

Meiji Oratory and the Fate of the Popular Rights Movement

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The promulgation of the Imperial Diet in the Meiji Period and the popular writings by supporters of democratic reforms such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) generated a heightened interest in the art of giving speeches in Japan. Little has been written about the history of oratory in Japan, so it is not surprising that it is not often linked with the development of the standard, colloquial, national language sometimes referred to as “genbun itchi” (unification of spoken and written language), but I argue that the genbun itchi style was influenced by the view that a national language that could be both written and spoken, and that would have an air of authority and elegance was needed, and that the genbun itchi movement was seen as a way of promoting democracy.

Yamamoto Yoshiaki suggests at the beginning of his essay “Enzetsu no tanjô to sokki jutsu no hatsumei” (The birth of oratory and the emergence of the shorthand technique, 1996) that the media revolution of Meiji was far more “drastic” in the world of oral communication than in the world of writing, and that this revolution began with Fukuzawa Yukichi’s proposal in Gakumon no susume (1872-76) that Japanese people adopt the Western practice of making speeches.¹ Yet while there are many books on the topic of the reform of writing, there is very little on the “revolution in oral communication” in Japan in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This is probably mostly due to the fact that no

accurate recordings of speech exist until the shorthand transcriptions of speeches made during the first national assembly, or Diet, in 1890.²

One out of every 160 people in Japan bought the first edition of Gakumon no susume, the most widely read of Fukuzawa's works and possibly the most widely read work in Japan up to that time.³ Fukuzawa outlined there the first definition of a speech, or "enzetsu," although this term had been used in the sense of "explanation" or "lecture" in Japan prior to this essay: "Enzetsu, or in English, 'speech' is the art of expressing one's opinions before an assembly of a large number of people, or of communicating one's ideas at a meeting. Sermons delivered in Buddhist temples, and so forth, are types of public speaking which have been presented without knowledge of this heretofore unheard-of art."⁴ It is significant that Fukuzawa compared this Western notion of a speech to the native Buddhist sermon or lecture. As we will see below, the purpose of speeches in the first decade of Meiji was generally "enlightenment," with the relationship between speaker and audience very similar to that of Buddhist priest and disciple. Of course, this enlightenment was profoundly different, one that was supposed to lead the common people towards Western civilization and progress rather than Nirvana.

Continuing from a definition of enzetsu, he noted the occasions at which speeches are delivered in the West -- "parliaments, assemblies of scholars, assemblies of merchants, assemblies of townsfolk, and even on minor ceremonial occasions such as the openings of businesses and shops." He then immediately emphasizes its importance to parliament: "The importance of this art is, from the outset, beyond dispute. For example, the theory of a Diet exists in our present society. But even if this Diet were promulgated, it would be unable to function without the availability of techniques for the expression of one's opinion."⁵ He effectively instructs his many readers that there are various kinds of speeches, but the primary one is the art of expressing one's views on political issues. One imagines that in the minds of the many readers who read this passage gears were now set in motion that would find their most revolutionary

effects in the People's Rights Movement of the 1880s.

A few paragraphs later Fukuzawa highlights how giving and listening to speeches fulfills the goal of learning, which he always defined as practical application. He says that in order to put learning to practical use, one must engage in "observation" and "reasoning" [transliterated from English].

In addition, one must read, one must write, one must converse with other people, and one must [stand] facing other people and speak. When these conditions are met, one can for the first time be said to be a person dedicated to learning. [. . .] Writing books and giving speeches are techniques for the spread of knowledge. [. . .] [People] must understand the necessity of speeches. What is most regrettable about the people of our nation at this time is the fact that they have so little knowledge of them. If scholars of today are so unfortunate as to have no previous knowledge of techniques [of public speaking], they must diligently pursue [the study of such techniques] so that they can lead our nation's people to a nobler place. [emphasis added]⁶

Haga Yasushi, who often draws on Miyatake Gaikotsu's Meiji enzetsu shi (1929), which appears to be the only pre-War work on Meiji speeches, agrees with Fukuzawa's statement (elsewhere), speaking about the Meiji period, "in our country methods for speech have never been heard of."⁷ Nevertheless, Tokugawa Japan did have a tradition of scholarly and religious lectures as well as street corner speaking performances which dared to touch on politics in spite of the severe penalties that could be brought on oneself and family by breaking the law against them. Fukuzawa mistakenly thought, according to Gaikotsu, that he was the first to use the term "enzetsu." Gaikotsu demonstrated that this term had already been used in medieval, early modern, and early Meiji with a similar meaning before Fukuzawa, and explains this error as a result of Fukuzawa's insufficient knowledge of ancient writings. Interestingly, however, Fukuzawa wrote the word with the character for "tongue" (shita/zetsu) at first, later changing it to "theory" or "explanation" because of the

vulgar connotations of "tongue." The term had also appeared before with this character, in Kojima Hôshi's Taiheiki, written during Nanbokuchu period. Although speeches were very much a "bodily" performance with a big emphasis put on gestures, volume of the voice, intonation, and facial expression, Fukuzawa was very cognizant of the "ga/zoku" (vulgar/elegant) distinction made in writing. The same distinction could be made in speech.⁸ Nevertheless, Fukuzawa did not completely eschew vulgarity in his own speeches. He was known for lively, witty speeches that depended heavily on vulgar vocabulary of the lower classes (beranmei), to the extent that one observer of his speeches wondered why he had to be so vulgar.⁹ At least by the time he witnessed the surprising financial success of Gakumon no susume he must have been aware that a little vulgarity could pay in the new publishing industry. As Takizawa Bakin, who was perhaps surpassed only by Shikitei Sanba in terms of financial returns from published works, once said, a successful gesaku piece was 70% vulgarity and 30% elegance. If this principle worked in Tokugawa it would be all the more true in Meiji's huge publishing industry.

In the same section of Gakumon no susume he writes that speech "enlivens" any topic. "For example, even ideas that are of little consequence when written, become intelligible and are able to move others emotionally when spoken." He compares speech to poetry, saying that when the proper techniques of Chinese and Japanese poems are observed they "take on an almost limitless eloquence and beauty that is able to move the emotions of the masses."¹⁰ This is precisely why Jean-Jacques Rousseau was distrustful of artful speech and rhetoric. He was concerned with the power of language to deceive children in Emile and viewed the development of alphabetic writing as being historically related with the development of the monetary economy and the police state.¹¹ He was suspicious of spoken language that imitated writing, and as we will see below, Fukuzawa's style of speech contained strong elements of writing. The word "yomu" has the meaning 'to read' and 'to compose poetry' in Japanese because poetry was originally meant to be read aloud.

Both poetry and oratory derive a supplement of force from the artful use of language, and Fukuzawa was, by any account, a master of rhetoric in both writing and speech.

Haga Yasushi says that Fukuzawa's idea of a good speech was one that was witty and unconventional. In 1874 he invited the storytelling master, Shôrin Hakuen (1828/31 - 1905) the second (of three generations stretching from late Tokugawa to Meiji), to his house and started to practice speaking. It was in December of the same year that he published the piece above from Gakumon no susume. Hakuen was starting a kind of "news-entertainment" section in the newspaper entitled "Newspaper Storytelling." Much of the so-called "news" of this period was openly sold as entertainment. One could say that at this time, as in late Tokugawa merchant culture, there was often no attempt to separate learning from entertainment. Within Baba Tatsui's speech group (enzetsu kai) the term enzetsu included storytelling and many of the great speakers of the time were "bunkajin" (cultural and literary leaders).¹²

Tanaka Akio writes in Tokyôgo: Sono seiritsu to tenkai that we can be sure that by the late 18th or early 19th century a standard way of speaking to commoners had been developed that is quite close to the colloquial style which became standard in Meiji. This style was employed in parables, lectures, "chobokure" (a genre of verbal social and political satire), rakugo, and Buddhist sermons on the dharma. Tanaka cites a chobokure which attacked the government that was performed between the late 1850s and late 1860s that employed the now standard "da," "masu," and "ja." Chobokure were talks given on street corners in return for food from onlookers that satirized political problems or social happenings in a mysterious or comic way. The performers would go from place to place telling the story while rhythmically beating on a Buddhist monk's wooden drum (the kind used in funeral ceremonies by the chanting monk.)¹³ Hakuen, like Sanyûtei Enchô (1839-1900) was quite famous and well respected, but as a storyteller from a tradition that included genres such as the chobokure, one can be sure that he knew how to talk

to the common people. When Fukuzawa wanted to develop his speaking skills he did not turn to a book, but to a living master of oral storytelling. As more and more less learned people became part of Popular Rights speech assemblies, techniques of communicating through clapping, poetic rhythm, repetition, and chanting became more common. (This was a late development in the Movement, however, beginning in approximately 1887).¹⁴

There were many others considered to be great orators during Meiji, in particular Baba Tatsui (1850-88), an early student of Fukuzawa and an Enlightenment advocate as well, and the politician Ozaki Yukio (1859-1954), but perhaps no other person played as great a role as Fukuzawa in popularizing oratory and so his writings are a good place to search for an answer to the question "What was the dominant notion of a speech in early Meiji?"¹⁵ To summarize from above, a speech was primarily a way of putting one's study to practical use, i.e., enlightening the people. Towards that end it was valuable in its capacity to mobilize the masses through the emotive force of speech, which writing lacked. For Fukuzawa, however, it appears that political reform was not properly one of the primary functions of speech-making. Wayne Oxford tells us in his dissertation on Fukuzawa's speeches that after looking at the titles of all the speeches delivered at the Mita Enzetsu Kan (Mita Speech Hall), which Fukuzawa built with his own money at Keio University, between 1875 and 1898 with an average of 10 speeches per week, there were only eight which could be labeled political.¹⁶ The Mita Enzetsu Kan, the main forum for oral communication among the Meirokusha, was the site of talks by intellectuals such as Mori Arinori on the reform of the status of women, Nakamura Masanao (1832-91) on the reform of the people, as well as literary or cultural figures such as Mori Ogai and Sanyûtei Enchô. Fukuzawa himself gave 350 speeches there. With so many talks devoted to the subject of "reform," one suspects that the definition of "political" here is fairly narrow, but Fukuzawa's Meirokusha certainly did not aim to tackle tough political issues as did the People's Rights enzetsu kai.

Although through the building of the Mita Enzetsu Kan, through Gakumon no susume, and through the Mita Enzetsu Kai, Fukuzawa was aiming to train people for public speaking that he envisioned would be necessary for Japan's future parliament, he did not talk of this as a political act. Whenever he speaks of his writings and speeches in the context of political issues that had come up, such as the "libel laws and newspaper ordinances" of June 28, 1875 which limited the extent to which periodicals could make political attacks, Fukuzawa maintains a posture of neutrality or "staying out of politics" (and consistently spoke out in favor of doing the government's bidding.)¹⁷ Whereas he had just written a year before this that people can and should join enzetsu kai and discuss reform, he now said that the Meirokusha should immediately discontinue their organ for disseminating their speeches, the Meiroke zasshi. He said, "If anyone violates these laws, he does so in a deliberate attempt to seek trouble. This supposition is indeed true. The Meirokusha has never been a society for the discussion of politics." With this the most prominent supporters of free speech capitulated to the government without the slightest struggle. He said that the country was "not the Japanese people's Japan; rather, it is the government's Japan."¹⁸ Ostensibly, most other groups ignored this anti-speech proclamation from the central government. Even later, after the July 12, 1878 prohibition against enzetsu kai, most speech groups held their ground, such as the Omeisha who continued to have as many meetings as before. Gaikotsu believes that the resistance of these groups (mostly People's Rights activists) successfully forced the government to announce in 1881 that the Diet would open in 1890.¹⁹ In spite of Fukuzawa's love of speech he never became anything like a "protector of the right to free speech." Notwithstanding Fukuzawa's assumed neutrality, his vision of large numbers of people with non-official status discussing official matters in a public forum was inherently political. Oxford says that the central government was "paranoid" about large public gatherings and even a gathering of a few hundred people seems to have been viewed as large.

When Fukuzawa introduced the idea of giving speeches, most of the Meirokusha and many others who were not members of their group were skeptical that the Japanese language could be used for making speeches. Mori Arinori wrote, "Western-style speeches must be in Western languages. Japanese is only appropriate for conversation, and is not a language that would allow one to say what one thinks to common people in public."²⁰ In early Meiji there was clearly strong resistance to the idea that spoken Japanese could become a public language, as written, classical Chinese had been for the Tokugawa period. Japanese had long been associated with private feelings and Chinese with public or official affairs (and I include kanbun kuzushi, Chinese rearranged in Japanese word order with Japanese verb endings, as one kind of "Chinese.") A style called "wakan konkōbun" (Japanese-Chinese mixed style) or "kana majiri bun" was perhaps the easiest style to learn to read and write -- a mixture of common Chinese vocabulary (kango), simplified classical Japanese sentence endings, and heavy reliance on spoken vocabulary and usage. This style was used in popular writings, but was not accepted as an official language like Chinese. If one were to talk about official subjects, such as government, one would need an official spoken language, such as the one used by the upper samurai and wealthy merchants of the Yamanote area of Edo, but this was a language which the majority of Japanese were incapable of speaking, and possibly even understanding.

Mizuhara Akito relates how in Shikitei Sanba's Ukiyo buro (1809) a woman talks while bathing in a public bath about her daughter whom she has sent to work at a samurai estate. "Thank you so much for employing my daughter. Her deportment will improve with this training. No matter how strict I am with her at home, she won't learn how to be courteous and well-mannered..." Mizuhara says it is clear from this passage that among middle and upper class merchants, one method of educating one's daughter was to send her to work at a samurai estate for "gyōgi minarai" (deportment apprenticeship). The mother speaks proudly of her daughter becoming the top-ranking maid of the house (the 'heya oya,' which meant

a girl from a merchant family who became the sole permanently employed maid of a samurai estate.) The manners and language that she would learn there would improve her and her family's chances of marrying into a good family. In a city like Edo, where half of the population were samurai occupying the highest status positions, it is natural that merchants would imitate samurai speech. The spread of samurai language into the speech of merchants was facilitated by the permanently employed maids portrayed by Sanba above. Mizuhara cites this passage of Ukiyoburo to show one major way that the language of the upper samurai spread into the wealthy merchant class.²¹

The closeness of this high-status speech to present-day polite Japanese is very evident. This passage employs exclusively 'masu' verb endings: narimasu, naorimasenu, and both gozaimasu and gozarimasu. Of the many levels of speech that were employed just within the city of Edo, this is the level that is closest to modern, "standard" Japanese. (Fukuzawa once gave examples of at least three class levels of speech in his native Nakatsu -- upper samurai; lower samurai, merchants, and upper peasants; and lower peasants.²² With the advent of a mass publishing industry and a centralized educational system in mid-Meiji, people of all classes in Japan began to adopt this language, but it is easy to forget that in Tokugawa there were few opportunities to acquire this high-status language. Only through a relationship that permitted daily interactions with native speakers of this language over a long period of time, such as described by Shikitei Sanba above, where the learner of the language actually lived in the same house on a permanent basis, could one hear and learn to reproduce it. Tanaka Akio, one of the few scholars to carefully investigate the issue of language standardization in Tokugawa, has argued that there was indeed a standard, spoken language current among upper level samurai and wealthy merchants, but this language was never read in books nor heard by the majority of the Japanese population.²³ The sankin kôtai alternate residence system had brought people of a certain elite class together in daily interactions, creating a standard Japanese

understandable by people of this class throughout the country, but few Japanese actually experienced such movement. (Fukuzawa identifies the word "ikinasai" for the imperative "go!" with the upper samurai in his area, so as far away as Kyūshū the same prestige dialect as Tokyo was being used.) Hence, the problem noted by Mori Arinori above was faced by all Enlightenment thinkers in Meiji. That is the question of how, through what language, was one to enlighten the masses. This was a problem of both speech and writing.

Tanaka cites Morioka Kenji, another famous historical linguist, that the language of Meiji Enlightenment lectures and speeches had a "conspicuously strong written coloring." Indeed, when one looks at samples of the written transcriptions of speeches by Fukuzawa, Baba, Ozaki and others, one sees that they were quite dependent on vocabulary and syntax from the official written language of kanbun and kanbun kuzushi. Tanaka says that a single, connecting line of common style goes through "shōmono, Edo lectures, Meiji lectures and speeches, and [the present] standard colloquial Japanese."²⁴ He agrees with Morioka that the language used in these kinds of materials have the same characteristics as the "genbun itchi" ("unity of speech and writing") style that is the basis of written Japanese and "common Japanese" (kyōtsūgo). One must be careful, though, to not ignore the fact that this style which many refer to as "Japanese" had strong classical Chinese elements. As examples of written "Japanese" that were borrowed into the modern colloquial style, Morioka mentions phrases like "yamu wo ezu" and "sezaru wo enai," which clearly came from kanbun.²⁵ Therefore, when Mori Arinori said that Japanese was "only appropriate for conversation," he must not have included this Chinese-based public style in his definition of "Japanese." With such an extreme view of the Japanese language as derivative from Chinese, a foreign language, it becomes easier to understand why Arinori, a patriot to the end, could be assassinated by ultranationalists.

If shōmono, Edo lectures, Meiji lectures and speeches, and the "colloquial style" (kōgōtai, a written style very close to spoken Japanese)

are examples of language used in a public setting, one can then, based on Tanaka's discussion above, characterize the oratory of the Enlightenment speakers and the *genbun itchi* style as a *public* form of Japanese. As Tanaka also points out, language in Japanese that sounds like [good] written Japanese after it is written down exactly as it is heard, is public language -- things such as news reports, lectures, debates, and speeches.²⁶ This is exactly what seems to have been done with speeches in early Meiji. The speeches that were published in Meirokeu zasshi and many of the "speech magazines" (*enzetsu zasshi*) were sold as copies of the speeches that were given at speech assemblies (*enzetsu kai*).²⁷ The style that eventually came to be termed "*genbun itchi*" in the late 1880s was for the most part the same as the style being used around 1874-75 ("the speech pioneering period" according to Yamamoto Masahide) among the *Meirokeusha* in public speaking.

This may indeed explain why Nishi Amane showed concern about both the need for a new style as well as the need for a new script in the same year, 1874. Two speeches were published in Meirokeu zasshi, one entitled "On Writing Our Language in the Western Script" in the first volume in May, and the other "[Foreigners'] Traveling in the Interior" (*naichi ryokô*) in December.²⁸ The first specifically advocated the use of romanized Japanese, and the second although not *about* style, employed spoken grammar rather than classical grammar. These were both moves away from Chinese-based systems. It seems that Amane immediately understood that one could not simplify the script without simplifying the style (the words themselves) because the public style was so dependent on Chinese characters; to create a simplified spoken style for speeches that would be attractive and easily understandable to the common people would require a move away from Chinese words (*kango*), which, besides having more homophones than spoken Japanese (complicating things even more), were also drawn from a "print culture," or a system of writing that would be unfamiliar to most people. Yamamoto Masahide says that the second of Amane's speeches employed both "*de gozaru*" and "*da*." Both

of these styles for the copula were very unusual for the time in writing, and as mentioned above, "da" was low-status while "de gozaru" was high-status. ("Nari" and other verb endings of the kana majiri style were the norm in Meiroku zasshi.) Masahide is of the opinion that Fukuzawa and Amane were consciously experimenting with new speech styles. He sees Fukuzawa's style as extremely close to genbun itchi style, with the exception that he consistently maintained classical sentence endings (like "nari.") His vocabulary was mainly from Tokyo spoken Japanese.

Fukuzawa and Amane have been praised for their willingness to depart from convention and use simplified language in order to reach a wider audience. If their ultimate goal was fukoku kyôhei, then their usage of language and their ideas about language were consistent with this policy. Fukoku kyôhei required both the dissemination of ideas carrying the common goals and aspirations of this larger community, the nation, as well as a new national consciousness (by which I do not mean imperialistic nationalism.) Along with the end of status divisions such as the samurai's sword there was a need for a language free of status divisions. Fukuzawa's goal in speaking to the masses was to mobilize them for fukoku kyôhei, and he knew as well as anyone that he would not be able to capture their hearts and minds if he spoke or wrote in the language of the old elite, such as in the Yamanote of Edo. (Mizuhara explains that there was a new influx into Yamanote of lower level samurai and merchant language and culture after the old elite moved back to their domains when the bakufu fell. As an interesting example of how the Yamanote language achieved a hegemonic position in Tokyo, he points out that many of the central bureaucrats there took geisha wives, whose private speech at home was of a lower social status than the late Tokugawa elites of Yamanote. This became the basis of a bourgeois language and culture which spread throughout Tokyo.) Antonio Gramsci wrote in his Prison Notebooks in Italy that common people "are distrustful of intellectuals speaking at political meetings."²⁹ They may be temporarily dazzled by the charm of the speaker's words, but afterwards they return

to their senses, seeing through the superficiality and becoming suspicious. The queerness of another's speech can easily be a cause of suspicion.

Haga Yasushi generalizes Japanese people as a whole, saying that they are a reticent people. He supports the mythical essentialism which says that Japanese are a naturally peaceful and gentle agricultural race. Others have seen this reticence as a result of a specific political culture and have cited political arrangements such as the "five family system," in which harsh punishments could be brought to bear on those who spoke out against injustice. As an example of this reticence, Haga mentions the following story that was printed in a newspaper in early Meiji. In one town there was not a single person who would come out for a lecture on religion sponsored by the government. The person in charge of the lecture went to round up listeners and it was decided that the persons who had to go would be selected by lottery. One 70 year-old man hard of hearing was selected, and [since he wouldn't be able to hear] someone was sent in his place. The journalist concluded that Japanese did not understand their right to freedom.³⁰

Many of the speaker-heroes of the Meirokusha would have probably agreed with Haga's essentializing of the Japanese people. Before the May 1st, 1875 completion of the Mita Enzetsukan Fukuzawa held the first public speech rally in February. Nakamura Masanao gave the first speech, on the reform of the people:

The people are the people of long ago. They are people with a slave's disposition. They are a people who are arrogant toward those below and curry favor with those above. They are ignorant, blind people. They are people who like to drink and have sex. They are people who do not like to read and ...³¹ [my emphasis]

Here, as in many of the speeches that one sees on reform (and every aspect of life was to be subject to reform, including food, drink, sex, and other pleasures of habit), one encounters a certain condescending attitude

among the Enlightenment thinkers (Keimōka). Fukuzawa and others attempted to adopt features of lower class speech in their oratories, but of course such behavior can often backfire and be felt by the listener to be condescension.

Michio Umegaki's After the Restoration (1988) emphasizes the "absence of true communication between the upper and lower orders of society." In a December 1879 local petition for a national assembly produced in Fukuoka-ken the usual complaint about "despotism by the oligarchical few" and estrangement from the Restoration government was abandoned and the new system of prefectural assembly was presented in a positive light, as a good model for a national assembly. One gets the sense that a new class was having its voice heard: "We, the commoners, are implied to be still ignorant and immature, [but] how can we, having some intelligence, not be incited and appalled [by these signs of condescension]?" Umegaki finds a very different tone and different arguments in this petition from an earlier petition of the time (1874) when Fukuzawa and other former samurai were "pioneering" oratory. "[We learn from the West that] the people's rights are not something that the rulers grant to the people, but something that the people willfully acquire..."³² This is not an idea that these petitioners would have learned from Fukuzawa. One could not describe his posture toward the government as "willful." Umegaki says that the participants in the meeting to draft the petition were 80% non-samurai.

At this point one could say that "the cat was out of the bag." The promise of a parliament found in Fukuzawa's Gakumon no susume was taken seriously, and from around 1878 the gônô class became involved in the People's Rights movement on a large scale. It was no mistake that speech assemblies started to become much more widespread than before.³³ By this time "enzetsu" had come to be equivalent to "seidan enzetsu" or political speech, no longer including cultural speeches. The July 12, 1878 prohibition against enzetsu kai, mentioned above, had a reverse effect from the one intended. Rather than inhibit the People's Rights' speech

assemblies who were doing things like drafting petitions for a national assembly, it incited them to meet even more frequently and in larger numbers.³⁴ To meet the demand Fukuzawa himself now built a meeting hall to seat 3,000 compared with 400 at his small Mita Enzetsu Kan, but when the government was displeased and concerned that he was holding "anti-government speeches," he soon sold it to a private company.³⁵

Irokawa Daikichi argues that Fukuzawa's early works had a profound effect on common people in Japan. Two natural right ideas above all seem to have given impetus to the gônô dominated phase of the People's Rights Movement (which one observer has given as 1878-82). One was the equality of all classes, his famous "Heaven does not create one man above another man, nor does it create one man below another." The other was the theory of social contract. Both of these ideas seem adequately explained in Gakumon no susume.³⁶ Irokawa's discussion indicates that both Fukuzawa and Katô Hiroyuki backed down from their advocacy of such natural right ideas. It is as if such Enlightenment intellectuals had inadvertently ignited a social revolution in their drive to strengthen the nation. They correctly perceived that in order to mobilize the citizenry a certain democratization of politics would be necessary. Yet, as Daikichi suggests, once these non-samurai, who were less concerned with their alienation from the centers of power than with popular representation at the national level, had absorbed these ideas they began to follow them to their logical consequences to the dismay of gradualists like Fukuzawa. This is what I mean by "the cat was out of the bag."

Toyama Shigeki uses the term "kanson minpi" (love the bureaucrats, hate the people) in the context of explaining Japan's transition from feudalism to capitalism. I take this term to be representative of a feudal mentality, which Enlightenment intellectuals such as Fukuzawa were attempting to rid Japan of. Nevertheless, many of these intellectuals appear guilty of kanson minpi, which could only inhibit the spread of the notion of an all-inclusive citizenry. Roger Bowen says that Baba Tatsui,

considered one of the greatest orators of the Movement, was "openly contemptuous" of illiterate commoners for their inability to understand Western ideas. Jyunosuke Yasukawa says that Fukuzawa was worried that "poor people, if educated, could develop into an opposition movement against the government," and Haga Yasushi says that Itagaki Taisuke was very skeptical that the common people could ever become enlightened because Japan was so backward.³⁷

If we take the statement in the petition above as typical, that the gônô felt they were looked down on by former samurai in the Movement as ignorant and immature, then the ideological schism between them may have been too great to forge an alliance against the central government on the issue of free speech and a national assembly. Between 1880 and 1882 several major events would attract even greater numbers of people to speech assemblies and probably introduce another schism. These include the establishment of the Freedom Party in 1880, the announcement in 1881 that a Diet would be opened in 1890, and the Matsukata Deflation policy, whose effects began to be felt in 1882. It is no accident that these years coincide with a flurry of publications on speeches,³⁸ mainly how to give speeches and participate in debates, and the greatest peak in popularity of Chinese poetry of the Meiji period (1881-82).³⁹ Gaikotsu also says that from 1881 political speeches throughout Japan were always followed by debates, and a book on debating came out in 1882. He argues that common people were actively preparing for the opening of the national diet and states that people were far more advanced in their thinking about a national assembly than the government. Many types of people participated in these debates, including women, and questions such as the following were debated: Whether political power should be distributed out through the localities or centralized, whether Okinawa should be allowed to send a representative in 1890, and whether politics should be taught in schools.⁴⁰ Without thorough study of Gaikotsu's work, one can only speculate, but one can at least surmise that greater numbers of people joining People's Rights speech and debate assemblies entailed

the introduction of even greater ideological diversity.

Conclusion

Although after the Matsukata Deflation of 1881 much greater numbers of common people (one would assume from poor peasants up to gônô) joined the People's Rights Movement and got involved in public speaking and debates, by roughly 1885 the struggle against the creation of a hegemonic power center in Tokyo had essentially been lost. From 1887 the style of presentation of speeches changed to one involving more bodily forms of communication such as clapping, poetic rhythm, repetition, and chanting, which must have enabled more non-literate people to participate in politics, but surely it was already too late. The gônô who, pulled in two directions, by the common people of their own locality on one side and by the oligarchy in Tokyo on the other, had already lent their considerable financial power to Tokyo in return for a guarantee of their property rights and police protection to "keep down the riffraff." How eagerly many must have read Tsubouchi Shôyô's first major translation, Shakespeare's Julius Caesar in 1884 with the famous lines:

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones.

This work written in the style of a Jôruri play also maintained a heavy dependence on kango (Chinese character-based vocabulary), however, and Katô Shûichi says that Shôyô's translation is unnatural, so it may not have been very influential within the Movement. Katô says that whereas Meiji novelists (such as Futabatei Shimei [1864-1909]) were trying to write in a way that would be closer to spoken Japanese, on the stage the opposite was true. "The problem [there] was how to make the words spoken by the actor closer to writing."⁴¹ I would say

that novelists and speech writers were dealing with the same problem. Speech writers and dramatists needed eloquent, authoritative, "legitimate language," so they borrowed from writing. Novelists needed "realism," so they borrowed from speech. The "gen" (parole) and the "bun" (écriture) were indeed converging into the unity of the *genbun itchi* style, a style which made its appearance in 1887 with Futabatei's *Ukigumo*. It is telling that the first work to use the prestige dialect of Tokyo in "literature" was published just as the state (whose identity was certainly associated with this language) consolidated its hegemonic position over other power centers, such as the *gônô* class.

In the search for clues as to what conditions may have caused the failure of the People's Rights Movement to wrest away from the center a fair measure of political representation for the common people, I would argue that one major cause was the failure to develop a public style of speaking and writing that could communicate to the common people common goals, inspire them to action, and allow them to make their own voice heard. Great oratory inherently favors "legitimate language," i.e. language with a powerful institution behind it, and the legitimate language of early Meiji depended on a high level of literacy and education. J.L. Austin found that the "illocutionary force" behind such language does not reside in words themselves, but in the person who makes the speech and in the institution that authorizes that person to speak.⁴² If one does not look, act, and *talk* according to the standards of the institution, the speech will lose its sense of enchantment and the audience will cease to take the speaker seriously. This explains why in this period the few women who were somehow able to establish themselves as prominent speakers were exclusively of the former samurai class. Women would lack one of the primary characteristics of the institution of the official -- being of the male sex -- so they would have to make up for this inadequacy with the proper status, language, and demeanor. In addition, women were supposed to remain in the private sphere. At the earliest stage of the People's Rights Movement, knowledge of Western languages and previous travel to the

West would have been an additional necessary feature of a great orator.

In the above we have seen that the language that Fukuzawa and others were using in their speeches and that was being disseminated throughout the country through speech magazines such as Meiroke zasshi was almost identical with the language that later came to be referred to as “genbun itchi.” Therefore the process of unification of the language -- unification in terms of both speech with writing, and periphery with center -- began much earlier than the genbun itchi novel that Karatani Kôjin sees as creating a new [Western] psychological perception of “interiority” and “landscape.”⁴³ More concretely, it could easily be argued that the spread of genbun itchi language throughout every region of Japan through speech gatherings, speech magazines (which were rapidly increasing from the late 1870s), and popular works such as Gakumon no susume led to a general recognition of this language as legitimate among gônô, former samurai, and wealthy merchants. In order for any language to become a public language it must be widely understood, must suppress vocabulary of provincial dialects, and be viewed as elegant and not vulgar. In the 1870s that kind of language was available in the prestige dialect of Yamanote, Tokyo. Fukuzawa and other Enlightenment and People’s Rights leaders democratized this language, just as they democratized politics, by reducing the number of kanji and employing “beranmei” vocabulary from places like Shitamachi of Tokyo, but the language remained the language of the center, a language that most literate people recognized and learned to understand, but were unable to reproduce themselves. The language was never democratized to the extent that invited participation from the common people. This is exactly what Gramsci meant by cultural hegemony. Educated people on the periphery, such as the gônô, invested in this linguistic capital of the center when they went to a speech gathering, read a speech magazine, or sent their sons to Keio University. As the language became part of them the communication gap, and the cultural gap, between themselves and the common people only widened, weakening personal bonds that could have

been the basis for an alliance against the center. In terms of language and culture, though, they were moving closer to the center and out of the village. Essentially, a somewhat more democratic politics was given by the state to the people in exchange for centralization of power in Tokyo.

References

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- ² Yamamoto.
- ³ Fukuzawa Yukichi, Gakumon no susume, Iwanami bunko (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996).
- ⁴ Oxford, Wayne Hemphill, "A Critical Edition of Selected Speeches of Fukuzawa Yukichi Dealing With the Modernization of Japan, Translated From the Japanese With an Introduction and Notes," University of California at Los Angeles, 1969, 67.
- ⁵ Oxford 68.
- ⁶ Fukuzawa 107.
- ⁷ Haga Yasushi, Genron 100-nen Nihonjin wa kô hanashita (Tokyo: Sanseidô, 1985) 5.
- ⁸ Two other terms used among the Meirokusha were "danron" (conversation + argument) and "benron" (eloquent + argument). Miyatake Gaikotsu, Meiji enzetsu shi (Tokyo: Seikôkan Shuppanbu, 1929) 10.
- ⁹ Oxford 120.
- ¹⁰ Oxford 67.
- ¹¹ Mark Shell, "Rousseau's Theory of Representation," The Economy of Literature (Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1978) 123.
- ¹² Haga 13.
- ¹³ Tanaka Akio, Tokyôgo: sono seiritsu to tenkai (Meiji Shôin, 1983) 231-4.
- ¹⁴ Haga 24.
- ¹⁵ Ozaki Yukio was an advocate of women's suffrage. He was arrested along with Nakae Chômin for public speaking after the Peace Preservation Law went into effect in 1887.
- ¹⁶ Oxford also draws heavily on Gaikotsu's work.
- ¹⁷ Oxford 173-80.
- ¹⁸ Oxford 179 and Gaikotsu 20.
- ¹⁹ Gaikotsu 70.
- ²⁰ Yamamoto Masahide, Kindai buntai hassei no shiteki kenkyû (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1993) 219.
- ²¹ Mizuhara Akito, Edogo Tôkyôgo hyôjungo (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1994) 25.

- ²² Mizuhara makes reference to this statement by Fukuzawa in Edogo Tôkyôgo hyôijungo, p.64, but he does not give all the original examples of the three levels.
- ²³ Tanaka's discussion of this standard, elite Japanese is discussed in Tokyôgo: sono seiritsu to tenkai (Meiji Shôin, 1983).
- ²⁴ Tanaka 83. "Shômono" were easy-to-read synopses, written in colloquial Japanese, of original classical Chinese texts prepared by Buddhist priests and Confucian scholars in Japan between the middle of the Muromachi period and early Edo period. "Lectures" here refers to Edo period Chinese-Learning (kangaku) and National-Learning (kokugaku) lectures, Buddhist oral teachings, Shingaku lectures, and Meiji Enlightenment lectures and speeches.
- ²⁵ Tanaka 84.
- ²⁶ Tanaka 82.
- ²⁷ As mentioned earlier, however, these were not accurate transcriptions. The first accurate transcriptions were from the first national assembly in 1890 in which shorthand was used so that the speech and the transcription would match word for word. Shorthand was also used for the famous and widely-read transcriptions of Sanyûtei Enchô's entertaining storytelling in 1884, but these were not always accurate.
- ²⁸ Yamamoto Masahide, Kindai buntai hassei no shiteki kenkyû (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1993) 216-19.
- ²⁹ Antonio Gramsci, Selections from Cultural Writings (Harvard University Press, 1985).
- ³⁰ Haga 24.
- ³¹ Haga 9.
- ³² Umegaki 211.
- ³³ Oxford 86.
- ³⁴ This appears to be the opinion of Gaikotsu. See Oxford 150.
- ³⁵ Oxford 87.
- ³⁶ Irokawa Daikichi, The Culture of the Meiji Period, Princeton Library of Asian Translations (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985) 59-63.
- ³⁷ Roger Bowen, Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan (University of California Press, 1980) 192. Jyunosuke Yasukawa, "Fukuzawa Yukichi," Ten Great Educators of Modern Japan, Benjamin Duke, ed. (University of Tokyo Press, 1991) 29.
- ³⁸ Gaikotsu 61.
- ³⁹ Daikichi 125-6.
- ⁴⁰ Gaikotsu 106-9.
- ⁴¹ Katô Shûichi, "Juriasu Shiizaa," Honvaku no shisô (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991)

442, 451.

⁴² Pierre Bourdieu has elaborated Austin's theory in "Authorized Language: The Social Conditions for the Effectiveness of Ritual Discourse," Ch. 3 in Language and Symbolic Power (Harvard UP, 1994).

⁴³ Karatani Kōjin, Origins of Modern Japanese Literature (Duke UP, 1994).