in 1926 (later going on to broadcast on it), and when Sasaki was elected village head in 1925, one pressing issue was the provision of electrical street lighting across Tōno.⁶¹ Life, even up in the mountain valleys, was changing, but whilst Sasaki embraced these changes, he was also interested in retaining some of the local traditions and values. His life's work collecting stories and religious practices reveals this, but his writing also helps to place it into a context which brought the old and the new together.

In a miscellaneous essay published in *Tōhoku Hyōron* in 1923,⁶² Sasaki discussed his thoughts on Esperanto, Einstein's theory of relativity, Shinran Buddhism, and European style tea. The four topics – the universal language, modern science, Japanese (and specifically Iwate) religion, and western culture were explored within Sasaki's own personal experience, marking not a clash of western modernity with local tradition, but how modern science, foreign culture and local tradition met within his day-to-day life. Rather than a conceptual framework of the relationship between western learning and local values, Sasaki expressed an 'everyday cosmopolitanism'. By exploring his daily cup of milk tea together with the thoughts of Renoir's art, as well as the memories of Tokyo which it evoked, his struggles to understand Einstein's theory, and his encounters

61 Tōno-shi Museum (2004), p.46.

62 Sasaki (1986) vol. 2, p.418.

with local forms of Buddhism, Sasaki gave a glimpse of a life which was innately connected to the wider world, yet remained rooted in Iwate. His and his friends' studies of Esperanto were one part of this lived experience.

The final part of this pattern was religion. As a student, Sasaki was baptised as a Christian but, in later life his research into local tradition brought him to return to local forms of religion – first to an esoteric local form of Buddhism, *Kakushi-Nenbutsu* ('hidden nenbutsu', also sometimes called *Kakure-Nenbutsu*), chiefly practised in secret, and later, no doubt influenced in part by Esperanto, he joined the religion Ōmoto-kyō.⁶³ Sasaki described Esperanto, too, in religious terms, calling its principles of world peace and pure world love (*sekai heiwa shugi*, 世界平和主義, and *sekai jun'ai shugi*, 世界純愛主義), in effect, 'human love through a religion that does not rely upon a god'.⁶⁴ Living within the communities whose traditions he studied, Sasaki straddled the gap between ethnographer and ethnos. But at the same time as he did so, living within the values and traditions of local society, through Esperanto he was able to imagine his connections to the wider world.

This sort of individual mingling of different international cultural influences recalls the cosmopolitan world traveller, such as the cross-cultural life of Okakura Tenshin, who helped to bring Japanese culture to the elites of the north-east of the USA. However, its presence in a small town in the mountains of Iwate is unexpected. Sasaki Kizen, who had never been overseas, and only lived for a few years in Tokyo, spent the last decade of his life in Tōno, studying Esperanto together with his friends, or teaching it to the local children, drinking milk tea, and trying to understand the new science of

63 Tōno-shi Museum (2004) p.85, 87, 91.

64 Sasaki (1986) vol. 2, p.419.

Einsteinian motion. In doing so he brought the local and the global, the old and the new together, not as in the case of the Aomori Esperantists in the form of a political or cultural movement, but in the small patterns of the every day.

Sasaki Kizen's description of Esperanto, Buddhism, science and western culture within Iwate prefecture recalls the work of his close neighbour, Miyazawa Kenji. Miyazawa was nearly ten years younger than Sasaki and grew up in Hanamaki, thirty miles or so down the mountain valley from Tōno, in the main river plain. He trained as a geologist and agricultural scientist, as well as writing poetry and children's stories and following a keen interest in astronomy and modern science. Whilst he achieved little renown or success during his lifetime, since his death there has been a sustained interest in his life and works. His mixed interests in Nichiren Buddhism and Einstein's science, and the contrast within his stories between an attachment to the local geography and cosmic themes represent some of the points of interest which have driven the extensive Miyazawa scholarship and readership, especially post-1945.

There were some loose connections between Sasaki and Miyazawa, related to shared interests in local folklore, resulting in a limited correspondence between them, but not until 1932 do they appear to have met in person.⁶⁵ In the spring of that year, Sasaki taught a pair of Esperanto courses in Hanamaki. Whilst there, he called on Miyazawa, who was in bed, sick. The two got on well and met often. An account of Sasaki's visits to Hanamaki suggested that:

'Whenever Sasaki would come to Hanamaki, without fail he would visit Miyazawa. When Sasaki's religion, Ōmoto-kyō, was criticised at times by Miyazawa, Sasaki

⁶⁵ Ishii (2005) p.173, 174. There are four letters from Miyazawa to Sasaki in Miyazawa (1997) vol. 13 - #242, #248 (1929) and #414, #448 (1932).

did not object to Miyazawa... “He's a genius, that man, he's a genius, absolutely a genius”, Sasaki would say.⁶⁶

Both men had long histories of poor health; they died within a month of one another, in 1933. Sasaki was 46, Miyazawa, 37.

Miyazawa's own engagement with Esperanto came in 1926. That year he had founded the *Rasu Chijin Kyōkai*, an attempt to create a local agricultural community which would both alleviate poverty and focus on local arts and culture. In the winter he took a break from work on this and visited Tokyo in order to study the cello and the typewriter. He accompanied an Indian friend from typing school to a lecture at the *Tōkyō Kokusai Kurabu* (Tokyo International Club) where he met Gustav Ramstedt, the Finnish diplomat and famed Esperantist. Miyazawa and Ramstedt talked – they had much in common, specifically rural affairs, dialects, and subsequently Esperanto, the last of which Ramstedt advised Miyazawa to be the best way to get a wider, global audience for his poetry and stories.⁶⁷ Miyazawa then took a course in Esperanto whilst in Tokyo, before returning to Hanamaki where he added it to the list of subjects studied in the *Rasu Chijin Kyōkai*, translating a number of his poems into the language.⁶⁸

On one hand, Miyazawa's interest in Esperanto stemmed perhaps from a frustration in his lack of success in the Japanese literary world, and a desire to seek a wider audience and new readers, bypassing the constraints of the Tokyo literary scene. However, at the same time, that he included it within the activities of the *Rasu Chijin Kyōkai* suggests that it had a greater affinity with his other ideas than a simple desire

66 *'Hayachinesan to Kizen-shi'* Seki Tokuhiko (Tokuya?#), *Iwate Nippo* 27th October 1933, quoted in Ishii (2005) p.180.

67 Miyazawa Kenji, letter to his father, 12th December 1926, quoted in Satō (2004) p.115. Miyazawa later sent copies of his two printed works, *Haru to Shura* and *Chūmon no Ōi Ryōriten* to Ramstedt.

68 See Mine Yoshitaka's entry for Esperanto in Watabe ed. (2007) p.271.

for a wider audience. He told a friend that the association was studying Esperanto, 'in order that they could present in Esperanto, and so be understood by the people of the world'.⁶⁹

The Rasu Chijin Kyōkai was one of a number of attempts roughly around the same time to create new agri/cultural communities, the other major examples being Mushanokōgi Saneatsu's Atarashiki Mura (founded in 1918) and Arishima Takeo relinquishing ownership of his farm in Hokkaido in favour of its tenants (1922). These had different aims and characteristics – where Atarashiki Mura was effectively a commune of volunteers who sought to practise a mix of artistic cultivation and agriculture, Arishima's act was cast in anarchist/socialist terms and sought to give the existing workers control of the land. Miyazawa's Rasu Chijin Kyōkai was also grounded in the local community and made up of local farmers rather than incomers.

Miyazawa's goals were an uncertain mix of practical improvement of farming techniques and of spiritual/cultural cultivation. The meaning of its name, *Rasu Chijin* (羅須地人) is uncertain. *Chijin* means 'people of the soil', farmers; but the *Rasu* has been interpreted in different ways – as a reference to John Ruskin who may have influenced Miyazawa's thinking, or perhaps an inversion of *Shūra*, 修羅, a Buddhist term for a world of mayhem which Miyazawa used in the title of his poetry collection, *Haru to Shūra*.⁷⁰

Miyazawa wrote an essay, 'General Introduction to the Farmers' Arts', which provides the best insight into the association's aims:

⁶⁹ Satō (2004) p.123.

⁷⁰ Kikuchi (2004) p.37.

We, all, are farmers; our busy work is also hard;
We seek the path to a brighter, more vibrant life;
Amongst our aged teachers, there were such people;
We aim to debate a blend of the scientists' proofs, the seekers' experiments, and
our own intuition;
So long as the world is not wholly happy, we cannot achieve our own individual
happiness;
We will steadily develop the consciousness of our selves, from individuals to
group-social-cosmos;⁷¹

Miyazawa explicitly linked the universal to the realisation of improved local conditions – there was a mutual relationship between the two – we cannot be complete as individuals so long as the world is not complete as a whole. Despite this idiosyncratic vision, there was a concrete element to Miyazawa's work with local farmers, using his training as an agricultural scientist to help local farmers to improve their work, first at the Hanamaki Agricultural School, and later at the Rasu Chijin Kyōkai, helping farmers to develop plans for effectively fertilizing their land.

Miyazawa's stories, too, reveal an interest in both the local and the universal. Many of his children's stories are set in *Ihatov*, a fantasy reflection of Iwate,⁷² revealing his intense attachment to the geography and landscapes of his home. However, he also made use of cosmological themes in stories such as 'Night of the Milky Way Railway'.⁷³

Miyazawa's individual blend of influences – science and religion, cosmology and

71 *Nōmin Geijutsu Gairon Kōyō, Miyazawa (1997)*, Vol.13. Miyazawa himself came from a family of relatively wealthy traders, rather than a farming family. The sense of being neither a part of the urban elite, nor of the workers of the land, but instead being from a background that he perceived as despised by both groups was a significant theme throughout much of his life.

72 *Ihatov* is often described as an Esperanto transliteration of Iwate. However, Miyazawa's use of *Ihatov* predates his interest in Esperanto. He used many different forms of it, and it is probably more correct to say that he adapted the name (which perhaps comes originally from an older form of Iwate, *Ihate* (イハテ)) into a more Esperanto-like form – with a stress on the second-to-last syllable and ending -o, indicative of an Esperanto noun – from *Iihatovu* to *Iihatōvo*. There is evidence that he made similar changes to other words (Watabe ed., 2007, p.271, 'Esuperanto').

73 For a discussion of the role of science and in particular modern physics in shaping Miyazawa's work, see Golley (2008), chapter 3.

local geography – explain in part the lasting attraction he has had for readers in the postwar period and beyond. They are represented not only in his literary vision, but also in his work with local farmers – studying Esperanto at the same time as drawing up plans for more scientific programmes of cultivation.

Conclusion

It is unlikely that any of the actors in this chapter would be identified within a more conventional study of internationalism – they were far from elite discourse and international politics, and their activities do not necessarily even conform to narrow definitions of internationalism. It is only through something like Esperanto, then, that we can trace the patterns of popular interest in the wider world as far as these small communities, identifying unconventional expressions of internationalist sentiment in unlikely locations.

The cases of Sasaki Kizen and Miyazawa Kenji, as well as that of the Aomori Esperantists, reveal a section of the rural population that was actively engaged with global and international ideas. Esperanto was one tool which allowed them to access debates about Japan and the world and do so potentially without recourse to the national centre. Just as linguistic minorities at the League of Nations saw in Esperanto an idea that, by resisting the hegemonic language blocs, gave support for their own diverse languages, local communities in Tōhoku found that Esperanto provided a method for retaining regional identity without cutting themselves off from the wider world.

Although I have traced the specific ways in which the Esperantists of Tōhoku

engaged with their language, I would not suggest that they were in any way unique in their expressions of a blend of local and global identity. Rather, I see them as a case study in how local context helped to shape the forms in which Esperanto was manifested on a strictly local basis, as specific parts of a greater whole.

The connections between Tōhoku Esperanto and figures focused upon elsewhere in this thesis (Akita Ujaku, Yanagita Kunio's link to Sasaki Kizen, for example) mean that the region was not a completely arbitrary choice of case study; however I do not believe that it is an unrepresentative one. The figures of JEI members recorded in Aomori and Iwate in the membership surveys during the 1920s are broadly comparable to other rural prefectures, whilst the regular *La Revuo Orienta* column 'Enlanda Kroniko', which recorded local club activities, saw occasional mentions of the clubs in Aomori, again falling within the scope of the mentions of other rural areas.⁷⁴ Activity in Aomori and Iwate, then, seems to have been broadly of a similar level to other locations.

Indeed, there were other regional and local Esperanto networks and initiatives which formed notable sub-parts of the broader Japanese movement that can be seen in parallel to the Aomori case: for example, a league of clubs in Kyushū, the southernmost of Japan's four large islands, during the 1920s; and in the early Taishō period, an Esperanto study group which was established in Okinawa. Likewise, there were Esperanto groups and networks in the colonies Taiwan and Korea. Each of these local sub-networks had their own connections to the wider movement, to prominent individual Esperantists, and in particular to the major hubs in Tokyo and Osaka/Kyoto. In each of these cases, no doubt, specific contextual differences helped to shape how

⁷⁴ Aomori had eight members of the JEI in 1922, nine in 1926, and twelve in 1929; Iwate had nine, four, and two, respectively (JEI Jarlibro, 1922, 1926, 1929).

and why individuals took up Esperanto, and what they hoped to achieve with it, again blending local, national, and international concerns.

Even the three examples presented here represent three different ways of making use of Esperanto. The Aomori Esperantists were socially active, trying to reform the region's relationship with modernity and the nation. Miyazawa Kenji, too, sought to transform society, although his efforts at improving the life of local farmers were as unique and individual as was much of his fiction. Finally, by contrast, Sasaki Kizen's Esperanto was a largely private experience, chiefly limited to practising Esperanto with a few friends and local children. However, his articulation of Esperanto together with other interests represented no less a blend of local identity and self-identification with a wider global community or world than did Miyazawa's literary vision, or the cultural movement of Aomori.

5. 'Green on the Outside, but Red Within': the Proletarian Esperanto Movement

One central theme of this thesis is the diversity within Japanese Esperanto, showing in particular that, despite the common association between internationalism and the left, socialists and indeed liberals had no monopoly over ideas of international language and communication and cooperation between nations. Nevertheless the left did form a significant constituency within Japanese Esperanto, as has been highlighted in previous chapters, present at the founding of the JEA in 1906, active even during the 'winter' period of Japanese socialism (a period of socialist inactivity in the wake of the 1911 'great treason incident'), and deeply involved with the resurgence of Esperanto before and after the end of the First World War.

Up until the mid 1920s, the socialists remained well integrated within the broader community of Esperantists, exemplified by the likes of Akita Ujaku and Yamaga Taiji, who continued to explore socialist and anarchist ideas whilst retaining contact with those Esperantists who held different political views. There is no particular reason that this well integrated network should have been so – one can imagine different groups independently developing their own uses of Esperanto with little or no interaction. There were disagreements, to be sure; however, these debates took place within the broad network that formed Japanese Esperanto and there remained a place within the movement for the proponents of minority opinions and heterodox views.

Thus it is significant that the most serious challenge to this interconnectedness came from the socialist wing of Esperanto, and that it came during a specific period at the end of the 1920s and into the early 1930s. During these several years, a distinct and separate set of

Esperanto organisations emerged, practising a different form of Esperanto, one that was motivated within a proletarian setting. The split between proletarian Esperanto¹ and what I will term 'mainstream Esperanto' can be overstated – many members of the proletarian Esperanto movement retained links to the JEI and to other mainstream Esperantists and groups, and the JEI published several of books of importance to the socialist-Esperanto movement during the period. All the same, not only were there separate organisational structures as well as separate publications and textbooks, but the language used by the proletarian Esperantists, derived from wider Soviet theory and politics, was very different from that of the mainstream, often explicitly challenging it.²

There were, I would suggest, two key reasons why this historical moment and this subject caused such a division, one external and one internal. The external reason was the suspicion and outright suppression by the state of Marxist and communist related movements from the late 1920s onwards.³ This put extreme pressure on any fault line between Marxist-influenced and other forms of Esperanto, in effect forcing a wedge into

1 In this chapter, I use 'proletarian Esperanto' to refer to the specific set of groups and individuals associated with the proletarian arts movement and centred around the PEA and PEU, as will be seen. This is useful as a form of identification and in my analysis of the chronology of socialist Esperanto, but it runs the risks inherent in all such forms of periodisation – it obscures continuity and gradual changes in favour of the creation of perhaps arbitrary and anachronistic watersheds.

2 Prior to the early 1920s, socialism in Japan had a mix of different influences and contained a range of different intellectual trends, influenced by various western schools (interpreted within a specifically Japanese context), with anarchism in particular being a significant presence. However, the establishment of the Soviet Union, and the death in the wake of the 1923 Kanto earthquake of Ōsugi Sakae, then the leading anarchist in Japan, allowed Soviet Marxism to take on an increasingly dominant role. See Duus (1988) for a brief history of the Japanese socialist movement, in particular p.692-700, for the shift away from anarchism; whilst Crump (1993) or Yamaga Taiji's anarchist Esperanto (Mukai 1974) represent examples of heterodox socialism after 1923.

3 The state kept a close eye upon the proletarian Esperanto movement. After it had effectively ceased to exist there were at least two major reports analysing its theory and structures: Hiraide (1940) and Takeuchi (1939), the former on the broader proletarian literature movement, the latter specifically on proletarian Esperanto, compiled by the Justice Ministry, in addition to ongoing surveillance (for example, *Saikin ni okeru Puroretaria Esuperanto Undō no Jōkyō*, *Tokkō Gaiji Geppō*, August 1937, in GSS (1982b) by the *Tokkō* special police, within the Home Ministry. These form a source of information on groups which, because of their often grey legal status, might otherwise remain undocumented.

any gap. But the internal reason was the presence of such a gap – the emergence of a separate body of Esperanto theory which proved hard to reconcile with the other perspectives contained within the movement. The increasing radicalism of socialist Esperanto developed in parallel with other bodies of Marxist thought over the late 1920s, drawing upon ideas from the Soviet Union, and increasingly hostile to 'bourgeois' ideas such as that of the mainstream Esperanto movement.

The communism of the 1920s was a curious mix of challenges to the nation-state. It contained within it an inherently revolutionary vision which threatened not only the positions of power and prestige of existing members of the government and elites, but also organised trans- and inter-nationally, arguing that class was a more significant loyalty and identity than nation. At the same time however, the presence of the Soviet Union provided a national body as the focus of communist organisation and theory, so the presence of communist groups within Japan represented not only an ideology which was antithetical to the existing political institutions and potentially even the nation-state as an entity, but represented also an internal source of influence from a hostile foreign state.

Communism and Esperanto found much common ground. Both were ideas which originated from Europe and were innately international in outlook. For the socialists, looking always abroad for theory and advice, even when focused on domestic politics, language was no less a barrier than it was for the scientists, philosophers, and scholars who were drawn to Esperanto. Indeed, Esperanto networks of communication represented a rich potential tool for the pursuit of socialist goals: they might provide a means for the introduction of theory, as well as for the international dissemination of news and tactics, and they could also serve as a way for the workers themselves to make contact with their

foreign comrades, building class consciousness, breaking down national barriers, and reinforcing the perception of a truly global socialist movement.

In addition to this concrete use of Esperanto, there were less tangible links between the language and communism. There was inherent within both Marxism and the more idealistic forms of Esperantism a revolutionary, utopian element – the world reformed as either a workers' paradise or the *Fina Venko* ('final victory') of universal Esperanto adoption, yet at the same time, both could look to at least partial realisations of these goals – to the Soviet Union as an apparent proof of the possibilities of communism, and to the transnational networks of practice that did exist between Esperantists. Thus both were a conjunction of the imagined future and the concrete present: partially realised utopias. For Japanese members of the proletarian Esperanto movement such as Akita Ujaku, these parallels overlapped in real and obvious ways.

There are three phases of the relationship between socialism and Esperanto in inter-war Japan: the first was the period up to around 1927-8 when socialist Esperanto remained a stream of thought and activism within the main body of the Esperanto movement; the next period, in which proletarian Esperanto was established as a separate and distinct entity, centred upon organisations such as the Kokusai-Bunka Kenkyūjo, the Puroretaria Esuperanto Kyōkai (the PEA) and the Puroretaria Esuperanto Dōmei (the PEU); finally, after these central groups were eliminated by the state, the third phase was one of smaller scale initiatives.

Proletarian Esperanto, which reached its full development around 1930, was born from the intersection of the Esperanto community and the proletarian arts and literature movement. Indeed, the path of evolution of both proletarian art and proletarian Esperanto

can be seen running broadly in parallel during the 1920s and early 1930s. Nevertheless, the history of how socialist Esperanto emerged in the 1920s as a distinct entity, separate from mainstream Esperanto groups, and with a marked identity within socialist and proletarian arts circles has its own glosses, revealing the role of the transnational and the international in Japanese communist socialism.

The international context to the Japanese proletarian Esperanto movement had two aspects which reflected the dual nature of its origins. On the one hand there was the growth of the Third International (Comintern) as a guiding hand for international socialist movements, which influenced all of Japanese socialism from the 1920s onwards. But there was also a specifically Esperanto-based socialist tradition. The *Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda* (SAT, the 'World Association of Non-Nationals'), founded in 1921 by the French socialist Eugene Adam (known by the nickname 'Lanti', from *L'anti*, for his habit of opposing much socialist orthodoxy) formed a socialist counter to the UEA as an international body for Esperantists. By the late 1920s, when Japanese Esperantists became most involved with it, this had a membership approximately two-thirds the size of that of the UEA.⁴ Lanti's own unusual views were reflected in a general unwillingness within the SAT to single-mindedly support the development of Soviet socialism. This led to ongoing conflict within the organisation and the eventual creation of a rival *Internacio de Proletaraj Esperantistoj* (IPE, the Proletarian Esperantists International), in 1933. Japanese groups, such as the *Kashiwagi Rondo*, who were engaged with the SAT in the late 1920s, generally endorsed the Soviet side of these rifts, reflecting the dominance of the Soviet communism

⁴ See Forster (1982), Chapter 7, for a detailed history of international Esperanto/Socialist relations.

within the Japanese proletarian movement of the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁵

The members of the proletarian Esperanto movement believed that they were crafting a second great revolution in Japanese Esperanto, one that would build upon and surpass the creation of the JEI, and in which the language Esperanto would achieve its fullest substantiation. However, like other aspects of the Japanese left, ultimately their movement was suppressed by the Japanese state, and by the mid 1930s only a few scattered individuals remained as active advocates of the intersection between socialism and Esperanto.

Defining the Relationship between Esperanto and Socialism

The parallel resurgence of socialism and Esperanto in the wake of the First World War was highlighted with the expulsion of Vassily Eroshenko from Japan in 1921. As described in chapter two, this led to a suspicion amongst some officials that Esperanto was no more than socialism by another name. This set the stage for a on-running debate throughout the 1920s about the exact nature of the relationship between socialism and Esperanto, both within the Esperanto movement itself and without. Early socialist Esperantists described themselves as 'watermelons' (*Akvomelono*) – green on the outside, yet red within,⁶ whilst others sought to challenge the connection between the two movements, eager to resist any public perception of Esperanto as inherently socialist.

One of the strongest counters to the charge that Esperanto was innately socialist held that a language was completely distinct from the ideas it was used to express: it was

⁵ For example, see Miyake (1995) p.40-1.

⁶ The use of the colours red and green to denote socialism and Esperanto, however, does seem to represent at least some acknowledgement of a semantic gap between the two movements, in contrast with the suggestion that 'all Esperantists must be socialists; all socialists must be Esperantists', which has been ascribed to Vassily Eroshenko (Miyamoto & Oshima 1973, p.119).

an empty vessel which could be made to carry any ideology and thus was fundamentally connected to none of them. As one Esperanto magazine put it:

What is a 'dangerous language' [*genjo*, 言語]? When we speak of “trifling with dangerous language [*genji*, 言辭]” is it the language, is it the people, is it the ideas, which is it? It goes without saying that it is the ideas. There are amongst the Japanese and the English and the Germans those who hold so-called dangerous thought. It is clear that we cannot, because of this, regard these national languages as dangerous. So, too, is the case of Esperanto.

It is different from saying English for trade, German for medicine and Italian for music. Whilst we might use the logic that Russian is dangerous, this does not extend to Esperanto. This is because Esperanto does not have the background of a nation.

There are those who say that it is dangerous because it is an international language, but if so we would have to say that, today, English is far more dangerous. That is, its speakers are many, and thus the number of individuals with dangerous thought and books, too, are numerous.⁷

Nitobe Inazō echoed this view in 1929 when he expanded and republished his earlier work on the use of foreign languages in Japan: '[Esperanto] has been indicted as being a channel of radical thought: but it is well known that more propaganda literature of “dangerous ideas” exists in other languages'.⁸ Indeed, the existence of an Esperanto translation of the communist manifesto (as well as Kropotkin, and Lenin's works) could be countered by the argument that there were translations of them into all national languages, too.⁹

The socialists drew on ideas of Marxism to brand this viewpoint 'linguistic fetishism', arguing that it was fundamentally flawed – language was shaped by, and in order to better reflect the needs of, the society in which it was used and thus could only be understood in a social context: 'that which we call a language is not knowledge written

7 'Esperanto to Kiken Shisō', *Esperanto En Nipponlando*, May 1926, p.85.

8 Nitobe (1929) p.461.

9 *Esperanto En Nipponlando*, May 1926, p.85.

upon paper, but a living craft used by living beings'.¹⁰

It was not necessary to be an advocate of the neutral forms of Esperantism to hold the view that, whilst Esperanto could be used to express dangerous ideas, it was not inextricably connected to it. But beyond the simple denial of a link between socialism and Esperanto, there were even Esperantists who held that the *Interna Ideo* was actively counter to socialist thinking. The most high profile expression of this view was a set of articles by Asada Hajime, a doctor and an Esperantist, published in the *Asahi Shinbun*. The six part 'Akka to Midori-ka' ('Red Shift and Green Shift') was an analysis of the social context of socialist movements through an extensive parallel to cancer in the human body, which argued not only that Esperanto was not necessarily allied to socialist ideas, but that the two were opposed. For Asada, Esperanto represented one part of the antidote to the threat of socialism.¹¹

Socialism was, to Asada, a disease of the nation state which arose amongst those who were isolated from the bonds of social connection – the sick, poverty stricken members of the proletariat, students who had failed to progress, and others. These elements of society were akin to those parts of the body which had received extreme stimulus – the stomach of big drinkers, the mouths of pipe smokers, and others. The treatment for socialism in society paralleled that for cancer in the body: prevention by removal of the stimulus – a living wage for workers, free treatment for the sick, for example; then where socialism had arisen, radical surgery – arrests, that is – but also the application of love and religion, which Asada saw as the parallel of radio- and chemotherapy. Skilfully applied, the application of love might replace the harsher method of

10 'Naze Puro-Esu Undō ha Hitsuyō ka?', *Kamarado*, March 1932, p.3.

11 'Akka to Midorika', Asada Hajime, *Asahi Shinbun*, 8th-14th May 1926.

arrests as an antidote to socialism, just as medical advances were allowing X-rays and radium to replace surgery as a method for tackling cancer. Esperanto was once such potential cure.

Where others saw socialism and Esperanto as allied, Asada explicitly denied the connection. Red, being recognised as the colour of socialism, came from the colour of blood, and the willingness of revolutionary movements to spill blood in pursuit of their goals. But thus this red was the colour of violence and disharmony. Socialists had no love of the nation-state, and thus would risk throwing the world into chaos. By contrast, the green movement, Esperanto, was born of a love of one's own nation, first, and a desire to ensure world peace, second. Peace and harmony was achieved through the external display of green – the colour of leaves and new growth. Asada's Esperantism was a view imbued with the optimism of *Homaransimo* and idealistic Esperantism, rather than the narrow linguistic definitions, predicated upon patriotism and the nation, and in direct opposition to socialism, which he saw as a social dysfunction.

Countering these disavowals of any link between socialism and Esperanto, the Japanese socialists moved from merely exploring the two ideas together to challenging the legitimacy of mainstream, or in the language of the socialists, bourgeois, Esperanto as a real manifestation of the true spirit of Esperantism. As briefly mentioned in chapter four, the magazine *Tane Maku Hito*, one of the earliest manifestations of what came to be the proletarian literary movement, featured a number of Esperantists, such as Akita Ujaku and Sasaki Takamaru, amongst its regular contributors. Within the magazine, they explored ideas of a new proletarian internationalism, seeking to make a break with the bourgeois liberal internationalism typified by movements such as mainstream Esperanto. This new

ideology they termed 'worldism' (*sekai-shugi*), to distinguish itself from the former internationalism (*kokusai-shugi*).

The conventional Esperanto movement, argued the socialists, was just one part of a body of thinking that, though it claimed to be internationalist in outlook and pro-peace in objective, was innately connected with the nationalism of the bourgeoisie. Instead, it was from the proletarian classes that the true internationalism – worldism – would emerge, exposing bourgeois internationalism for the sham it was. In this context, terms such as the world and worldism became synonyms for proletarian and the proletariat.

This argument that mainstream internationalism was really just a part of the cycle of war and peace that formed the fundamentally nationalist international system can be traced in Japan back at least to Kōtoku Shūsui and the socialists of the Russo-Japanese war (and particularly the critique of the Portsmouth peace treaty).¹² However, the growth and development of the proletarian literature movement in the 1920s saw it renewed and developed further. An editorial in the magazine *Tane Maku Hito* explored the relationship between art and the nation:

In today's world, every person cannot avoid being associated with a country [*ikkoku*], and so it is true that the work of an individual must necessarily, if unconsciously, contain the nation state [*kokka*]. As for the make up of countries, so long as humanity is organised into specific ethnic-nations [*minzoku*], the inclusion of the spirit and sentiment of ethnic-nationalism within art works probably cannot be avoided.¹³

This national consciousness, argued *Tane Maku Hito*, emerged from sense of the age, its 'representative consciousness', which pervaded all human endeavours – politics, economics, science, philosophy, and the arts – a consciousness which was fundamentally bourgeois in its manifestation. This bourgeois consciousness was represented not only in

¹² See, for example, Konishi (2008).

¹³ 'Geijutsu ni okeru Kokusai-shugi to Sekai-shugi', *Tane Maku Hito*, January 1922, p.3.

patriotism, but in the internationalism of peace treaties and the League of Nations. Similarly in the arts, the 'blind worship of foreign literature' was no less the product of the bourgeois age than was 'boasting that Japanese novels are no worse than foreign ones' – they were two sides of the same coin. However, the *Tane Maku Hito* editorial also looked to a future age in which another consciousness would predominate:

In contrast to that, there is a group in the field of the arts, based upon 'worldism'. That is, a worldism which longs for a world in which a proletarian consciousness must come to oppose the bourgeois consciousness of the current age.¹⁴

Sasaki Takamaru, a member of the *Tane Maku Hito* group, as well as one of the Esperantists who had participated in the 1923 lecture tour to Tōhoku, explored Esperanto from the perspective of worldism in a three-part article in the *Asahi Shinbun*. He began by outlining the same ground as in *Tane Maku Hito*, making explicit the equation of 'world' with 'proletarian': 'In short the true meaning of what we call "worldist literature" is "proletarian [*musan kaikyū*] literature"'.¹⁵ The reason that the proletariat might achieve a true connection where the bourgeoisie could not was that the proletariat could identify true solidarity, where bourgeois connections were at best an uneasy truce:

The world meeting of the proletarian class is not like the superficial shell-only neighbourly meeting of the likes of bourgeois internationalism, because it is a meeting of the naked with the naked. Not the masked handshake of mutual enemies, or mutual competitors, but the embrace of fellow brothers.¹⁶

In considering Esperanto, Sasaki recognised that much of the existing Esperanto movement could be categorised as a part of the bourgeois internationalism, but argued that the language itself 'as far as it bore a love of man, was born as a manifestation of the highest ideals'. Names for Esperanto such as 'international auxiliary language' and

¹⁴ *Tane Maku Hito*, January 1922, p.6.

¹⁵ 'Sekai-shugi Bungaku to Sekaigo', Sasaki Takamaru, *Asahi Shinbun*, 5th-7th July 1922.

¹⁶ *Asahi Shinbun*, 6th July 1922.

'*Internacia Lingvo*' could be identified with the bourgeois movement, whereas the true Esperanto would be better represented using terms such as '*sennacia lingvo*' or '*Esperantisto revolucia*' ('non-national language', and 'revolutionary Esperantist').

By explicit extension then, the existing Esperanto was not a true international language movement – that would only be achieved in the hands of the workers. Only by reformulating Japanese Esperanto along Marxist lines, a true international language movement would emerge. Over time, just as new waves of Marxist theory were introduced to Japan, developing in sophistication, a Marxist theory of language was developed which included a place for Esperanto. This materialist theory argued that the development of language mirrored the development of society. With the emergence of the nation-state and the capitalist economy came the creation of national languages and eventually the need for an international auxiliary language. However, from there would come the proletarian revolution, and with it would emerge the true *Sekaigo*, world language. This theory was developed in the Soviet Union, but was introduced to Japan through a series of translations, chiefly undertaken by Ōshima Yoshio, using the pseudonym Takagi Hiroshi, from the late 1920s onwards.

Even prior to this fully fledged theory, however, the equation 'world (*sekai*) = proletarian, international (*kokusai*) = bourgeois' reveals the fundamental change in interpretation which drove the socialist internationalism and thus the Marxist Esperanto movement to distinguish itself from existing international and Esperanto movements. This line of theory ensured that the new movement was at best in an uneasy relationship to the bourgeois Esperanto from which it had emerged.

The gradual development of a theory of socialist Esperanto which occurred during

the 1920s was paralleled by the creation of a number of socialist Esperanto groups. These forerunners of the organised proletarian Esperanto movement included the 'watermelons' mentioned above (a group of students associated with the Gakuren student association who organised a socialist sub-group at the 1924 Sendai JEI congress); the Clara-kai, a women's Esperanto association (named after Ludwig Zamenhof's wife) organised by Sasaki Matsue, sister of the famous feminist activist Yamakawa Kikue; and, most directly, the Kashiwagi Rondo, a Tokyo-based Esperanto study group which bridged the gap from socialist Esperanto within the JEI umbrella to a separate proletarian Esperanto outside it.¹⁷

The Kashiwagi Rondo emerged from within the Tokyo Esperanto scene: a group of young Esperantists who worked together to study their shared interests in Esperanto and socialism. Although there was a wide group of participants, the core was a set of five: Higa Shunchō, an Okinawan native who had moved to Tokyo and worked for the publishing house Kaizō; Nakagaki Kojirō, who originated from Kyushū but who had become engaged with Esperanto whilst working as a teacher in Korea; and three ex-Waseda university students, Ōshima Yoshio, Nagahama Kojirō, and Kiyomi Rokurō.¹⁸

It is not clear exactly when what began as a regular casual meeting, studying such texts as Esperanto versions of the communist manifesto, Lenin's 'The State and the Revolution', and revolutionary writings from Europe, Russia, and China, turned into a more formal organisation, but at some point between 1925 and 1928 they came to be

17 Miyake (1995), chapter 4, contains a good outline of these groups, Miyamoto & Oshima (1973) also discusses a number of the individuals involved.

18 Miyake (1995), p.37; Takeuchi (1939, p.157) lists nine individuals as founders of the group, including those listed above, a Taiwanese named Ii, and one woman, Miyake Hisano, who was a labour activist also involved in Sasaki Matsuei's Klara-kai.

recognised as the de facto Japanese wing of the SAT.¹⁹ The group made efforts both to publicise the SAT and introduce to a wider audience some of the Marxist linguistic theory which they were encountering in their study.²⁰

The Kashiwagi Rondo retained links to the JEI, organising SAT sessions at a number of JEI congresses. At the 1929 congress in Tokyo, the members of the Kashiwagi Rondo successfully passed a motion that called for the JEI to provide Esperanto study materials to the young socialists who had been arrested in the mass police actions of 15th March 1928 and 16th April 1929 and were still being held in prisons. The arrestees were apparently allowed to receive books on religion and language study, and over 100 responded to JEI enquiries indicating that they were interested in learning Esperanto.²¹

Within Asada Hajime's analysis, one might interpret this as a way to help counter the threat of socialism in Japanese society by providing the inmates with an alternate ideology, one that worked in harmony with the state and existing institutions, rather than aiming at bringing them down. Indeed later, in the 1930s, an ex-member of the Justice Ministry, Hirata Atsune, suggested a similar role for Esperanto in reintegrating ex-socialists into Japanese society.²² However, for the members of Kashiwagi Rondo, it was a means of further integrating Esperanto with the proletarian movement. It is striking that those members of the JEI who attended the AGM in 1929 seem to have still been relatively

19 The Justice Ministry report of 1939 suggested that the Kashiwagi Rondo was created in 1927 or 1928 (Takeuchi 1939, p.150) whilst Miyake argues that, whilst various of the participants suggested that it happened as early as 1924 (Higa), or as late as 1928 (Oshima), announcements in the Esperanto press suggest that they began to call themselves the Kashiwagi Rondo (after Higa's residence in Kashiwagi, where the meetings were held) some time in 1926 (Miyake 1995, p.36, footnote).

20 For example, *Nuntempo Stato, Perspektivoj kaj Plua Evoluo de Laborista Esperanto-Movado/Kio Estas SAT?*, pamphlet published by Kashiwagi Rondo, 1929, copy held in the library of the JEI.

21 Takeuchi (1939) p.158. Miyamoto & Oshima (1973, p.147-152) explore some of the experiences of prisoners studying Esperanto.

22 Hirata (1938).

comfortable enough to allow links to be made between Esperanto and those accused of involvement within the Japanese communist movement.

The Proletarian Esperanto Movement

At the same time as the Kashiwagi Rondo and others were involved in introducing socialist theory from overseas to the Japanese Esperanto movement, so too was the growing proletarian movement engaging more seriously with Esperanto. One of the key figures occupying this overlap, and thus one of the key players in the growth of proletarian Esperanto in the period 1928-1930, was Akita Ujaku. Although he was a socialist and an Esperantist of long standing, one of the formative events in establishing the reality of the potential of both communism and Esperanto, as well as the link between the two, was a trip which he took to Moscow to participate in the 1927 celebrations of the October Revolution's tenth anniversary.

Akita and Narumi Kanzō (the Russian specialist and Esperantist from Akita's home town of Kuroishi), who accompanied him, were not the only Japanese to visit Russia at that time, but Akita's presence was relatively high profile: he sent back accounts of his experiences to be published by the magazines and journals which helped to fund his trip. But as much as the publicity of the trip was important, more significant was Akita's personal experience of the Soviet Union, an experience which served as a dramatic validation of Akita's belief in the real world power of communism as a modern and rational political, economic, and social system and, as Akita's first experience overseas, also a realisation of the value and potential of Esperanto as a means of communication and international connection. His trip to Moscow, and his conversations with Russian Esperantists, offered hope that his idealistic visions were not imaginary, that they existed

at least in partial form in the contemporary world.

The trip was not, unlike that of some other Japanese visitors to Russia, undertaken in secret. Rather, Akita planned it methodically over the course of 1927, liaising with officials from both the Home Ministry and the *Tokkō* special police in order to secure the necessary approval.²³ His trip was even announced in advance in the press.²⁴ Akita's excitement at visiting Russia is palpable in his diary entries. He travelled across China and then Siberia – from Chinese town of Mukden (*Hōten*, 'beautiful like a painting'), via the pivot of the melting pot of Harbin (a 'weird existence', with growing Chinese presence and a waning Russian one) and on towards western Russia; as he went he celebrated the transformation of the world around him from a Chinese one into a Russian one, noting white birch trees on a station platform, Lake Baikal stretching on for mile after mile, and finally the first snow as they reached Moscow.

Once there, the visit was similar to those of many other 'fellow travellers' to the early Soviet Union: Akita and Narumi were hosted by VOKS, the Moscow based 'All Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries', they met with a range of different artists and writers, made visits to innumerable political and literary sites, including a trip to the Caucasus, and they took part in number of groups and committees, repaying their hosts' generosity by writing a number of articles about the success of the new Russian society.²⁵

However, Esperanto also played a key role in Akita's individual experience. He met

23 The account of this trip comes from Akita Ujaku's diary entries for 1927 and 1928, Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.2 p.9-138.

24 'Ujaku-shi Iyoiyo Roshia Shibai Angya', *Asahi Shinbun*, September 19th 1927.

25 Stern (2007) outlines the experience of Western intellectual visitors to the Soviet Union.

four or five Russian Esperantists on the train out of Harbin: as they reached the border at Chita, finally entering Russia proper, they sang the Esperanto anthem, *La Espero*.²⁶ Once in Moscow, Akita met famous European Esperantists such as Henri Barbusse and Ernest Drezen, and increasingly a snowball-like series of wider Esperanto contacts.

Language proved to be a notable problem for Akita. He made efforts to study Russian, both during the preparation for his visit and again after arriving in Moscow (there taking lessons from his old friend, Vassily Eroshenko, who made contact with Akita three days after his arrival in Moscow).²⁷ However, he appears to have had limited success.²⁸ Narumi Kanzō's presence on the trip was, at least in part, to provide language assistance; Akita was also provided with an interpreter by VOKS, Mary Tsuin [ツイン], for many of his activities.²⁹ Nevertheless, Akita's first comment about the Congress of Friends of the Soviet Union (the main congress which Akita attended during the celebrations) was simply 'language problems'.³⁰ He and other Esperantists sought to solve these by proposing a motion to the congress in favour of Esperanto. Akita was due to speak for the motion, with Barbusse to second it. However, due to a wrangle involving advocates of the rival language Ido, Akita and the others agreed to withdraw the motion; in place they collected a petition of delegates' signatures recommending Esperanto for use in international cultural relations.³¹

26 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.2 p.33-35.

27 On the 18th January 1928, Akita recorded that Eroshenko had been sacked from his university job (Akita & Osaki 1965, vol.2 p.66).

28 Akita (1987) p.146-7.

29 Their relationship appears to have been a good one on the whole - they worked together on translations of his work for VOKS and discussed a wide range of subjects, although Mary was sceptical of Esperanto (Akita & Osaki 1965, vol.2, p.99).

30 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol. 2, p.44.

31 'Sovueto Roshia ni okeru Esuperanto Undō', Akita Ujaku, *Esuperanto*, August 1928, p.138-141, 170-171. In his diary, Akita also mentioned a speech by a female worker harshly rebuking him/Esperanto (Akita &

Despite this setback in the formal part of his visit, Esperanto provided Akita with new and unexpected avenues in his exploration of Russian society. He made a series of three radio broadcasts in Esperanto; in addition to the thirty or so Esperantists that Akita met amongst the other foreign delegates at the anniversary celebrations, these broadcasts brought him into contact with Russian Esperantists. He was invited to the meetings of the Esperanto club of the PTTR (Post, Telegraph, Telegram, and Radio) department, meeting individual Russian Esperantists through this more informal setting, and later he was invited to Minsk by local Esperantists there.³²

As he wrote in his diary on meeting a well known Russian Esperantist, S. Shabarin, and again when describing the Soviet Esperanto scene for a Japanese Esperanto audience, it was through Esperanto that he was able to make contact with the new life of ordinary Russians – to get a glimpse into their daily life, their houses and their work.³³ Akita's invitation to Minsk came from a young medical student who had heard one of his radio broadcasts.³⁴ There, and in Moscow, he met with Esperantists of various types: students and workers, men and women, foreign visitors, and a range of different ethnic groups.³⁵

Akita Ujaku's experience and use of Esperanto at home was fairly typical for a 1920s Japanese Esperantist (particularly one based in Tokyo). Whilst the origin of his contact with Esperanto was inextricably linked to the beginnings of his friendship with Vassily Eroshenko, nevertheless his opportunity to make use of Esperanto with non-

Osaki 1965, vol. 2 p.45).

32 Akita (1987) p.149.

33 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol. 2 p.98 and *Esperanto*, August 1928, p.138; also Akita (1987 p.147):

'Once I made some Esperanto friends, I was able to use their linguistic aid to enter the real life of Moscow (daily life). Through an Esperanto teacher called [Viktor] Zhavaronkov, I was able to make contact with workers' daily life, home, factory, and club life.'

34 Akita (1987) p.148.

35 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol. 2, particularly entries for March and April 1928, e.g. p.83, p.109, p.118.

Japanese was limited to contact with the stream of occasional visitors to Japan, with foreign residents of Japan who spoke Esperanto, and to correspondence overseas. Thus his trip to Russia was not only a chance to see for himself the new socialist experiment, it was his first trip overseas, and what turned out to be a vivid proof of his hope for Esperanto as a way to bring peoples together, inspiring him to compose the following poem:

You are a child of the west, I am a child of the east, but; When we are in the same field, we see the same sun.³⁶

Akita's initial visa ran until November 1927, but he stayed in Russia until the May day celebrations of 1928, arriving back in Tokyo by the 18th of May. The trip was clearly of immense personal importance to him. To the progressive visitor of the late 1920s, Soviet Russia was an emerging socialist modernity, one in which, to Akita at least, Esperanto was increasingly playing a key role in forging transnational networks. Whilst Akita expressed dismay at the martial feel of the central celebration of the October Revolution – a parade in Red Square on the 7th of November,³⁷ the overall tenor of his experience was immensely positive, in particular because of the personal angle which Esperanto opened up for him.

On his return journey on the trans-Siberian railway, as the train made its way back across Siberia, and into Manchuria, Akita once again had an opportunity to reflect on the importance of language in bringing peoples together and in helping to facilitate the reform of society. On the train, he made acquaintances with several Chinese students returning from study in Berlin and Moscow. According to Akita, whilst several were drawn to ethnic

36 *'Kvankam vi estas la filo de la Okcidento; kaj mi estas la filo de l'oriento; Iam ni iros la saman kampon; kaj nepre vidos la saman sunon'*, (Akita & Osaki, 1965, vol. 2 p.98).

The poem was dedicated, not to a Russian, but to a young American Esperantist named Paul Crouch, also visiting Moscow. Akita wrote it at a meeting of Esperantists at which discussion of Japanese – America foreign relations came up. Akita suggested that American and Japan's historical opposition was a bourgeois phenomenon and thus had no meaning for the likes of he and Crouch, echoing the famous expressing of mutuality between Russian and Japanese socialists at the time of the Russo-Japanese war.

37 Akita & Osaki (1965) vol.2 p.44.

nationalism (*Minzoku-shugi*), all were ardent reformists. However, Akita recalled the 'absurdity that, whilst we were the same humankind, humans with the closest relationship of interests, because of the constraints of language we could not freely exchange these intents'.³⁸

Back in Japan, greeted in Tokyo station by his wife and a number of his friends and colleagues, Akita set about bringing his new experiences to bear upon his understanding of both the proletarian problem and Esperanto.

Akita's account of the reality of the Russian project was of great interest to many: his various essays were published as a combined volume, *Wakaki Sovēto Roshia* ('Young Soviet Russia'), and he spoke at many meetings about his trip. Furthermore, he went on to found the Kokusai-Bunka Kenkyūjo ('International Culture Research Institute', later reformulated in 1929 into the Puroretaria Kagaku Kenkyūjo, 'the Proletarian Science Research Institute', often known simply as Pro Kagaku). These groups helped to contribute to the creation of proletarian Esperanto as well as the development of wider cultural Marxist groups. The goals of the Kokusai Bunka Kenkyūjo were 'to introduce widely to the Japanese proletariat and its allies in what ways proletarian culture, centred upon the Soviet Union, is superior to bourgeois culture, and how it is becoming so'.³⁹ The members were keen to stress that Pro Kagaku was 'a Marxist research institute, not a political group',⁴⁰ highlighting the ongoing problems in exploring Marxism and communism whilst remaining a legal organisation.

The names of the two groups is suggestive. The use of 'international culture' to refer

38 Akita (1987) p.151.

39 Objectives of the Kokusai Bunka Kenkyūsho, quoted in Hiraide (1940), p.242.

40 Standing committee of the Pro Kagaku group, quoted in Hiraide (1940), p.243.

to proletarian and specifically Soviet forms shows that the equation of the global with the proletarian remained (although the distinction between *sekai* as proletarian and *kokusai* as bourgeois seems to have been dropped). Marxism was a scientific approach to society and politics, and the Soviet Union was the central reference point for this scientific study – a society in which the new socialist modernity was being made manifest, a 'new, free heaven created for humanity'.⁴¹

In addition to Akita, and figures from within the proletarian arts movement such as Kurahara Korehito, some of the young Esperantists associated with the Kashiwagi Rondo, Itō Saburō and Nakagaki Kojirō for example, were involved with the creation of the Kokusai Bunka Kenkyūjo. And, indeed, Esperanto had a presence within the group from its very outset.

The Kokusai Bunka Kenkyūjo organised a summer language school in 1929, at which Esperanto was taught alongside European languages and Chinese.⁴² Then, when it was founded later that year, the Puroretario Kagaku Kenkyūjo began a regular Esperanto study group, one of a number of weekly research subgroups. In 1930, the group organised series of courses for those interested in learning Esperanto. In March, two twenty day courses in Esperanto ran side by side, one held in Shinjuku, the other in Hongō. The first class was intended for students and intellectuals, the second for workers. This pair of courses, attended by roughly seventy people in total, was followed by a second pair in July/August, this time split into a beginners' course and an intermediate one. The summer saw a repeat of the summer language school; this time eighty students attended each of a beginners and an intermediate Esperanto course. 1931 saw a further two sets of classes,

41 Puroretaria Kagaku Kenkyūsho (1930-31), vol.1 p.1.

42 Miyamoto & Oshima (1973) p.160.

this time relatively more sparsely attended.⁴³

The experience gained teaching these courses gave rise to a six volume set of textbooks, *Puroretaria Esuperanto Kōza*. This was designed as both an Esperanto course and an introduction to Marxist and socialist thought. The introduction to the first volume explained that it would cover: 1) the relationship between human social existence and language, 2) language as language 3) understanding the rules of language, and 4) issues relating to the study of language.⁴⁴ Each volume was intended to cover four weeks' worth of study, and alternated essays on the nature of language and its role within human society with a course in Esperanto, starting from the very basics. Priced at eighty sen per volume, this proved to be phenomenally successful with reported sales in the thousands.⁴⁵

But Esperanto was not only to be used internally, spreading Esperanto and Marxism to the proletariat in Japan: it could also be used externally. The first issue of *Puroretaria Kagaku*, a magazine published by Pro Kagaku, reported upon the success of the Kashiwagi Rondo group's 'books for prisoners' motion at the JEI Esperanto congress of 1929, as well as announcing the publication in Europe of an Esperanto edition of Henri Barbusse's journal, *Monde*. The second issue (December 1929) began what was to be a regular Esperanto subsection of the magazine. The first of these comprised a statement of 'Our principles', along with details of the foundation of the Pro Kagaku group, and some recent publications (including Akita's *Wakaki Soveto Roshia*). The closing line expressed the intent to make use of Esperanto in sharing news of the proletarian struggle with other

43 Takeuchi (1939) p.159-160; *Puroretaria Kagaku Kenkyūsho* (1930+), vol.13 p.114 (October 1931).

44 *Puroretaria Kagaku Kenkyūsho* (1930-31), vol.1 p.2.

45 A figure of 8,000 is given by Miyamoto & Oshima (1973); although it is unclear where this figure came from, it is echoed by other sources, such as the government report, Takeuchi (1939), which suggested that 'practically all involved in the Puro-Esu movement read it, sales were said to be several thousand' (p.162). Even spread over all six volumes, this would still suggest that the texts were very popular.

nations: 'We ask that our comrades of all nations reprint this declaration [of the principles of Pro Kagaku] in the cultural organs of all nations'.⁴⁶ Later months' columns were made up of Esperanto translations of previous months' articles, I believe with the goal of assisting foreign socialist groups in disseminating and engaging with the work of their Japanese comrades.

The joint success of the *Puroretaria Esuperanto Kōza* textbooks and the 1930 Esperanto courses led to the creation of a proletarian Esperanto group, the Puroretaria Esuperanto Kyōkai (PEA, from the Esperanto name, the Proleta Esperanto-Asocio). This was, in effect, the Esperanto wing of the wider proletarian literature movement, and its central body the Zen-Nihon Musansha Geijutsu Renmei (the All Japan Proletarian Arts League, which was known widely as NAPF, also from its Esperanto translation, Nippona Artista Proletaria Federacio)

From its beginnings in the magazine *Tane Maku Hito*, proletarian literature and proletarian arts had developed their own bodies and their own theory, in parallel to the development of Japanese socialist political organisations. *Tane Maku Hito* ceased publication in the wake of the Kanto earthquake of 1923, but in its place a series of organisations grew up. During Akita Ujaku's absence in Moscow, the then central group, the Nihon Puroretaria Geijutsu Renmei (JPAL: the Japan Proletarian Arts League) had ruptured into three different groups: the remainder of JPAL, and two splinter groups, the Rōnō Geijutsuka Renmei (WPAL: the Worker-Peasant Artists' League) and the Zen'ei Geijutsuka Dōmei (VAL: the Vanguard Artists' League). NAPF was formed from the partial reconciliation of these groups, stimulated in part by the 15th March incident of 1928,

⁴⁶ 'Niaj Principoj', *Puroretaria Kagaku* no.2, December 1929, Puroretaria Kagaku Kenkyūsho (1930+), vol.1 p.433.

a wave of police actions against the left which helped drive the various factions back together for mutual support.⁴⁷

The first Esperanto courses organised by the Pro Kagaku group led to three regular study groups ('*rondo*') being established in Tokyo – one in Hongō, one in Shinjuku, and one in Nakano. These in turn led to the creation of the PEA in July 1930. According to Nakagaki Kojirō, the initial membership was twenty-two, of whom five or six were Koreans; by the end of the year this had risen to over a hundred.⁴⁸ Accompanying the creation of the PEA came the publication of a magazine, originally titled *Avangardo* (subsequently changed to *Kyōsansha Puroratisto* and finally *Puroretaria Esperantisto*). The first issues of this saw similarly rapid growth – from sixty copies printed at first to over 200 by the fifth issue.⁴⁹

The PEA's goals included the use of Esperanto as a tool for the liberation of the proletariat, and the spread of Esperanto into factories and farming communities. The general theoretical outlook, originating from Comintern and the Soviet Union and in line with the approach of NAPF and proletarian literature as a whole, stressed the need to remain more closely in tune with communist party objectives (without crossing the delicate line into illegal activities):

The PEA acts in a specific field of proletarian culture, according to the cultural plan of the revolutionary party... The PEA is not a political body, but as far as possible its members must individually engage in organised political movements.⁵⁰

In 1931, less than a year after the PEA had been founded, it gave way to a new

47 See Shea (1964), especially chapter 6, for the development of proletarian literature and proletarian arts movements.

48 Takeuchi (1939) p.164, Shibata (2010) p.35.

49 Takeuchi (1939) p.167.

50 From notes recorded by Kinoshita Tadazō; Miyake (1995) p.53.

organisation, the Nihon Puroretaria Esuperanto Dōmei (PEU: the (Japan) Prolet-Esperanto Unio). In essence, this was a reformulation of the PEA – the membership of the central committee was barely changed – but it represented a desire to change direction and alter the central goals of Japanese proletarian Esperanto, one which reflected a shift in focus across the proletarian arts movement. NAPF, too, was reconfigured in 1931, as KOPF (the Nihon Puroretaria Bunka Renmei or Federacio de Proletaj Kultur-Organizoj Japanaj), an umbrella organisation which contained a range of subgroups for each of the arts, including the newly formed PEU.

The logic behind these changes came from changes to overall proletarian theory. Kurahara Korehito, a PEA and NAPF member, had attended the fifth congress of Profintern in Moscow, returning with a set of new ideas. Central to this new outlook was a desire to take the proletarian arts closer to the proletariat – to support the creation of literary groups within factories and farming communities.⁵¹ The new strategy was one that sought to achieve mass participation in the proletarian arts, including proletarian Esperanto.

The PEU focused then on seeking to promote the potential for international correspondence, and put even more stress on developing study groups within factories and working communities. To some extent this was successful – in the first year some thirty study groups were formed within factories in Tokyo, Osaka and Okayama, whilst PEU membership rose from around one hundred at its foundation to three hundred, and circulation of a new magazine *Kamarado* ('Comrade') reportedly reached two thousand.⁵²

51 Shea (1964) p.207-8; Miyake (1995) p.61.

52 Takeuchi (1939) p.185-6. The circulation figure in particular is somewhat unclear: Miyake (1995, p.62) suggests the peak level was around 2500 but provides no source, Hiraide (1940, p.310) suggests that the

However, it was not a complete success: promotional lectures and exhibitions were poorly attended, likely due to government interference, and not a single study group was formed in an agricultural setting.

Both proletarian literature and proletarian Esperanto sought to develop in line with a theory of best practice which originated from the Soviet Union and Comintern. This in part necessitated the development of proletarian Esperanto as a distinct entity, formalising the split between proletarian and mainstream/bourgeois Esperanto, realising the theoretical distinction between bourgeois liberal internationalism (*kokusaishugi*) and proletarian worldism (*sekaishugi*). Over time the make up of the proletarian Esperanto groups and their relationship to the JEI and mainstream Esperanto changed. The proletarian Esperanto movement grew out of an intersection between Esperanto and socialism and/or Marxism – its leaders were the likes of Akita Ujaku, Itō Saburō, and Nakagaki Kojirō: people whose interests in Esperanto and in Marxism developed side by side, who also retained long-standing connections to the JEI and its members. However, many of those who joined (and later led) the proletarian Esperanto groups were drawn to Esperanto as a tool for revolutionary goals, less than in the language's own right – for example, Sakai Matsutarō, later a leader of the PEU recalled: 'I did not participate because I especially liked Esperanto but because I was attracted by the revolutionary movement... perhaps this was true of most of us of that time'.⁵³

Inevitably these younger proletarian Esperanto participants were also much less connected to the JEI and its members. PEA policy had suggested that they might use

final few issues of the magazine in 1933 sold around 600 copies, whilst Takeuchi (1939, p.183) quotes the second AGM in March 1932 as reporting a circulation growing rapidly from 1000 to 2000, but also notes Nakagaki claimed a figure of 3000.

⁵³ Miyake (1995) p.54.

bourgeois Esperanto groups for their own goals, whilst exposing anti-proletarian attitudes and seeking to recruit from the ranks of bourgeois Esperanto.⁵⁴ Shaped by Soviet thinking about the relationship between left wing movements and the overthrow of capitalism, the proletarian arts groups and other Marxist groups began to take a more hostile approach to non-communist left wing ideology, seeing it as a barrier to revolution.⁵⁵ Within the context of the PEA and PEU, this meant a growing hostility towards the JEI and bourgeois Esperanto, something which was met with some ambivalence by the likes of Akita Ujaku and Nakagaki Kojirō.

Moreover, this shifting attitude was but one part of an increasing radicalisation of the proletarian literature organisations – closer ties to the Japanese Communist Party, which resulted in growing difficulties in remaining a legal organisation and thus growing problems for the central members.⁵⁶ This was something else which some of the senior figures of proletarian Esperanto found troubling. As one of the young activists later recalled of Nakagaki Kojirō, by then one of the old stagers:

At that time we increasingly left aside our fundamental studies and heated discussions about politics and international affairs would flare up. Nakagaki would never take part in those discussions... He never became close to the illegal organisations. He never lent an ear to political issues. We criticised Nakagaki as a 'technicalist' or a 'political blockhead'.⁵⁷

Nakagaki Kojirō was joined by the likes of Akita Ujaku and Ōshima Yoshio, in gradually distancing themselves from the PEU activities. The start of 1932 was the high watermark of PEU achievement, but also the beginning of its downfall. The 20th of March saw its second

54 Takeuchi (1939) p.166.

55 Takeuchi (1939) p.193. Despite a theoretical stance that was hostile, Takeuchi suggests that this resulted in little in the way of actual conflict, since the newer proletarian organisations were obliged to make use of the accumulated experience of the better established mainstream movement.

56 Beckmann & Okubo (1969) p.214.

57 Shibata (2010) p.37, quote originally from '1931-nen no Hibi', Sakai Matsutarō, *Nova Rondo*, March 1966

annual general meeting, as Akita Ujaku wrote in his diary:

Woke early, left the house at nine. A mass of PEU people were gathering. Some twenty or so police, changed into plain clothes, had gathered. We were speculating on whether or not the meeting would be dissolved... Before the opening there was some small trouble with the police.

The meeting opened; after Mutō's opening speech, I rose as the chair of the AGM, and as Makishima began the announcements, we were dissolved. The police claimed that the reason was that the agenda item was banned, but the real reason was nothing but the realisation of a plan to suppress left wing cultural groups.⁵⁸

Although the main members of the central committee managed to meet later that night, this was but one example of an increasing level of police intervention, in part a response to the shift towards increasingly political and radical activities by the PEU and other proletarian arts groups led by KOPF. Akita Ujaku was highly concerned about the radical change in relations with the police, remarking in the days following the AGM his relief at completing that stage of PEU activity, as well as the desire to plot a new plan for retaining the legality of the PEU.⁵⁹

In fact, the meeting marked the beginning of the end of proletarian Esperanto, that is, the centrally organised phase of left wing Esperanto in Japan. Following on from the police intervention in the PEU AGM of 1932, police action continued to impede progress. In August 1933, the then secretary general of the PEU, Higuchi Kōkichi, was arrested, necessitating a reshuffle of the central committee. In September, Tomita Tomu, was elected the new secretary general, but in November, after he moved without warning to Osaka, he was replaced by Yamanaka Seitarō. Yamanaka was arrested only days after being named the new secretary general, so was replaced in turn by Yokogawa Seiichi. Yokogawa remained in place until March 1934, when he, too, was arrested. His replacement, Iwaba

58 Akita & Osaki (1965) Vol.2 p.289.

59 Akita & Osaki (1965) Vol.2 p.290.

Shōzō, was arrested in September 1934, marking the effective end of the PEU.⁶⁰ With its senior figures distancing themselves from its activities, and others in jail, the PEU increasingly found itself starved of leadership experience, and with linguistic expertise replaced by political radicalism. Unable to organise itself legally, and rapidly losing its initial linguistic purpose, proletarian Esperanto ground to a halt.

Left Wing Esperanto after the Suppression of Proletarian Esperanto

If 1934 marked the death of the centrally directed, Soviet driven, and increasingly JCP-focused proletarian Esperanto movement, around the same time as the wider proletarian literature movement also failed, it nevertheless did not spell the end of all left wing Esperanto activity in pre-1945 Japan. Rather, it meant the end of one phase of socialist Esperanto, one type of activity, and the transformation into another. Even as the last vestiges of the PEU were collapsing, exhausted by their efforts to combat the hostility of the state, there was a faction of proletarian Esperanto who were rejecting the centralised, political strategy, and seeking to formulate a new way for socialists to make use of Esperanto.

The major change in the socialist Esperanto of the post-1934 era was a shift in the scale of organisation. From a centralised, committee-driven organisation following (ever changing) theoretical road maps supplied by Comintern, the movement fractured into smaller, more individual projects, concentrating more on bottom-up initiatives than the top-down plans of the previous period, and more geographically decentralised than the Tokyo-focused PEU era.

Just as individuals such as Nakagaki Kojirō stepped away from the PEU in the face

⁶⁰ Takeuchi (1939) p.202-204.

of its increasing politicisation, a similar phenomenon happened at some of the regional branches of the PEU. The most significant such group to strike out in a new direction was the Kobe branch of the PEU, led by Nakatsuka Kichiji. In 1934, they broke away from the PEU, reformulating in the autumn of the same year as *Marshu-sha* (from the Esperanto *marŝu*, 'March'). In the declaration of their break, and in a later manifesto of their own, the group both criticised the approach of the PEU and laid out their own formulation for socialist Esperanto:

We need an organisation. How is it to be? Will it be, like the previous PEU, a national central committee, will it be, like the neutral strand, regional? We must pick the most correct form for the current state of affairs. An organisation akin to the PEU would not work for our progressive Esperanto movement. Why? Because, as an organisation of the proletarian Esperanto movement, the PEU is unable to operate legally, thus it is unable to become the sort of popular movement like progressive Esperanto, further it is, practically speaking, impossible to operate as an illegal organisation. Further, in the current era where we face suppression, both abstract and concrete, simply for being liberals, even though progressive language does not carry proletarian meaning, just from the standpoint of progressives, we cannot fully avoid suppression altogether, thus the pains of a national, centralised organisation would constantly be large.

For the above reasons, we have selected a regional structure. But what is this, concretely? It is simple. Those comrades currently operating across the nation in each region can build groups along the correct lines for that region. In one region, it would be right for an explicitly progressive organisation to unreservedly oppose neutral groups, in another region it might be necessary to exist as one group within the neutral organisations. And further, one group might target popular participation by publishing their own local magazine, whereas another group might be able to do no more than publish their own opinions within the publications of the Gakkai (neutral Esperanto group [i.e. the JEI]).⁶¹

Over time, a number of other local Esperanto associations joined the general umbrella of the *Marshu-sha*'s idea of 'progressive Esperanto', including: *Amiiko* in Okayama, *Frato* in Osaka, *Poporo* in Nagoya, and the *Kyoto Proletarian Esperanto Kenkyūkai*.⁶² These post-1934 groups were smaller than their predecessors – comprising only tens of members, and

61 Takeuchi (1939) p.211-12.

62 Details of the various groups are in Takeuchi (1939) p.214-25.

with magazines that circulated in the low hundreds and which were less professionally printed than the likes of the PEU magazine, *Kamarado*.

However, the progressive Esperanto movement, and other post-PEU efforts should be seen as not only a break from, but importantly also a development of, many of the aims of the proletarian Esperanto of the PEU and the PEA before it. Whilst they explicitly repudiated the politicised nature of the PEU and advocated mostly local autonomy, they did not necessarily represent a break with the influence of Comintern and the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Marshu-sha group still looked to the IPE, the Soviet-controlled Internacio Proleta Esperantistaro, as a source of ideas. The move from a centrally controlled movement to one that operated on a more cellular level was a change of policy, but it was one which reflected both the local realities of police interference and also Comintern guidance.⁶³ The new model was borrowed most directly from the Esperanto movement in China, where the Shanghai group acted in a loose leadership role providing guidance to local groups that were largely autonomous. Japanese authorities viewed the Shanghai based Esperantists as essentially directed by the IPE, and thus came to be very suspicious of connections between them and Japanese groups.⁶⁴

Another way in which the progressive Esperanto movement broke with PEU policy, but but by doing so reflected the changing dominant view of Soviet orthodoxy was in a softening in their attitude towards the JEI and other non-communist Esperanto groups.

63 Tokkō Gaiji Geppō, August 1937, in GSS (1982b) p.502. The idea that a decentralised organisation might be necessary in the face of state suppression also formed a part of the Profintern thesis which Kurahara Korehito introduced to Japan and led to the creation of KOPF (Shea, 1964, p.207-8).

64 *Tokkō Gaiji Geppō*, August 1937, in GSS (1982b), p.505: '[Kobe based Esperantists] became aware through proletarian Esperanto correspondence of new guidance by the secretariat of the IPE, advising the new tactics of "China-Shanghai World Economic Association" (essentially based upon Comintern's new plans) and, based upon that they resolved to develop a mass proletarian Esperanto movement; in September 1934, Marsh-sha was founded'.

This was a move in line with the emergence of 'popular front' movements designed to resist the rise of fascism.

It was perhaps natural for the older members of the proletarian Esperanto movement to move back towards the JEI as they stepped away from the PEU. Two of these more senior figures, Ōshima Yoshio and Nakagaki Kojirō collaborated with the JEI in an effort to enhance the quality of Japanese-Esperanto translation. Their two magazines, *Esuperanto Bungaku* and *Kokusaigo Kenkyū*, included a range of modern authors, including Akutagawa and Futabatei Shimei, but also Kobayashi Takiji's *Kanikōsen*, one of the leading works of the proletarian literature movement, as well as a continuation of Ōshima's translations and introductions to the work of Soviet linguists.⁶⁵

Marshu-sha, although run by younger socialist-Esperantists with fewer well-established connections to the JEI and neutral Esperanto groups, still advocated at least a less overtly confrontational attitude towards the bourgeois groups, suggesting as quoted above that in places progressive Esperanto groups might cooperate with other local Esperanto groups. Of course, it was not necessarily the case that simply because the socialist-oriented groups no longer sought to fight the neutral Esperantists, they found a warm welcome from the latter. In many situations they found rapprochement hard to achieve because the mainstream Esperantists were struggling to break a link within popular perception between Esperanto and the left.

One of the key aspects of the smaller scale, progressive Esperanto which replaced proletarian Esperanto was a renewed focus on transnational activities. These had been a part of the PEA and PEU plan, but they were revitalised by the move to more individual

65 Shibata (2010) p.40

initiatives. The proletarian Esperanto movement had long seen concrete benefits from cross-border Esperanto networks: the opportunity to make contact with workers overseas and thereby to share experiences was used in the recruitment of new members of the movement, and a source of encouragement for existing activists, proof that their efforts were matched by those overseas and that they were a part of a much larger, worldwide movement. Adverts for Esperanto textbooks used slogans such as 'gain knowledge and join hands with comrades throughout the world!', and 'the proletarian masses can [through Esperanto] open the door to a real international life'.⁶⁶ Beyond this, the networks of communication represented a key tool for sustaining contact between national movements which were often illegal and subject to state surveillance. Through these, uncontrolled, unplanned networks, different national movements could share strategies and news. Several socialist magazines drew upon these sources for reporting the successes and setbacks of their overseas comrades.⁶⁷

A Japanese branch of the international body, the PEK (Proleta Esperanto-Korespondado), was established in 1931.⁶⁸ The aim of the PEK was to encourage the development of correspondence networks between proletarian Esperantists across the globe. The PEU's second AGM, in 1932, had resolved to use these networks as an inspiration for achieving popular participation in the Esperanto and wider labour

66 Adverts in the *Pro Kagaku* magazine, *Puroretaria Kagaku Kenkyūsho* (1930-31) p.206-7.

67 The most conspicuous success of this for the central communist movement in Japan came after the demise of the PEU, when the 'Dimitrov Thesis' – George Dimitrov's speech to the 1935 7th Comintern, marking the full endorsement of popular front strategies – achieved its first full Japanese translation through Esperanto channels. See Miyamoto & Oshima (1973) p.221-2.

68 Foreshadowing his participation in the later break away of the Kobe branch of the PEU, the head of the new PEK Japan branch, Kurisu Kei, had resisted pressure to formally submit the group to the guidance of the PEU, preferring to remain independent, likely with beneficial results for the continuation of the PEK movement in Japan in the wake of the destruction of the PEU (Miyake 1995, p.66-7).

movement.⁶⁹ However, the rise of the progressive Esperanto movement from 1934 onwards placed even greater emphasis on this concrete use of Esperanto.⁷⁰ The authorities, too, saw it as a potential threat:

Considering the method of worker correspondence, at first it seeks simple exchange of partners' work, age, lifestyle and so on, or swapping photos and picture postcards, gradually it progresses to politics, economics, society and culture, and all other concrete fields, and furthermore seeks to move onto a critique of these from a communist standpoint.⁷¹

The PEU/PEA era was an innately transnational one, looking as it (and the proletarian movement as a whole) did to the Soviet Union as a source of inspiration and ideas, and indeed involving individual experiences such as that of Akita Ujaku. However, the decentralised nature of the post-1934 progressive movement, led to a stress more on those experiences as an end in themselves, rather than a part of shaping a centrally directed movement.

Nakagaki Kojirō moved from his participation in the PEU to becoming involved with a small group of Chinese ex-patriot students. In December 1935, *La Revuo Orienta* reported the creation of a Chūka-Ryūnichī Sekaigo Gakkai (中華留日世界語学会, Sekaigo Institute for Chinese in Japan).⁷² This group was created in recognition of the barriers to full participation within JEI classes experienced by aspiring Chinese Esperantists, as a result of their poor Japanese skills.⁷³ JEI member Okamoto Yoshitsugu was the first person to act as a teacher for the group (of about forty or so) and Nakagaki began to participate in

69 Hiraide (1940) p.304.

70 *Tokkō Gaiji Geppō*, August 1937, in GSS (1982b), p.502.

71 *Tokkō Gaiji Geppō*, August 1937, in GSS (1982b), p.502.

72 *La Revuo Orienta*, December 1935, p.351.

73 *La Revuo Orienta* also made brief mention of previous 'misunderstandings by the police' related to Chinese participants in JEI related activities, hinting at some form of at least suspected political engagement (December 1935, p.351).

early 1936.⁷⁴ When the organised classes came to an end, Nakagaki took to teaching a core of the students in his own home. Over the subsequent year and a half, Nakagaki became close to several of them; the effort culminated in a scandal in June 1937 when Nakagaki and a number of his students were arrested under charges of seeking to re-establish 'red Esperanto'.⁷⁵

Another example of post-PEU transnational activities, indeed, the best known example of anti-imperialist Japanese Esperanto in the pre-war period, is that of Hasegawa Teru. Hasegawa has been the subject of numerous postwar studies, focusing on her as a rare voice against the Japanese war effort, or as an advocate of women's rights.⁷⁶ In many respects she can be seen as the culmination of the personal, transnational nature of mid-30s Japanese left wing Esperanto, achieving both the most intimate transnational connection and perhaps the most striking act of resistance to Japan's imperial state and expanding war effort. Hasegawa was born in 1912 in Tokyo; she became involved with Esperanto in 1931, as a student at a teacher training school in Nara. She rapidly joined the left wing Esperanto movement: she was arrested briefly in 1932, before joining Nakagaki Kojirō and Ōshima Yoshio in writing for the post-PEU magazine, *Esuperanto Bungaku*. Around the same time, she too came into contact with Chinese Esperantists – in 1935 writing an article on Japanese women and their issues for the Shanghai journal, *La Mondo*,

74 Shibata (2010) p.46-7.

75 Headline in the *Hōchi Shinbun*, 29th June 1937, reprinted in Shibata (2010, p.62). In 1936, Nakagaki had rejoined the JEI, presumably to reduce any suspicion that his activities were an attempt to sponsor left wing radicalism amongst the Chinese students. In arresting Nakagaki and his Chinese friends, the authorities pointed not only to their use of banned texts, but also their contact with the communist Esperantists in Shanghai who were, as discussed above suspected of being 'under the guidance of of the Soviet Esperanto League in Moscow' (officials quoted in *Asahi Shinbun*, 6th June 1937, and *Yomiuri Shinbun*, same date).

76 For example Hasegawa Teru Henshū Iinkai (2008), or Tone (1980). See Kushner (2006 p.144-147) or Esselstrom (2008) for English accounts.

then in 1936 meeting another of the ex-patriot Chinese students and Esperantists, Liu Ren, whom she married the following year.

Liu and Hasegawa moved to Shanghai in the late winter/spring of 1937, in advance of the escalation of conflict between Chinese and Japanese troops which occurred in the summer. Shanghai was a rich mix of different groups, and the couple participated in groups seeking to bring an end to the Japanese military engagement on the continent. From there, as the war spread and developed, they travelled across China, continuing to work to support Chinese resistance to the Japanese military. Most famously, in 1938 Hasegawa made radio broadcasts aimed at Japanese soldiers and critical of Japanese militarism. These drew enough attention to her that she was criticised in parts of the Japanese home press.⁷⁷

Hasegawa Teru and her husband's move to China coincided with the effective end of socialist Esperanto in Japan. In 1936 a number of the remaining magazines with socialist influence were banned by the authorities – both *Esuperanto Bungaku* and *Kokusaigo Kenkyū*, as well as *Amiiko* and *Saluton*, published by groups associated with the progressive Esperanto movement. In November and December 1936, many members of the small progressive Esperanto groups such as *Marŝu-sha*, *Frato*, and the *Kyoto Pro-Es Kenkyūkai* were arrested. These arrests continued in 1937: as mentioned above, Nakagaki Kojirō and his Chinese associates were arrested in June; Kurisu Kei and others were arrested in December, and further mopping up continued into 1938 and 1939.⁷⁸ Individuals such as Takaragi Yutaka and Saitō Hidekatsu, both young Esperantists active during the last phase

⁷⁷ Hasegawa Teru Henshū linkai (2008) p.310.

⁷⁸ Miyamoto & Oshima (1973) p.336-352 contains the most detailed time line of socialist Esperanto. In particular, p.344-6 details the final period of state suppression.

of proletarian Esperanto, continued to explore a range of ideas related to proletarian Esperanto; both continued to face opposition from the state, and indeed both died (in 1943 and 1940 respectively, aged 26 and 32) from tuberculosis caught whilst in prison.⁷⁹

Conclusion

At the heart of the idea of radical socialist internationalism lay the argument that class represented a stronger form of identity than nationality – that workers in one part of the world shared more common interest with workers in another part of the world than with other socio-economic groups within their geographical space, culture, or society. Thus, the proletarian movement of Taishō/early Shōwa Japan contained within it an inherent challenge to the nation-state in a fundamentally different way to more conventional forms of liberal internationalism which were built upon the idea of a network of cooperating nations. This ideological difference was at the heart of the split within the Japanese Esperanto movement of the late 1920s: competing ideas of the nation-state and Esperanto's relation to it proved unable to co-exist within a single set of institutions, and thus those individuals who sought to bring together Esperanto and the Japanese proletarian movement had to build their own organisations.

The proletarian Esperanto movement of the late 1920s and early 1930s therefore positioned itself not only in opposition to the Japanese state but also found itself opposing the mainstream 'bourgeois' Esperanto community. As the state's suppression of the proletarian arts movement grew, much of the mainstream Esperanto movement became even more keen to maintain a clear separation between them and proletarian Esperanto,

⁷⁹ Both individuals were the subject of postwar biographies, Takaragi in Takaragi (1984) and Saitō in Satō (1997).

seeking to avoid a public and official perception that Esperanto was inherently linked to socialism.

That said, although proletarian Esperanto was perhaps the only significant part of Esperanto in Japan to resist inclusion within the umbrella of the JEI, there remained much in common between the socialist Esperantists and the JEI-centred mainstream. The urge to make contact with the wider world – to gain knowledge from it and to make friends and comrades from other nations – was shared by Esperantists of both right and left. And although their visions were different, both proletarian and non-proletarian Esperantists alike were engaged in an effort designed at creating a new, modern world. Thus, although they struggled to co-exist, both strands represented the ongoing influence of internationalism in inter-war Japan.

6. Imperial Esperanto

Chapter five describes the growth of a proletarian form of Esperanto in Japan, and its suppression at the hands of the Japanese state at the end of the 1920s and the start of the 1930s. However, they were only one part of the Japanese Esperanto movement – an offshoot of the main tradition which faced its own challenges in seeking to practice Esperanto within Japanese society, rather than in opposition to it. The 1930s have been described as a decade 'characterised by forces that were the precise opposite of cultural internationalism: exclusionary nationalism, racism, aggression, and mass murder',¹ describing not only conditions in Japan, but in Europe as well. However, despite this apparently hostile environment, the Japanese Esperanto movement persisted and continued to practice through the 1930s and into the 1940s, finally coming to a halt in 1944, only a few months before the close of the Pacific war.

This chapter examines the ongoing presence of Esperanto in Japan even as Japanese society entered the 'dark valley' of Shōwa militarism, how it adapted to the changing environment, and how it was possible to go about being both Japanese and an Esperantist, to be both patriotic and internationalist, in the extreme politics of the 1930s. In doing so, it explores further the relationship between nationalism and internationalism.

It would be easy to presume the events of the early 1930s to be a death knell for the various forms of internationalist sentiment inherent within the Esperanto ideal, driving the non-revolutionary practitioners of Japanese Esperanto off-stage in the face

¹ Iriye (1997), p.91.

of the looming rise of nationalism. However, this is not what happened. Likewise, it would be easy to point to those Esperantists who did continue to practice and promote the language through the 1930s and 1940s, and the ways that they found to reconcile their responsibilities as Japanese citizens with those of being Esperantists, as evidence of the 'internal contradictions' of early Shōwa Japan, or perhaps as an example of opportunistic use of internationalist rhetoric in the pursuit of nationalistic goals.

These perspectives do have some explanatory power. Firstly, it is true that there was a steady decline in Esperanto activity from the middle of the 1930s onwards. Although the early 1930s has been called the highpoint of pre-1945 Japanese Esperanto, as the decade wore on the public size of the movement clearly lessened as many Esperantists simply gave up in the face of domestic and world trends, or restricted their activities to practice in private. Secondly, those Esperantists who continued to participate in the movement reconfigured their ideas to better fit within domestic society, in doing so reflecting no small level of intellectual capture by the military-centred ideology which came to predominate. I would not wish to deny an element of perverse irony in the use of an international language designed to help unite mankind in the justification for the nationalist policies of aggression across Asia and the Pacific.

However, we must also recognise that despite all this, there was nevertheless a population of Japanese Esperantists who continued to advocate their language, a strand of continuity from the idealistic period in the early 1920s which saw the 1930s not as the death of their vision of humankind but as a changing environment in which they could continue to promote, practise, and teach their language. I believe that, rather than

dismissing their attempts as fatally compromised or sitting in moral judgement on their complicity within the many tragedies that took place across Asia, studying what the participants within the Japanese Esperanto movement did during the period of Japanese militarism helps to reveal the complexities of the path from early 1920s idealism to late 1930s aggression, and to expand our understanding of internationalism as a concept.

There are two classic narratives of Japanese liberalism in the transition from Taishō democracy to Shōwa militarism. One is that of the liberal or dissident intellectual retreating into semi-retirement and private life, simply removing themselves from a situation which they perhaps deplored but found themselves powerless to prevent. For example, Nanbara Shigeru, as considered by Barshay (1988); or Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, whose private diary recorded his dismay at 1940s Japan.² The second narrative is that of the dramatic repudiation of past beliefs and realignment with Japanese emperor-centred nationalism, *tenkō*. But, although there were individual examples of both of these things, as a whole, the Japanese Esperanto movement was neither: it neither faded completely away nor engaged in a dramatic reversal, but rather underwent an ongoing, gradual shift to better align itself to the norms of Shōwa society. In short, a subsection of the Japanese Esperanto community found domestic and international trends to be not inimical to the prospects of an international language or hopes of a more peaceful world, but instead were able to find a potential role for Esperanto in the imagined future global alignment. Yes their numbers fell over time, and yes some of the positions that they took

² Kiyosawa (1999).

today seem strange and contrived, but all the same, there were those for whom the rhetoric of the new Asian order was more than a fig leaf for aggression, for all that the reality of military operations may have belied it. And their ideas and the internal logic of their activities reveal something of the compatibility of internationalism with nationalism, and the role that language could, indeed must, play in the construction of a new world order.

Early Shōwa Esperanto

By the late 1920s, the Japanese Esperanto community had matured and developed into a wide-reaching, diverse group, spread across the country and the various colonial territories, and involved in using Esperanto in a range of different fields and endeavours. Although perhaps the excitement and sense of immediacy which had marked the period immediately following the end of war in Europe was gone, it was replaced with a more sophisticated movement, as well as a broader, deeper awareness of Esperanto amongst the public at large.

Whilst membership of the JEI peaked in the mid 1920s,³ Hatsushiba (1998) describes the early 1930s as the highpoint of the pre-war Japanese Esperanto movement, a time in which there were Esperanto sections in the major book stores and the level of Esperanto related publishing peaked; contemporary Esperantists suggested that the language had achieved a level of broad public awareness such that no one would not

³ Although, as discussed in the introduction, this is at best a crude way to measure the overall size of the Esperanto community. In particular, (and in addition to the hiving off of the proletarian Esperantists) the ongoing expansion of different forms of Esperanto and different specialist groups and organisations outlined in this section made the JEI, if the umbrella group for mainstream Esperanto, only one amongst a wide range of potential organisations an Esperantist might join.

recognise its name.⁴

In an international context, the Japanese Esperantists became more confident in their position as a part of the global Esperanto community and thus the validity of their own opinions regarding best practice and policy – that Asia could be a source of views on Esperanto, rather than as an adjunct to a European movement. The JEI congress passed motions such as the rejection of neologisms (1933, in Kyoto), and the call for a new set of standardised grammar and style guides, to be translated into all the national languages (1935, Nagoya). By seeking to prevent further neologisms entering Esperanto, the Japanese Esperantists were trying to protect their knowledge of the existing vocabulary from being diluted by new words of European origin (largely alien to Japanese Esperantists, but more immediately assimilated by European Esperantists). In 1934, the Japanese congress resolved to replace the Esperanto words for Japan/Japanese (Japanio/Japana), with a word of native origin, such as Nipponlando.⁵

This confidence also manifested itself in the view that Japan should be at the vanguard of the international adoption of Esperanto, cutting through ongoing squabbling between European language blocs. For example, Nagata Hidejirō, the retired mayor of Tokyo, argued that, 'recently, east Asian contributions to world culture have been exceedingly scarce, but by advocating the use of Esperanto we should make

4 Hatushiba (1998) p.85; Kurosaki Makoto, *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1934, p.16.

5 *La Revuo Orienta*, May 1934, p.142. Japanese Esperantists had previously suggested a similar idea in unofficial channels, and been rebuffed by the UEA (*Esperanto en Nipponlando*, July 1926). By contrast, the first congress of the JEI, in 1920, voted unanimously to reject an international proposal to introduce a suffix indicating national names into Esperanto grammar, arguably representing a desire to resist placing nationhood centrally within Esperanto's very structure (*La Revuo Orienta*, October 1920, p.4).

this one such [contribution]'.⁶ Likewise, in 1935 a *La Revuo Orienta* editorial called for the establishment of a government translation department, to translate the works of Japanese scholars and scientists into Esperanto, with a view to both spreading Japanese work and taking the lead in the expansion of Esperanto.⁷ In recognising the European linguistic origins of Esperanto, some Japanese Esperantists argued that, precisely because it was harder for Japanese Esperantists to learn the language than it was for Europeans, their commitment would be all the more effective in driving its widespread adoption.⁸

The JEI moved in 1928 into new offices, a rented two story, western style building in Ushigome in central Tokyo; then in 1932, at the initiative of Okamoto Yoshitsugu, the JEI purchased a plot in Hongō and built a new headquarters of their own.⁹ In 1931, they launched a second magazine to complement the main one, *La Revuo Orienta. Shotō Esuperanto* ('Elementary Esperanto', later renamed simply *Esuperanto*) was targeted at people in the early stages of studying the language, featuring lessons, problems and articles for learners, as well as Esperanto related news. It was published on a monthly basis with sales of around 2000; in 1933 a push was made to have the magazine available in book stores nationwide.¹⁰ Eventually in 1938 it was merged with *La Revuo Orienta*.

The introduction of public radio broadcasting in Japan in 1925 represented another opportunity rapidly embraced by Esperantists. Starting the same year, with

6 'Nihon Kokumin to Esuperanto', Nagata Hidejirō, *La Revuo Orienta*, December 1934, p.342.

7 *La Revuo Orienta*, August 1935, p.211.

8 'Nihon Kokumin to Esuperanto', Nagata Hidejirō, *La Revuo Orienta*, December 1934, p.342.

9 *La Revuo Orienta*, August 1932, p.281; Hatsushiba (1998) p.79, p.83.

10 *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1933, p.21; Hatsushiba (1998) p.83.

JOAK in Tokyo and JOBK in Osaka, networks across the country, Taiwan, Korea, and Japanese settlements in Manchuria ran programmes about Esperanto and lectures by leading Esperantists, as well as short language courses. The major first radio course was a three month, twice weekly course on JQAK in Dairen, Manchuria in 1926; the first one in Japan proper was the following year on JOCK (Nagoya). The text supporting another radio course, this time lasting two weeks and run on the JOAK network in Tokyo in 1927, reportedly sold 15,000 copies, vastly exceeding the initial print run of 3,000.¹¹ Similar lectures and courses continued to run at least into the mid-1930s, including one month-long course in 1932 which ran simultaneously on ten stations stretching almost the length of the mainland, from Akita to Kumamoto.¹²

As the Esperanto movement matured, a growing number of sub-groups emerged, seeking to apply Esperanto within their own specific setting. The largest, of course, was the development of socialist Esperanto discussed in chapter five, but it was far from alone. The 1932 Japanese Esperanto congress, held in Tokyo, featured at least twelve sub-groups in fields including medicine, science, Buddhism, education, and the arts.¹³ Although several of these sub-movements were almost as old as the Japanese Esperanto movement itself, they developed greater sophistication and organisation during the 1930s. For example, whilst there were individuals seeking to use Esperanto for introducing an understanding of Buddhism to a wider audience since at least the early

11 *La Revuo Orienta*, February 1937, p.7; Hatsushiba (1998) p.76-78. Subsequent courses from 1928 onwards also reportedly attracted very high rates of interest – the peak being a course which ran in 1931 that was supported by applications for around 20,000 texts (*La Revuo Orienta*, August 1931, p.251, *La Revuo Orienta*, February 1937, p.7).

12 *La Revuo Orienta*, September 1932, p.350.

13 Hatsushiba (1998) p.84.

1920s, including the creation of Esperanto clubs in Otani University and Ryugoku University, it was only in 1931 that the Nihon Bukkyō Esuperanchisuto Renmei (JLBE, Japanese League of Buddhist Esperantists) was formed.¹⁴

Similarly, at the 1935 Japanese Esperanto congress's science sub-group, work began that led to the creation the following year of the Nihon Kagaku Esuperanto Kyōkai (JESA, the Japanese Esperanto Science Association). This group grew to 94 members by the end of 1936, although it also compiled a list of 350 Esperantists working in science and technology (a subsequent list in 1938 included 561 names). JESA published a magazine, *Scienco*, which ran from 1936 until the end of 1939.¹⁵ Medical Esperantists had organised earlier, with the creation of the Hipokratida Klubo, later renamed the Eskulapida Klubo, in 1923.¹⁶ In both fields, Japanese Esperantists made efforts to publish Esperanto versions of their work, as well as essays introducing scientific topics to a less specialised audience. Hatsushiba (1998) collected a list of 39 individuals who published Esperanto papers during the 1930s in the fields of mathematics, the natural sciences, and engineering, and a similar number who published on medical topics.¹⁷

One example of the use of Esperanto in the sciences and medicine is the case of Murata Masataka. Murata was an independent-minded doctor who took up Esperanto despite being a highly proficient German speaker. In the mid 1920s, Murata published a series of columns introducing Esperanto to a medical audience in the *Iji Shinbun* which

14 Asano (1955).

15 Hatushiba (1998) p.94.

16 Hatushiba (1998) p.65.

17 Hatushiba (1998) p.95.

were later published in a pair of separate volumes. Murata also wrote essays in Esperanto and made a presentation in Esperanto on 'The most straightforward method for serodiagnosis of syphilis' at the 4th Far-Eastern Conference of Tropical Medicine (*Tōa Nettai-Byō Kai*). As the head of the Sotojima hospice for sufferers from Leprosy, Murata introduced a range of liberalising measures, including Esperanto classes, until a scandal surrounding suspicions of socialist radicalisation amongst the patients forced his resignation.¹⁸

Ōishi Wasaburō is a prime example of a scientist who used Esperanto to seek to disseminate his work more widely. Ōishi was a meteorologist who studied in Europe and the United States during the 1910s. From the mid-1920s onwards, when he ran a high-altitude atmospheric observation station, he published a number of papers on his research in Esperanto including the annual reports of his research station and, in particular, his observations of the high-speed, high altitude winds which came to be known as the jet stream.¹⁹ Yanagita Kunio argued that the development of a richer and more varied body of literature and scholarship in Esperanto would not only contribute to the spread of Esperanto, it would provide a valuable route for Japanese intellectuals to gain a wider audience for their knowledge; although Ōishi's attempts to garner a wider audience seem to have been largely unsuccessful, they nevertheless represented

18 *La Revuo Orienta*, October 1925, p.202-205. The technique for serodiagnosis of syphilis became known as 'Murata's method'. See Gotō (2010) for a more thorough outline of Murata's experiences with Esperanto.

19 Lewis (2003) p.357-368. His research on the jet stream was not picked up in the west – the jet stream was rediscovered in Chicago in the immediate post-war period. However, Ōishi's discovery was more widely known in Japan. During the Pacific war, the military experimented with bombs attached to balloons which were released from Japan, targeting the American west coast. One such bomb led to some of the very few casualties of the Second World War to occur on American soil (Mikesh 1973, p.67).

an attempt to use Esperanto in just such a way.²⁰

As the 1930s opened, then, Japanese Esperantists were finding new and more sophisticated ways of using their language, both domestically and across border. However, during the same period, both Japanese domestic politics and the international sphere were in transition, generating new challenges for the Japanese Esperanto community, irrespective of its vibrancy and the new ways in which it was developing. The domestic and international changes were, of course, inextricably intertwined. The era of party-led governments gave way, as the military intervened in politics, with assassinations and attempted coups such as those in October 1931, May 1932 and February 1936. Similarly, in foreign affairs the era was punctuated by a series of events – the Manchurian Incident of 1931, the withdrawal of Japan from the League of Nations in 1933, and the Marco Polo Incident of 1937 being the most significant, marking the transition from a Japanese diplomacy based upon membership of the League and adherence to the Washington Treaty system, to one that was increasingly focused on establishing a Japan-centred Asian sphere of political and economic independence, free from European and American influence.²¹

These events – the path down the 'dark valley' of Shōwa militarism represented a real challenge to Esperanto in Japan. The late 1930s in other countries, Germany and the Soviet Union in particular, were a time in which Esperanto was suppressed, whether it was practised by political dissidents or not.²² However, the rise of nationalism in Japan

20 'Nihon ga Buntan subeki Ninmu', *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1927, p.1.

21 However, Abel (2004, Chapter One) outlines how the Japanese state continued to seek to participate in many multilateral international activities even after leaving the League of Nations.

22 Lins (1975) discusses the suppression of Esperantists by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

did not spell the end of Esperanto there. Rather than renounce their language, the Japanese Esperantists who sought to motivate it within Japanese society reformulated the movement in ways that better aligned it with the goals of the nation and the state. So successful were they that some state and quasi-state bodies sought to make use of Esperanto; similarly, for many existing Esperantists there was no barrier to continuing to practice the language whilst remaining within the ideological space of mainstream Japanese society.

In the first instance, in the early 1930s, Japanese Esperantists found their most major challenge to be not conditions within domestic and international politics, but rather the public perception of the link between Esperanto and socialism. In January 1934, *La Revuo Orienta* published a survey of Esperantists' views into their pressing issues. Esperantists from across the nation sent in opinions, over fifty of which were published, giving a broad account of the perspectives of Esperantists from top to bottom and centre to periphery.²³ Whilst there were some who made reference to domestic and international affairs, arguing that 'the time of emergency in society as a time of emergency for we Esperantists, too',²⁴ it was the need to correct the 'mistaken perception of Esperanto' amongst the general public (and to a lesser extent the authorities) that was occupying the minds of Japanese Esperantists.²⁵

This perception was, no doubt, the result of the high profile suppression of the

23 '1934-nen wo Wareware ha Kaku Tatakau', ('In 1934, this is how we will fight'), *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1934, p.2-27.

24 Yoshida Taichi, *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1934, p.12.

25 The other most common issues were the need to reform to strengthen the domestic organisation, in particular to enable the regional clubs to make more effective promotion, and to develop wider practical uses of Esperanto.

proletarian Esperantists within the wider police action against Marxist groups. It forced those Esperantists who were not politically left wing to work hard to distinguish themselves. In the late 1920s/early 1930s, the Esperanto mainstream, with the JEI as its organisational centre, began to stress the political neutrality of Esperanto as a language and movement. This represented a shift in the centre of gravity of the movement from the early 1920s, when the *Homaranismo* faction had emerged as the dominant form of Esperantism, as outlined in chapter two. Whilst *Homaranismo* need not be an explicitly political ideology, the arguments of the early JEI years represented a victory for the view that Esperanto was more than *just* a language, whereas by the early 1930s the JEI was once again seeking to stress the innate political neutrality of Esperanto, falling back on the argument of language as a neutral medium. This does not mean that the *Interna Ideo* and *Homaranismo* were abandoned by Japanese Esperantists, but rather that they were too nuanced as ideologies to maintain a clear separation from the proletarian Esperantists in the eyes of non-experts. As a result mainstream Esperanto, though continuing to express internationalist sentiments, began to put more public stress on the political neutrality of their cultural mission. In effect, the emergence of proletarian Esperanto necessitated the mainstream movement to shift away from the more overtly idealistic forms of Esperantism (at least in their most official articulations), in order to maintain a clear semantic space between the two sets of groups.

Two final, linked, examples of 1930s Esperanto help to illustrate the ongoing suspicion of socialism and anything linked to it. The first example is of the magazine *Tempo*, and the second is the visit to Japan of the SAT founder, Lanti. *Tempo* was

published by Kaniya, a Kyoto based publishing house, between 1934 and 1940. In total there were sixty-six issues of the magazine over a period of sixty-nine months, with a print run of approximately five hundred per issue.²⁶ It was an all-Esperanto language magazine focusing not on the Esperanto community but on current affairs, featuring a wide range of subjects: domestic and international affairs, science, essays on philosophy and politics, and translations of literature (as well as some articles on the Esperanto movement).²⁷

Kaniya, which was owned by Nakahara Shūichi, specialised in books on science and medicine, serving Kyoto's student population.²⁸ As a result of Nakahara's own interest in Esperanto, from the early 1920s it was also an active Esperanto publisher, releasing books by some of the Esperantists based in Kyoto, such as members of the Third Higher School, and several books related to the blind Esperantists of Japan. *Tempo* didn't take a radical stance on issues – although it was broadly liberal in outlook, it sought to operate within the laws relating to newspaper censorship, described as 'pink', in comparison with the fully red socialists.²⁹ Nevertheless, Ulrich Lins suggests that 'it is remarkable that the editors did not avoid taking critical stances; even more surprising this criticism was often very sharply directed at affairs of their own nation, as well as those of others'.³⁰

26 Nojima (2000), p.24, p.30.

27 In 1982, the collected issues of *Tempo* were republished as a collected volume, Nagoya Esperanto-Centro (1982).

28 The publishing house was named at the suggestion of the linguist Shinmura Izuru, a friend of Nakahara, from the word for crab, possibly in reference to Romaji text's sideways alignment (Nojima 2000, p.10).

29 Miyamoto & Oshima (1973) p.239-40.

30 Nagoya Esperanto-Centro (1982), p.28.

Only two issues of *Tempo* were banned from publication: #28 and #29 (February and March, 1937), which both contained parts of a translation of Shimaki Kensaku's *Goku* ('Prison') (although the novel remained unbanned in its Japanese original).³¹ However, the magazine remained under the eye of officials. In 1940 Nakahara was arrested by the *Tokkō* special police, together with his collaborator, Nojima Yasutarō (who had been arrested once previously, in 1938, also in relation to *Tempo*).³² Although *Tempo* was not banned as such, the hostility of the police, the damage that two and a half months in prison did to Nakahara and Nojima's relationships with potential authors, and economic worries about sourcing paper and the threat that *Tempo* might pose to the ongoing existence of the whole of Kaniya forced the editors to cease publication. Ultimately, Japanese society ceased to be tolerant of what Nojima later described as *Tempo*'s general approach of 'seeing through the eyes of liberal critics'.³³

The impact of the changes in late 1930s domestic society can be seen, too, in the visit to Japan of Lanti. Lanti, the founder of the SAT (the 'non-national' international association for socialist Esperanto), arrived in Japan in late November 1936. Initially advised not to visit by the JEI, Lanti came anyway and, whether by deliberate subterfuge or accident, managed to pass through immigration by disembarking at Yokohama, rather than the terminus, Kobe, where officials were expecting him.³⁴ The JEI's concern was that Lanti's presence might be a threat to the JEI, given his strong left-

31 Nojima (2000), p.97.

32 Nagoya Esperanto-Centro (1982), p.27.

33 Nagoya Esperanto-Centro (1982), p.22.

34 Lanti (1987) p.136. When Lanti had informed the JEI that he was going to come, regardless of the JEI's concerns, the JEI had passed on his travel plans to the state, thus his arrival was anticipated in Kobe. Lanti's full name, Eugene Adam, was on his passport; this most likely confused the less prepared officials in Yokohama.

wing associations.³⁵

Once in Japan, Lanti made immediate contact with Japanese Esperantists but was also visited in turn by the *Tokkō* police, who warned him to avoid contact with ex-members of the socialist Esperanto movement. Lanti initially settled in Tokyo, but ongoing suspicion by the police made even Japanese Esperantists unconnected to socialism reluctant to associate with him. He had used the JEI as a postal address, which necessitated regular visits there, making for an uncomfortable environment.³⁶

Eventually he moved to Ishikawa prefecture, at the invitation of a Buddhist Esperantist, Takeuchi Tōkichi, in what seems to have been a compromise with the *Tokkō*.³⁷ After several months there, he then moved to Osaka, where the level of police surveillance appears to have been less intrusive than Tokyo, allowing Lanti to participate in Esperanto activity. Although he visited the offices of Kaniya, his visit was two days after Nakahara had left on a trip to attend the 1937 world Esperanto congress in Warsaw; Nakahara returned in December, a few weeks after Lanti had departed Japan for Australia. Nevertheless, Lanti published a number of articles in *Tempo* around the time of his visit to Japan.³⁸

35 Lanti (1987) p.103.

36 Lanti (1987) p.113.

37 Takeuchi Tōkichi appears to have been a part of the Esperanto movement least swayed by the more nationalist society of the 1930s. In the 1934 *La Revuo Orienta* survey, he suggested that the call to the Japanese spirit was akin to the rise of nationalism in the west, and that there was a danger that, like the west, this would lead to opposition to Esperanto. More seriously, he suggested that the most pressing danger to the Japanese people was the threat of a fall into military rule (*La Revuo Orienta*, January 1934, p.6). He was reputedly also one of the few Esperantists to object to the creation of the Esperanto Patriotic League (Esuperanto Hōkoku Dōmei, see later in this chapter for more details) in 1937 (Nojima 2000, p.173).

38 e.g. 'Pri Moralo k Cetero', *Tempo*, August 1937, p.192. This letter was reported as coming from 'our French *samideano* [fellow Esperantist] L.', and carried a disclaimer in which the editors stated that printing it did not indicate that they agreed with its contents (some discussion of Marxist ideas).

Despite the ever-present need to stress the lack of deterministic links between Esperanto and socialism, and Japan's worsening diplomatic situation, the overall tenor of Japanese Esperantists in 1934 was not one of a movement experiencing decline, but one of cautious optimism confronting an ongoing struggle for success within a changing domestic and world environment.

Communicating Japan's Position

The outbreak of conflict in Manchuria in 1931 which culminated in the creation of the new nation-state of Manchukuo brought with it a diplomatic struggle: the Japanese seeking to obtain foreign acceptance of their actions and then official recognition of the new state, the Chinese KMT seeking to obtain concrete support in rejecting Japan's actions. The outcome was in essence a victory for neither party: the Chinese were unable to motivate sufficient support to reverse the Japanese expansion, but the Japanese paid heavy diplomatic costs, the most concrete being Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations.

However, it was certainly perceived within Japan as at least a partial diplomatic victory for the Chinese government, a victory that resulted from a disparity in linguistic and diplomatic skills between Japan and China:

'Through the Chinese people's inherent language ability and traditional skills of propaganda, they have worked vigorously in the field of international propaganda, such that they are gaining the sympathies of small countries with little contact with the orient and distant from events, and even created a mistaken understanding of our nation amongst foreigners with insufficient knowledge [of events]'.³⁹

This criticism recalled the comments about Japanese language ability that had arisen

39 'Ni-Shi Funsō ni sai shite', Kawamura Rokurō, *La Revuo Orienta*, April 1932, p.3.

around the Esperanto activity at the League of Nations, made most forcibly by Fujisawa Chikao: that, as a linguistic outsider (both due to the Japanese language's relative distance from other major languages, and the long period of Japanese isolation), Japan's diplomats were held back by their inability to communicate effectively.

It also provided the Japanese Esperanto community with a means of fulfilling what Nohara Kyūichi called their 'duty as Japanese Esperantists'.⁴⁰ Through their transnational activities, the Japanese Esperantists had developed a network of overseas contacts through which they might contribute to the work of 'rectifying the mistaken understanding' of conditions in the far east. If Esperanto was a means by which Japanese could engage with the wider world, it could also be a tool for making the wider world better aware of Japan and Japanese perspectives. Indeed, it was a pressing concern:

Despite it being well known that the Esperanto clubs of every region of China are without exception sending out false manifestos, appealing for the support of the *Samideanoj* [fellow Esperantists] of all the nations, our nation's Esperanto organisations are without a plan.⁴¹

At the very heart of Ludwig Zamenhof's vision of Esperanto was the understanding that it was the inability to communicate which caused conflict and problems between nations; the Japanese situation was, it could be argued (from a Japanese perspective), the result of the inability or unwillingness of foreign nations, especially those far from the site of the Manchurian Incident, to grasp the rectitude of Japanese actions. The need to facilitate better understanding between nations was fundamental to the Esperanto project:

40 Nohara Kyūichi, *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1934, p.21-2.

41 *La Revuo Orienta*, April 1932, p.3.

At this point, taking up our Esperanto to make clear our nation's position, and to explain to foreigners the traditional Japanese spirit, based upon justice and humanity, is not only our duty as Japanese, but is the only path in union with Dr Zamenhof's *Homaranismo*.⁴²

A major example of how Japanese internationalists adapted their attitudes in the wake of the Manchurian Incident, and sought to use Esperanto's network of transnational connections to communicate Japan's position is that of Ogasawara Yoshio. Ogasawara was a Wakayama businessman and local politician who had been involved in the freedom and people's rights movement in the mid-Meiji era, as well as Unitarian Christianity. In 1929 he started a Kokusai Nichiyō Gakkō ('International Sunday School') for primary school children, as well as the Nihon Kokusai Renmei Kyōkai Wakayama Shibu (Wakayama branch of Japanese League of Nations Association).⁴³

Whilst they were very much personal projects, created with the goal of furthering the cause of world peace, nevertheless they proved popular: membership of the League of Nations Association branch reached two hundred, and attendees at the Sunday school grew from an initial fifteen to over a hundred, necessitating a move from Ogasawara's own house to a local school.⁴⁴ In 1931 the Sunday school was host first to a visit from an American missionary H. H. Guy, and then to a group of fifteen students from Shantung Christian University. These visits attracted large turn outs – two hundred to see Guy speak, and then five hundred to meet the Chinese students.⁴⁵

This popularity, however, was hit hard by the international reaction to the formation of Manchukuo and the Japanese government's decision to withdraw from the

42 *La Revuo Orienta*, April 1932, p.3.

43 The Sunday school was soon reconfigured as the youth wing of the adult association.

44 JEI (2008) p.8.

45 *La Suno*, Issue 1, October 1934, p.7.

League of Nations. Although the organisation continued, dropping reference to the League from its name to become the Nihon Kokusai Kyōkai Wakayama Shibu ('Wakayama branch of the Japanese International Association'), it was a much smaller organisation in the years after 1933. Undaunted, Ogasawara continued to seek to promote international cooperation and understanding. Perhaps inspired by their experiences with American and Chinese visitors, Ogasawara and his Sunday school students also experimented with Esperanto. Their first effort, in 1931, foundered in a few weeks as the students found the language too difficult. However, they tried again in 1933 and 1934. On the first two occasions the students placed an advert in a major European Esperanto journal, *Heroldo de Esperanto*, asking for pen pals. They reportedly received in excess of a thousand replies from over forty different countries on both occasions.⁴⁶

Responding to the international reaction to the Manchurian Incident and the creation of Manchukuo, in 1934 Ogasawara launched a small, all-Esperanto magazine, *La Suno* ('The Sun'). Ogasawara argued that only through the building of mutual understanding and thus through the building of connections between the peoples, and most importantly the children, of different nations, could world peace be achieved. *La Suno* was to be a medium through which he could communicate Japan, Japanese culture, and Japanese perspectives to the wider world. Ogasawara financed the magazine himself, not only paying the printing costs, but offering to send it for free to anyone who requested a copy. Although it was short, and irregular (only nine issues between

46 JEI (2008) p.9.

1934 and 1939), it was reportedly sent to two thousand recipients in over fifty nations.⁴⁷

Through *La Suno*, Ogasawara hoped to be able to explain to his readers worldwide that, far from a belligerent nation bent on the conquest of its neighbours, Japan was a force for peace in Asia, and was acting with the sole purpose of stabilising China and Asia at large. As he explained with the first lines of the first issue of the magazine:

There is a constant error regarding the nation of Japan, which regrettably is reproached for its militarism. Is this reproach true, or not? I say no, that they in no way know the true quality of the Japanese nation. How and why can I prove this to you?⁴⁸

The central points of Ogasawara's argument in the magazines of 1934, and again in a special issue in the wake of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 1937, was, firstly, that history revealed Japan as a peace loving nation that had seldom gone to war in its 2500+ year long history, and secondly, that Japan's modern actions were those of a nation seeking to maintain peace in the region, not one undertaking aggressive wars of conquest. He perceived international sentiment as the result of mistaken understanding of Japan and Japanese character, encouraged by Chinese propaganda, expressing frustration at the hypocrisy of western nations who let their individual interests blight the purpose of the League of Nations, and who criticised Japanese action in China, their own records of invasion and colonialism notwithstanding.

Ogasawara's efforts were not only designed to convey the political stance of the Japanese intervention in continental China, they were also built upon the belief that popular international (for which read European and American) sentiments regarding

47 JEI (2008) p.14; *La Suno*, Issue 8, July 1939, p.8.

48 *La Suno*, Issue 1, October 1934, p.1.

Japan's actions in Manchuria and China were misunderstandings that were rooted in a lack of knowledge of Japanese and Asian history and culture. The western nations were (perhaps wilfully) misunderstanding Japanese policy, but they were also fundamentally misunderstanding the nature of Japanese civilisation. Thus, in addition to bottom-up efforts to communicate to an international audience a Japanese perspective on the Manchurian Incident, he and others were interested in spreading an understanding of broader subjects related to Japanese culture.

This impulse can be identified throughout the history of Esperanto in Japan – for example in 1906, when the JEA had been founded with goals not limited to the spread of Esperanto in Japan, but also the inclusion within the Esperanto vocabulary of words of Japanese origin; or in the content of magazines such as *Oriente Azio* mentioned in chapter two. Similarly, in Yanagita Kunio's first postcard to Sasaki Kizen from the League of Nations, he not only suggested Sasaki investigate Esperanto, but he included the gloomy observation that 'foreigners know nothing of Japan'.⁴⁹

Similarly, Japanese-to-Esperanto translation was a constant activity within the Japanese Esperanto community, from Ōsugi Sakae's 1906 telling of the Momotarō tale onwards. A wide variety of different texts were translated by Japanese Esperantists, from ancient classics and legends to modern literature and children's stories.⁵⁰ In the 1930s both the transnational networks of informal contact, and efforts at cultural communication took on deeper, more political overtones. The collaboration between JEI

⁴⁹ Yanagita (1966a) p.466.

⁵⁰ The history of Esperanto translation of Japanese literature has tended to focus upon short stories and excerpts, for issues of practicality – limited time, resources, and print space.

members and some of the survivors of the break-up of proletarian Esperanto to make concerted effort to improve the standards of Japanese Esperanto literature and translation, mentioned briefly in chapter five, is one example of this – its timing in the early 1930s is no coincidence. In the context of activities by Ogasawara and others, it can be seen as one strand of the attempts to use Esperanto more effectively to spread Japanese culture internationally.

One of the most striking efforts at translation as a tool for the communication of Japanese culture was that of Nohara Kyūichi. Throughout the 1930s he worked to translate Japanese classics into Esperanto, starting with shorter works such as the *Hōjōki*, but peaking between 1935 and 1939 in a five-volume translation of the *Nihon Shoki*, one of the foundational texts of Japanese myth/history.⁵¹ In 1939, Nohara was the first recipient of the Osaka Prize, an annual award (named after Osaka Kenji, the leading force behind the creation of the JEI) recognising significant contributions to Japanese Esperanto.⁵² In establishing the prize, Ōishi Wasaburō cited contribution to the Esperanto movement firmly within the sphere of patriotic activities:

Today, in a time of emergency for the nation-state [*kokka*], Esperantists are using the international language as a weapon, making clear righteous Japan's position, or working at advancing our national culture, increasing the realisation of public duty, too; these are nothing but the fruit of the excellent education, received directly and indirectly, of this great guide [Osaka Kenji].⁵³

The Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 1937 reinvigorated these efforts to use Esperanto to communicate Japan's position to the wider world, and to align the

51 Nohara's translation was titled *Kroniko Japana*.

52 *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 14th April 1939; *La Revuo Orienta*, May 1939, p.2.

53 *La Revuo Orienta*, December 1938, p.17. However, the two other war-time prizes (1940 and 1941) were awarded to two individuals whose work was not overtly political – Kidosaki Masutoshi who wrote a popular textbook, and Fujima Tsunetarō, who wrote a historical study of Japanese ideas of international language.

Esperanto movement better with the nation. That year's Japanese Esperanto congress, held in December in Tokyo, opened with the Japanese national anthem, and also featured the singing of military songs. Both the education and the Christian sub-groups at the congress resolved 'to assert to the world the legitimacy of our nation in response to current affairs, and to work towards the goals of the general mobilisation of public spirit'.⁵⁴ The following month this general outlook led to the foundation of the Esperanto Hōkoku Dōmei ('Esperanto Patriotic League'), with stated objectives along very similar lines:

To work towards the publication and distribution to foreign Esperantists, both individual and group, of Esperanto language works essential for informing the world of the legitimacy of our country's true actions in relation to the current incident.⁵⁵

The founders of the Hōkoku Dōmei were a number of long time Esperantists including Nohara Kyūichi and Takahashi Kunitarō but, most strikingly, Fujisawa Chikao. Fujisawa, who at the League of Nations in the early 1920s had articulated a classic example of *Homaranismo* oriented Esperanto internationalism, was one of the few Esperantists to undergo a distinct volte-face in his outlook. Whilst this did not involve a repudiation of his interest in Esperanto, it did represent a 'return to Japan'. He described his ignorance of Japanese tradition and culture and his inability to answer questions about it whilst he was in Europe: he recalled telling Henri Bergson that eastern thought was backward (being sternly rebuked for the comment).⁵⁶ Back home, he underwent a transformation during the 1920s, in which he became deeply interested

54 Nojima (2000), p.169-170.

55 *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1938, p.46. The Hōkoku Dōmei was also reported on in the national newspapers, such as the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 3rd March 1938.

56 Usui (2010) p.9-11.

in ideas of Japaneseness, writing and broadcasting on subjects such as 'Esperanto and the Japanese spirit', 'Capitalism, Marxism and the Japanese National Thoughts', and 'Japanese and Oriental Political Philosophy'.⁵⁷

Through the Hōkoku Dōmei, the Japanese Foreign Ministry sought to make use of Esperanto. In collaboration with the JEI and the Rotary Club, they produced an Esperanto pamphlet, *Prudento kaj Nuna Ĥina Afero* ('Understanding and the Current China Affair'), which represented a 'plea for understanding on the part of the people of Japan'.⁵⁸ 5000 copies of the pamphlet were printed: 1,000 for the Foreign Ministry, 3,000 for the Rotary Club, and the remainder for the JEI, which sent one out with each copy of the March issue of *La Revuo Orienta*, urging its members to use it in their correspondence with Esperantists overseas.⁵⁹

Although they were involved with this project, in general the JEI was slow in participating in attempts to make use of Esperanto for patriotic means. In August 1938, Ōishi Wasaburō, then chairman of the JEI, wrote an editorial in *La Revuo Orienta*, noting that, in its founding charter, the JEI had been created with the goals of 'the spread and development of the international language Esperanto... together with the global advancement of our nation's culture through the international language Esperanto'.⁶⁰ Ōishi conceded that the JEI had focused in the first instance on the first objective at the expense of the second (for good reason, given the state of broad Esperanto adoption, he claimed), but that the time had come for this to change and for the JEI to help those

⁵⁷ *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1938, September 1938; Fujisawa (1928); Fujisawa (1935). A number of his works were published in European languages including English, German, and Italian.

⁵⁸ JEI (1938), p.1

⁵⁹ *La Revuo Orienta*, March 1938, p.39, p.46.

⁶⁰ *La Revuo Orienta*, August 1938, p.1.

individuals whose private efforts had been the chief vehicle for the Esperanto language transmission of Japanese culture and views on international politics.

One example of how they did so was in the publication of a pamphlet, *Impreso pri Japanujo sub la Konflikto* ('Impression of Japan at War'). This was a translation of an article published in the *Asahi Shinbun* written by a French writer, Claude Farrère, who visited Japan at the invitation of the Japanese government. Farrère had been a long-time supporter of Japan's expansion, finding direct parallels between Japanese colonial exploits and those of European nations, explored in fiction and non-fiction written from 1908 into the 1920s and 1930s.⁶¹ He was, therefore, a natural selection for Japanese efforts at cultural diplomacy. The JEI illustrated his observations that, despite growth and modernisation, Japan 'has in no way lost its character nor its nobility' with photos of the imperial palace, Meiji Jingu, and other ancient Japanese buildings in Kyoto and Nara.⁶² The JEI also engaged in their own efforts at providing sympathetic eye witness European testimony of Japan, for example through the Hungarian Esperantist, Istvan Mezey.⁶³

The JEI also worked to build ties to other nations' Esperanto associations such as Hungary, a fellow axis power,⁶⁴ and Brazil,⁶⁵ effectively representing an organisational equivalent to individual Esperantists' personal correspondence. However, the

61 Kawakami (2005), p.63-75.

62 Farrère (1939) p.6.

63' *Mia Impreso Pri Japanujo*, *La Revuo Orienta*, May 1938, p.1-4; also mentioned in April 1938, p.40.

64 Esperanto connections between Japan and Hungary date back at least to 1928 through the person of Aibara Susumu (*La Revuo Orienta* August 1928 p.231, 1929 p.135, February 1932 p.43), but there was a relatively high level of interchange in the period after 1937 (for example, *La Revuo Orienta*, 1938 p.185-192, p.216-7, p.262-267, p.500; 1939 p.172-3, p.203-206, p.298-302).

65 *La Revuo Orienta*, June 1940, p.4.

international Esperanto community experienced turmoil during the 1930s. In 1933/4, the UEA transformed its internal structure from one of direct individual membership to an umbrella organisation, the members of which were national Esperanto associations, rather than individuals. Between then and 1936, discord between the central figures in the UEA increased, with the eventual creation of a new body, the Internacia Esperanto-Ligo (the IEL) which took with it almost all of the national associations, leaving the original UEA still extant, but with little function. Finally, in 1940, the JEI pulled out of the IEL, with the intention of forming its own international organisation, describing it as the first step in responding to the new domestic order, and expressing the intention of (rather than moving to a stance of isolation) reformulating relations with other national Esperanto movements along lines better aligned to the principle of *Hakkō Ichiu*.⁶⁶

These attempts within the Esperanto community to aid Japan's foreign policy through a mix of popular and semi-official means were examples of *Kokumin Gaikō* ('citizen diplomacy'), a term which emerged from another such effort, the campaign to host the 1940 Olympics. The campaign is linked to Esperanto through the person of Nagata Hidejirō, the mayor of Tokyo who led the bid and who has already been mentioned as a keen Esperanto supporter (if not an active speaker himself).⁶⁷

The success of Tokyo's bid, announced in 1936, inspired a campaign by some Japanese Esperantists to host the 1940 UEA Esperanto congress in Tokyo, coinciding as

⁶⁶ *La Revuo Orienta*, October 1940, p.1. *Hakkō Ichiu* (八紘一宇) being the slogan of Japanese nationalism 'all the world beneath one roof'.

⁶⁷ An article in *La Revuo Orienta* noted that Nagata, then Rail Minister, was described by *Kokumin Shinbun* as one of Japan's leading Esperantists but that, despite promoting Esperanto publicly, he had little or no actual ability in it (*La Revuo Orienta*, January 1940, p.18).

it would with not only the Olympics but also the celebrations to mark what had been identified as the 2600th anniversary of the Japanese imperial line, providing a perfect opportunity to promote Japan and Esperanto.⁶⁸ Although the JEI executive was lukewarm – noting various potential problems, chief amongst them being the need to pay a substantial license fee to the UEA – they made some overtures to the UEA to see if it might be possible. They were firmly rebuffed: Cecil Goldsmith, the UEA director, suggested that they expected that only ten or so Esperantists would be able to make the journey from Europe to attend, and thus it was not a viable plan to hold the congress in Asia.⁶⁹

Disappointed, advocates of the Japanese universal congress argued that an Esperanto congress in Europe was no less far for Asian Esperantists than an Asian congress was for Europeans,⁷⁰ echoing the successful Olympic bid's argument that the Olympic movement's claims to universality was blighted by their failure up to that point to organise their major events outside of Europe/America.⁷¹ Japanese Esperantists suggested that: 'we still will not have a *universal* congress in Esperanto-land; we will call the current [state] "the universal congress in the west", and we will organise on our side a "universal congress in the east"'.⁷²

In 1938 the Japanese government surrendered the right to host the games, citing

68 Nakahara Shūichi, the publisher of *Tempo*, in particular, was a keen advocate of Japan hosting a world Esperanto congress – in 1937, just as the JEI's efforts were meeting with rejection by the UEA, he visited the congress in Warsaw to personally seek to extend an invitation to Europe's Esperanto population (Nojima 2000).

69 'Parolas Membroj', *La Revuo Orienta*, August 1936, p.31; 'Nefavora Respondo', *La Revuo Orienta*, December 1936, p.32.

70 Nojima (2000) p.44, quoting *Tempo*, December 1936.

71 See Collins (2007), chapters 2 & 3, for a full discussion of the Olympic bid.

72 Nojima (2000), p.46, quoting *Tempo*, June 1937. Emphasis added.

the costs of the war in China and the impropriety of hosting an international sporting event whilst Japanese soldiers were risking their lives (notably reaffirming their commitment to the ideas of the Olympic movement and holding out the hope of hosting the 1944 games as they did so).⁷³ Thus the plans to promote Esperanto's use at the Olympics and surrounding events also came to nothing. Nevertheless, the Japanese Esperanto community participated fully in the celebrations of the 2600th anniversary of the imperial line's foundation, featuring several articles in that year's *La Revuo Orienta* issues on how best to contribute, and holding their national congress in Miyazaki, home to the main shrine of the mythic founding emperor Jinmu, and the site of the monolithic *Hakkō Ichiu* monument, built in 1940 as a part of the celebrations.

The Olympics are a classic example of 'patriotic internationalism' – of international (cultural) cooperation which is nevertheless predicated upon the world as a network of nation-states, and which features all the pageantry of the nation – flags, anthems, and dramatic statements of national identity and loyalty to one's nation. The Japanese Esperantists participated in this, and other attempts to assist the Japanese state in articulating Japan's position to the wider world. Whether in the form of direct political expression, or in more 'soft-power' style cultural forms, as a language, Esperanto was expressly designed for international communication, and thus it was perfectly placed for use in the task of conveying Japan to the world at large. As Nohara Kyūichi suggested, Esperanto could be the key to open the 'hidden palace of oriental

73 Collins (2007), chapter 6 & p.165.

culture' for the west.⁷⁴

Language in the Recreation of Asia

In the 1930s, Esperanto represented an informal network of contacts with the west through which Japanese perspectives and culture could be communicated. In doing so, Japanese Esperantists found that their perceived patriotic responsibilities as national citizens were not in conflict with their obligations to the wider community of mankind, or their goal of an international language. However, the Esperanto network also proliferated across Asia; there it played a different role in the 1930s: the goal was not simply to convey the Japanese position, but to take part in the project of creating a new Asian community.

The Japanese military expansion into Asia carried with it an attempt to refashion regional politics. The rhetoric of this new Asia, from the creation of Manchukuo to ideas from the 'New Order in East Asia' (*Tōa Shin-Chitsujo*) through to the 'Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere' (*Dai-Tōa Kyōei Ken*) was something which Esperantists in Japan were able to see in harmony with their visions of international language. And, moreover, language was an integral part of attempts to reform Asia, something to which Esperantists could contribute directly.

The 1930s have been characterised as period in which conservatives triumphed over reformists in arguments about potential reforms to *Kokugo*, the political manifestation of standardised Japanese language.⁷⁵ However, whilst the officially recognised forms of the Japanese language perhaps remained largely unchanged, not

74 *La Revuo Orienta* January 1934, p.23.

75 Carroll (2001) p.65.

only were there vibrant and fierce debates going on behind this stable situation, there were other, dramatic, changes to the Japanese language taking place outside of its standardised grammar and orthography. Specifically, the Japanese military expansion into Asia drove an unprecedented spread in the geographic range over which Japanese was used, beyond Japan and the colonies Taiwan and Korea, into new settings such as the state of Manchukuo, and the south-east Asian nations which went into the creation of the Great East-Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere in the 1940s.

Situating Esperanto within this changing linguistic world was a complex task. Despite the best efforts of Esperantists, the argument that Esperanto represented no threat to nation and national language, indeed that it might act in defence of the nation, was something which needed constant reiteration. The Marxist theory of language which the proletarian movement had introduced to Japan posited an evolution that would lead to the rise of a world language and the withering away of national languages; this may well have contributed to suspicion of Esperanto's nature. But as Nagata Hidejirō said (in reply to a German expressing surprise that a patriotic Japanese might use Esperanto), 'were one to abandon one's own language and use another national language, it might be thought of as unpatriotic, but to use a neutral international language unaffiliated with any nation is unobjectionable, I think'.⁷⁶

Whilst the re-emphasis on language's neutrality helped to distance the Esperanto mainstream from the proletarian Esperantists, many Japanese Esperantists went further in arguing that, whilst Esperanto might be inherently apolitical, its effects nevertheless

76 'Nihon Kokumin to Esuperanto', Nagata Hidejirō, *La Revuo Orienta*, December 1933, p.342.

actually served to support the Japanese language (and by extension nation), rather than to threaten it. Different individuals expressed this in different ways. In the 1934 JEI survey, several of the respondents made this point, such as Murakami Matsuyuki, who argued that 'Esperanto's true meaning is one aspect of patriotism, as Zamenhof made clear; if we Esperantists have forgotten this, then how can we expect non-Esperantists to know it?', and Fukuda Jun'ichi, who suggested that Japanese Esperantists 'must build an Esperanto movement upon our self-realisation as Japanese'.⁷⁷ Similarly, in a collection of essays, Kitano Nagagorō argued, under the title 'Patriotism and Esperanto', that:

True patriotism is never in opposition to the love of mankind. No it is founded upon it. Esperantism is deeply filled with the love of mankind. However, that it is also steeped in the true meaning of patriotism must not be forgotten.⁷⁸

However, the most influential articulation of Esperanto as an act of patriotism, particularly with respect to language, was an essay written by Kuroita Katsumi, the founder and leader of the old JEA and professor at the Imperial University. Kuroita's essay, titled 'Kokugo no Yōgo wo Ronjite, Kokusaigo ni Oyobu' ('On the protection of national language, with reference to international language') was originally published in the major national magazine *Taiyō*, in 1915,⁷⁹ but significantly it was reprinted as the title article in a JEI pamphlet in 1932, in the period between the Manchurian Incident and the Japanese withdrawal from the League of Nations.⁸⁰ 'Kokugo no Yōgo' laid out an argument which comprised three topics: language as a key for the formation of national unity, a critique of Japan's attitude towards foreign languages, and finally the

77 *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1934, p.9 & p.16.

78 *Aikoku Undō to Esuperanto-go*, Kitano (1930), p.67.

79 *Nihon Kindai Bungaku-Kan* (1999), p.663.

80 JEI (1932).

proposal of Esperanto as the solution to these issues.

Kuroita argued that language had a vital role to play in the knitting together of a nation, something possible even in cases without a single racially unified people – he suggested that, where China's peoples retained their diverse languages, though the ethnic origins of the people of the United States of America were no less varied, the common use of English was one part of what allowed the United States to form a strong national citizenry whilst the (linguistically diverse) Chinese remained weak. The explicit consequence of this was that Japan's dysfunctional relationship with foreign languages, by weakening the vitality of the Japanese language, was thus weakening the nation.

Where Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese war had inspired other non-western nations, such as Egypt, to reassert their own language and culture in the face of colonial pressure, Kuroita argued that Japan's position with respect to foreign languages was in crisis. It was now becoming a necessity to understand English to operate in Japanese society – it appeared in newspapers, magazines, government activities, even on tobacco papers, railway tickets, and in post offices. And most significantly of all, it was integrally embedded within the middle school educational curriculum.

Kuroita's vision was a mix of notions of purity and more complex ideas of integration. Whilst he expressed the idea of the nation in terms which were far from simple biological racism, he nevertheless expressed the view that the Japanese language, reflecting the beautiful development of over 2500 years of national linguistic independence (surely an improbable view, given the very characters his essay was

written in), was akin to the imperial line in its contribution to Japanese civilisation. However, he also described the belief that Japanese was the uniquely perfect language of *Kotodama*⁸¹ as no different to the blind national pride of any other nation.

Kuroita suggested Esperanto as the answer to Japan's problems. It could replace English within the school system, eliminating the invasive threat to Japanese language and culture, and simplifying the process of communication overseas. Moreover, Japan's role in the adoption of Esperanto need not be one of trailing the Europeans (who were sluggish in their support, each hoping that their own language might succeed to the throne of international language) but rather Japan's adoption of Esperanto would cause other nations, desiring to trade with Japan, to learn it also.

In 1915, the argument that Esperanto could serve as a neutral buffer between national languages, thus acting to better define and protect national culture and linguistic identity, was perhaps somewhat out of step with the direction in which Esperanto in Japan was headed. Certainly, the change in overall outlook that came with the close to the First World War, towards conceptualising Esperanto within the frame of *Homaranismo* and similar ideologies, marked a move away from this 'nationalist internationalism'.⁸²

However, by the early 1930s, when as Ōishi Wasaburō pointed out, 'anything which reeks of the west is deprecated',⁸³ Kuroita's was a resurgent and powerful

81 言霊, a Japanese tradition of the mystical power inherent within (the Japanese) language.

82 Kuroita ceased to play an active role in the leadership of the Japanese Esperanto community with the creation of the JEI in 1919. Nevertheless, he remained a willing participant in promotional efforts, respected for his age, his role in the creation of Esperanto in Japan, and his prominent position in Japanese academia (*La Revuo Orienta*, March 1947).

83 *La Revuo Orienta*, January 1934, p.2.

argument. Introducing the essay's re-publication, Nishi Seiho, another prominent Esperantist, wrote that 'there has recently been a dramatic change in the nation's diplomacy towards autonomous diplomacy; however it is clear that an independent revolution in education, to answer the needs of the new age, is needed, too'.⁸⁴

Indeed, the domestic changes between the first publication of Kuroita's essay and its reprint meant that not only was Kuroita's analysis of the role of language in protecting culture and knitting together people, and the consequent threat of European linguistic dominance, still relevant, it took on new and wider implications. In 1915 Kuroita's analysis of language led him to suggest that it might be a key to colonial policy – linking bloodlines between the Japanese people and their subjects in Korea and Taiwan was hard, but by using the Japanese language, another form of unity might be achieved.⁸⁵ However, by the time it was reprinted, the Japanese language was spreading further still, and the significance of language education was evident not only in Japan, or even Korea and Taiwan, but elsewhere in Asia, too.

The question of language in Asia gained immediate importance with the creation of Manchukuo in 1932. The rhetoric of the new state, of the construction of the nation as a 'harmonious union of the five peoples' – (Han) Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Manchurians, and Mongolians – both revealed the ethnically diverse mix which were contained within the state borders and appealed to the Japanese Esperantists' ideas of the love of humankind. Just as, for Akita Ujaku, the Soviet Union represented a symbol of the potential of communism and Esperanto's role in the creation of a new modern

84 JEI (1932).

85 JEI (1932) p.2-3.

socialist society, so too, for other Esperantists, Manchukuo's ethnic mix recalled the conditions in Zamenhof's home town which had inspired the creation of Esperanto in the first place, and the nation could be seen as a bold new modern experiment in nationhood, one in which Esperanto might find its most major realisation to date.

There was a need to provide for Manchukuo linguistically, both for administration and culturally. Kuroita's argument that China remained divided by language whilst the United States of America's use of English enabled it to forge a strong union had direct implication: the need of some form of linguistic union to enable the realisation of the harmony of the five peoples. In the words of one Esperantist, Arakawa Eijirō:

The sudden appearance in one corner of the eastern hemisphere of Manchukuo is a historical wonder and a joy of the love of humanity; in the face of the birth of this newly risen nation from an unprecedented situation, of the great ideals upon which the spirit of this nation forming is based, and in particular of the advocacy of the great banner of human equality, one can but offer one's sincere praise...

The work of creating a new nation [requires] each earnest field of work, but there remains a problem, a problem which cannot be solved at a single stroke. What is this problem? The problem of the language of daily public life.

Beyond the languages of each people, a fixed common language for official use is not only vital from the point of view of governing, or of uniting the people, I believe that, for the execution of national affairs, it cannot be delayed for a single day.⁸⁶

Arakawa considered and rejected Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, and Manchurian, and recommended Esperanto on the grounds of equality to all peoples and of ease of study. He imagined that the adoption of Esperanto would be a ten year project, but nevertheless the one which would best solve the problem of Manchukuo's language, at the same time both providing a short cut to world knowledge and acting as a major step

⁸⁶ Arakawa (n.d.) p.1.

in the advance of Esperanto as world language.

Arakawa's suggestion for Manchukuo's public language was perhaps an uncommon and radical one, but it serves to indicate the common ground that could be found between the rhetoric used in the creation of the new state of Manchukuo and Esperantists' ideas of linguistic unity and equality.

The presence of Esperanto, and indeed Japanese Esperanto, on the north-east of the Asian continent pre-dated the creation of Manchukuo. Futabatei Shimei's experiences in Vladivostok provided a direct connection between Japanese Esperanto and Russian Esperantists in Asia from the very outset of the Japanese movement, and a number of individual Japanese Esperantists such as Yamaga Taiji, Takahashi Kunitarō, and Fujisawa Chikao had all made trips there. The first Japanese Esperanto club in Manchuria was founded in 1922, in Dairen. The following year there was a club founded within the South Manchurian Railway Company, the quasi-state organisation which ran Japanese interests in Manchuria, and a number of courses were organised by Esperantists in various towns, attracting several hundred new learners in aggregate.⁸⁷ The bulk of the Esperanto community was Japanese, bolstered by a number of Chinese and Russians. From the late 1920s onwards, Esperantists in Manchuria were proactive in their use of the language – at the vanguard of the movement to spread it by radio, as discussed above, for example. They also received some official support from South Manchurian Railway Company who, for example, in November 1935 printed an Esperanto guidebook, *Gvidfolio por Vojaĝanto en Manĉoŭkŭo*. Within the first six months,

87 'Manshū Esuperanto Undō Nenpyō', *La Revuo Orienta*, April 1940, p.32-40.

some 400 copies of this were ordered from overseas, principally Europe, so further pamphlets were printed in 1937.⁸⁸

Esperanto, as well as ideas of rational language reform drawn from the wider intellectual sphere of planned languages, played a significant role in the debates which arose regarding language policy in Asia during the changing phases of the Japanese expansion into Asia. In 1934, in preparing for an 'All-Asia People's Conference', organised by the pan-Asian/nationalist Ōkawa Shūmei in Dairen, a group meeting in Kobe resolved to develop a common Asian language:

'This is a long term project requiring surveys and research, but to unify the peoples of all Asia, mutual linguistic unity is essential, so for this we will establish something akin to an Asian Esperanto; the grammar will be taken from world Esperanto, and in the manner of 1000 words [taken] from European languages, 1000 words from Chinese, and 1000 words from Japanese, we will establish something Asian that is simple for Asians to learn.'⁸⁹

The diversity of Asian languages – that is, specifically, their purported mutual dissimilarity relative to the alleged greater level of similarity within the space of European languages – and the lack of a common script were held to be barriers to the cultural and political unification of the region. In 1938, a librarian working at the Hibiya Library released a 'new east Asian Esperanto *kana* alphabet', which he had developed by studying the scripts of Japan, Korea, China and elsewhere, and which he hoped would help to achieve the 'harmony of the five peoples', initially through adoption in schools in Manchuria.⁹⁰ This idea echoed suggestions by linguists such as Hoshina Kōichi that

88 *La Revuo Orienta*, October 1935, p.438-9, April 1940 p.176-7. The SMR also collaborated with the JEI in a series of articles in *La Revuo Orienta* in 1936-7 giving basic details of Manchukuo, whilst in 1940 the magazine *La Revuo Orienta* ran a regular 'Manchurian section'.

89 'Ō-Ajia no Reimei', *Kōbe Yūshin Nippō*, 19th January 1934.

90 'Tōyō no Esuperanto Shin-Kanamoji Hatsumeī', *Chūgai Shōgyō Shinbun*, 5th August 1938.

Japanese language education in Manchuria should be conducted in *kana*, avoiding the use of *kanji*. From around 1939, Manchukuo authorities worked on developing a syllabary which might be used for phonetically representing Japanese, Chinese, and Mongolian, resulting in 1943 in 'Mango Kana', a method of writing Chinese using Japanese *katakana* (although the war ended before this could be put into actual practice).⁹¹ Another stream of planned language theory which was introduced to the context of 1930s Asia was that of restricted versions of natural language: in 1933 Doi Kōchi, a Tōhoku University professor, developed Kiso Nihongo, based upon the language Basic English,⁹² and in 1942 a similar version of Japanese designed for the use of continental Asians, Nippongo, with a vocabulary of three hundred words, was developed and textbooks were written in various Asian languages.⁹³

Esperanto retained a place, as model and as metaphor, within these debates regarding how best to use language for uniting Asia. Indeed, Esperantists offered their own perspectives and suggestions. For example, in 1939, four Esperantists with direct experience of Manchukuo wrote a set of brief articles published in the *La Revuo Orienta* under the title 'Tairiku ni okeru Gengo no Mondai' ('The Language Problem(s) relating to the Continent') in which they outlined their own experiences of language as used in Manchuria and occupied China. They described an environment in which Japanese and Chinese were used in parallel as quasi-official languages but where the range of languages used in daily life was far in excess even of the five major languages of the five

91 Lee & Hirano (1996) p.193-4.

92 Basic English was a limited form of English with a simple grammar and a limited vocabulary that was intended for foreign students. It was created in 1930 by Charles Ogden.

93 Yasuda (2006) p.168-9.

peoples, and where even the Japanese language spoken in Manchuria exhibited a wide range of variations based upon the speakers. The authors drew different lessons from their experiences – for example, Yamagata Mitsue, argued for reform of the Japanese language, suggesting that 'it has rapidly become an age where Japanese is not the Japanese of Japan alone, but has taken on the size of the continent, so firstly to establish a simple clear and beautiful Japanese language has urgency'; whereas Fujieda Ryōei, recognising that 'the “continental language problem” is a problem of the language(s) of the Chinese peoples', called for the simplification and unification of the Chinese languages; and Takagi Teiichi suggested that Japanese/Manchurian cooperation should be based upon the motto 'where the Hinomaru flies, use Japanese; beyond there, use Esperanto'.⁹⁴

Whilst perhaps by the end of the 1930s it became orthodoxy that Japanese was the language for Asia – that the Japanese language was the Esperanto of Asia – this was not uniformly accepted, nor was it true throughout the decade. In arguing for the elimination of the excessive influence of English from international conferences, Takeuchi Tōkichi argued in 1937 that:

Should the day come when international conferences could be conducted in Japanese, the Japanese conscience should not regard replacing English with Japanese as a solution to the problem [of language equality in international affairs].⁹⁵

Even given the assumption that the Japanese language was to be the common language of the new Asian sphere of influence, the Tōa Kyōtsū-go (東亜共通語, the 'east Asian

94 'Tairiku ni okeru Gengo no Mondai', *La Revuo Orienta*, 1939, p.400-406.

95 'Wareware ha Nihon no Ryōshin ni Saidai no Nozomi wo Kakeyou', *La Revuo Orienta*, October 1937, p.360.

language of communal use'), Esperantists found a role for themselves and their language. Inoue Masuzō suggested that, whilst 'the opening of the great east Asian war brings with it the globalisation of the Japanese language', Esperanto too had a part to play. Inoue was of the opinion that 'the true meaning of what we call the spread overseas of the Japanese language is not the elimination of other people's languages and the replacement of them by Japanese'.⁹⁶ Rather, the expansion of Japanese across Asia would be best achieved by encouraging the uptake of the Japanese language by a cadre of Asian leaders, whilst Esperanto and Esperantists could contribute to the Japanese mission by working with the second tier of Asians who were not amongst the elite, but nevertheless would be deeply involved in cross border trade and exchange in the new system.

Similarly, in 1939 Miyake Shihei found a role for the Esperantists of Japan and Asia in the creation of a new Asian culture. Miyake's principal argument was a call for the simultaneous development of superior Asian language skills amongst the Japanese (correcting what he termed a 'self imposed position as colonial subjects' with respect to foreign languages, i.e. English) and the spread of Japanese language and culture amongst a 'still newer Asian generation'.⁹⁷ However, Chinese and Japanese Esperantists could, he suggested, work together for the construction of the new order, using their common neutral language to prevent either from predominating.

For Japanese Esperantists it proved more straightforward than might be expected to find common ground between their goals as Esperantists and the role of Japanese

96 'Daitōa Kensetsu to Esuperanto', Inoue Masazō, *La Revuo Orienta*, March 1942, p.65-66.

97 'Kokugo no Hatten', Miyake Shihe, *La Revuo Orienta*, March 1939, p.1.

citizens contributing to the self-proclaimed national mission to recreate Asia: as one Esperantist wrote in 1942, 'Esperanto is *Hakkō Ichiū*'.⁹⁸ Most of the proposals made by Esperantists were most likely peripheral to the actual creation of policy (and indeed, even better placed linguists such as Hoshina Kōchi did not necessarily see their ideas reflected in actual practice in the overseas territories). Nevertheless, they and, more directly, knowledge of Esperanto, both as language and as idea, fed into the wider debates on the proper role of language or languages in Asia.⁹⁹

Conversely, in 1942 Ishiga Osamu called for Asian values and linguistics to be better integrated within Esperanto, through the development of an 'Orienta Esperanto', a more Asian form of Esperanto. He was arguing in support of 'the commonly expressed opinion that Esperanto will not be a true international language until it includes Oriental elements'.¹⁰⁰ By introducing such Japanese-language ideas such as subject – object – verb ordering (something grammatically valid in Esperanto, but rarely used outside of poetry) and little or no use of the definite article, two forms of Esperanto might emerge, much akin to the divide between American and British English – distinguishable, but mutually comprehensible. Although this view sparked a minor controversy in Japan, it reveals the ways in which ideas of the Japanese nation and Asia increasingly fed into the Esperanto imagination of the Japanese movement.

98 'Maree-go to Esuperanto', Kawasaki Naokazu, *La Revuo Orienta*, 1942(?), p.112.

99 One Esperantist who was perhaps more central to the language debates was Ishiguro Yoshimi [石黒修], a linguist who worked at the Monbusho Kokugo Kenkyū-sho (文部省国語研究所, the Department of Education National Language Research Institute). A collection of his is housed at the University of Tokyo, http://www.um.u-tokyo.ac.jp/publish_db/2004shimbun/s_48.html.

100 'Kensetsu no Kadai 2: Orienta Esperanto', *La Revuo Orienta*, 1942, p.174. This point of view proved quite controversial within the Japanese Esperanto community, given it represented a direct repudiation of the linguistic universality within the Esperanto imagination.

Conclusion

In March 1944, *La Revuo Orienta* reported a JEI decision to suspend publication of the magazine, citing the desire to contribute to the resolution of the Pacific war – not simply because of limited paper, but also to free labour to work on more urgent objectives.¹⁰¹ The Japanese Esperanto congress was also suspended that year, marking the effective end of pre-1945 public Japanese Esperanto.

As war spread from China across Asia and into the Pacific, the Japanese Esperanto movement did decrease significantly in scale. Participation fell markedly – for example, the 1940 congress (held in Miyazaki due to the 2600th anniversary celebration of the imperial line) attracted an attendance of nearly 300, but by 1942 the figure fell to fewer than 100.¹⁰² There was a continuation of activities, such as an effort to produce a translation of the poetry collection *Aikoku Hyakunin Isshu* ('The Patriotic 100 Poems by 100 Famous Poets'),¹⁰³ but where earlier efforts such as Nohara Kyūichi's translations of Japanese and Chinese classics were done with the express goal of communicating eastern culture to an overseas audience, the *Aikoku Hyakunin Isshu* seems to have been more inward looking – more of a reiteration of the patriotism of the Japanese Esperanto movement than an effort to communicate Japanese culture overseas. Of course, as war spread to encompass a greater proportion of the world, opportunities for transnational activities and the practical use of Esperanto became much more scarce.

Nevertheless, despite this final inward turn, the persistence through the 1930s of

101 'Kyūkan no Aisatsu', *La Revuo Orienta*, March 1944, p.4-6.

102 JEI records, http://www.jei.or.jp/hp/materialo/eks_jk.htm [accessed March 2013].

103 This was a 1940s collection using a fairly common model, originating with the original *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*.

Esperanto as a manifestation of a strand of internationalist thinking and action in Japan is noteworthy. Ulrich Lins suggests that the mainstream Esperantists, though they strove to avoid the association of Esperanto and the revolutionary left, 'did not go to the other extreme by aligning themselves with the military government', and that 'by applying [the] principle [of neutrality]... succeeded in resisting the pressure to commit the Esperanto movement to the prevailing ideology'.¹⁰⁴ In charting the ways in which the Japanese Esperantists were able to find common cause with the Japanese state, I have not sought to portray them as somehow morally compromised. Rather I would suggest that the ways in which many Esperantists were able to reconcile their perceived national duty with their vision of a global society, and to understand the rhetoric of a united Asia as more than a paper thin justification for acts of Japanese aggression represented one possible response to the changing domestic and international context. Some, such as the socialists, sought to struggle against the state, others receded into the private sphere, or engaged in *tenkō*, forswearing their prior positions. In contrast to these, many Japanese Esperantists, and the movement as a whole, sought to retain their vision of an international community, and to secure for it a place within Japanese society and policy.

Different institutions and individuals within Japan weighed obligations and loyalties to the nation-state and to the international community differently. For some in power, no doubt, the call to the international was no more than a rhetorical device to legitimate national aggression, but it would have been a poor device if the call had had

104 Lins (2008) p.52-53.

no power to convince anyone. The Japanese Esperanto community, I suggest, especially given the ongoing continuity in much of its population, represents an example amongst domestic society for whom international responsibilities were genuinely felt, and thus who were susceptible to the logic of Japan's actions as internationalism.

Jessamyn Abel suggests that the shifting understanding of internationalism amongst the elites of 1930s Japan explored a number of meanings – from the Wilsonianism of the 1920s, through ideas such as people's diplomacy, cultural internationalism, and regional internationalism, culminating in 'imperialist internationalism', in which the superposition of nationalism and internationalism finally collapsed.¹⁰⁵ Each of these forms is identifiable within the Esperanto of 1930s Japan, and indeed perhaps at some point in the early 1940s national claims finally triumphed over the international. Nevertheless, up to this point, wherever exactly it lies, the Japanese Esperanto community continued to seek to bring their ideas of linguistic internationalism to bear upon Japanese society and its relationship with Asia and the world.

105 Abel (2004) p.15.

Conclusion

From the Volapük moment of 1888/9, to Japanese Esperanto's two great booms in 1905/6 and the immediate post-First World War period, all the way through to the last, strange forms during the Pacific war, the presence of ideas of international language in pre-1945 Japan traces a history of Japan's engagement with the wider world and modernity. Indeed, this history did not end in 1944 – plans for a resumption in the publication of *La Revuo Orienta* began on the 16th August 1945, the day after Emperor Hirohito's radio broadcast announced the Japanese surrender to the nation, and the first new issue came out in October of that year.¹ In the postwar era, cheaper travel allowed an ever greater degree of transnational engagement by Japanese Esperantists: more Japanese were able to attend international congresses, the goal of Japan's hosting the UEA congress was achieved in 1965 (the year after the Tokyo Olympics, which served as something of a symbol of Japan's re-emergence into the society of nations), and Yagi Hideo, an active Kyoto-area Esperantist, became the president of the UEA in 1962.²

By tracing the history of Esperanto in Japan up to 1944, I have revealed a popular tradition of internationalism within Japanese society, one manifested both intellectually, and through patterns of organisation and practice. This internationalism touched places, times, and people which it might not have been expected to; in doing so it reveals both insights into twentieth century Japanese history, and also lessons for the wider

1 *La Revuo Orienta*, October 1945, p.2.

2 JEI (2006) p.122-124. Yagi's tenure was short lived however – he died in 1964. Many of the leading figures of the pre-1945 era movement continued to play leading roles (although a few, such as Fujisawa Chikao, who had allied themselves too strongly to the military ideology of the 1930s were ostracised after 1945).

understanding of internationalism. Read as one history of Japan's early twentieth century, the Russo-Japanese war and the end of the First World War loom large as key watersheds in popular participation in the wider world, whilst the shift from the 1920s and Taishō democracy into the militarism of the 1930s was much more of a gradual transition, without any obvious key breaking point, despite the series of significant events in the early 1930s.

Throughout, I have endeavoured to recognise the multiple different intellectual trends contained within Japanese Esperanto. The converse to this diversity of motivation and vision is the recognition of the pervasive nature of the urge to connect with the world beyond Japan's borders and the persistent language problems which arose as a consequence. The history of Esperanto in Japan is a history of Japan's contact with the wider world and its struggles with foreign languages. Scholars, students, scientists, traders, diplomats, schoolchildren and members of a myriad other social groups all sought to make contact with other nations, to learn from them, to teach them of Japan, and to play a role in the creation of a new world order. In doing so they were consistently faced with language as a key barrier to the flow of information, in both directions.

As described in chapter five, socialists made an equation between 'worldism' and the proletariat, but through Esperanto we could well make a similar link between the world (or the international) and the modern. Ever-changing technology made the early twentieth century world ever more inter-connected in ways with resonance to our current era of globalisation. The modern world was one in which international contact

and engagement were inevitable and vital. In particular, Esperanto's vision of a world connected through common language placed modernity, not as a uniquely western phenomenon exported to Asia and elsewhere, but one which emerged explicitly in the coming together of the world's nations and peoples – in the international sphere itself. Thus, through Esperanto, nations such as Japan could look to participate in the creation of the modern world.

Different Esperantists had different visions of what a world remade through language might look like. Particularly striking is the comparison in the early 1930s between the proletarian Esperantists and those mainstream Esperantists who explicitly linked Esperanto and the Japanese state's actions in Asia. Both groups could look to a bold new experiment in state-building as a vision of the future – for the Marxists, it was the Soviet Union, and for the others, it was the creation of Manchukuo – and both groups linked Esperanto to these new states in direct ways. However, in other respects, their visions were so incommensurate that they were unable to remain part of the same set of organisations and institutions. These articulations of Esperanto as linguistic internationalism were joined by a range of others, from express neutrality – what I have described as Esperanto as technology – through conventional liberal internationalism, to other, more spiritual motivations such as those of the religions Ōmoto-kyō and Bahá'í. And for many, perhaps most, Japanese Esperantists, their interest came not so much from a well articulated ideology than from a less explicit sense of the international community.

There is a problem when seeking to define a concept such as internationalism or

cosmopolitanism in choosing the right level of specificity. Too narrow a definition risks capturing too limited a set of examples, whilst too broad a definition may lose explanatory power. My definition of internationalism is a relatively loose one. Nevertheless I believe that the recognition of some idea of world community and associated norms and obligations as the common core of different forms of internationalism is a useful model. Specifically, I believe that it is helpful in going beyond naïve ideas which contrast a picture of good, peaceful internationalism against bad, violent nationalism. Rather than ask whether an individual or group was nationalist or internationalist, we can recognise the plural nature of identity and socio-political obligation. Whilst in the moment one set of loyalties must be weighed against another, this is not to deny the presence of more than one. In short, it is possible for nationalism and internationalism to coexist – we need not be either nationalist or internationalist in outlook, but can, and do, bring both loyalties to bear on the world. Only in extreme situations such as Japanese society during the Pacific war does the national fully exclude the international.

The history of Esperanto in modern Japan represents well the complex and fluctuating relationship between internationalism and the nation and nationalism. I have argued that the popular emergence of Esperanto in Japan in the wake of the Russo-Japanese war was facilitated by the securing of Japanese national sovereignty, and the elimination of the treaties subordinating Japan to western nations. The League of Nations was a complex, somewhat compromised, attempt to realise idealism in the realities of the system of international relations; however, the international language

problems which were raised there saw a coincidence of Japanese national interest with internationalist principle. Finally, and most strikingly, the persistence of Esperanto in Japan throughout the 1930s and even the 1940s and the Pacific war reveals the way in which ideas of internationalism could be reconciled to military expansionism.

In the postwar era, there has been a general shift in the international Esperanto movement away from a campaign for universal adoption, towards the recognition that Esperanto has achieved the status of a real living language, and that its international body of users, institutions, and events represents, if not a fully unified world, nevertheless a partial realisation of the principles of equality and transnational community held by many Esperantists. This is as true for Japanese Esperantists as for those elsewhere: Miyamoto Masao, a leading postwar Esperantist, suggested that the 1965 congress marked a major transition, in which expanding transnational engagement changed the tenor and outlook of the Japanese Esperanto movement:

Unsuccessful resistance to power, nesting in the movement as an internal idea, gradually disappeared... and a new idea took over: amusement and pleasure in being able to talk freely with foreigners and even marry across the races. Thus the language became real rather than ideal.³

In looking back at the Japanese Esperanto movement before 1945, it is easy to be distracted by what they were trying to achieve – widespread Esperanto adoption, inclusion of Esperanto in the national school system, and so on – and thereby lose focus on what they did: establish a popular national movement with a network of transnational connections, a growing body of literature, and a body of intellectual work and practical manifestations. Thus, rather than see the movement as a failed attempt to

³ Miyamoto Masao, *Historieto de la Japana Esperanto-Movado*, quoted in Lins (2008) p.54.

change the international system, we can see it as the realisation, however partial and often fleeting, of a community of mankind, linked through language, that stretched beyond national boundaries and brought people together.

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