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Proverbs : Based on Well-known Japanese
Proverbs (2) : 日英諺の比較研究

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A Comparative Study of English and Japanese Proverbs

—Based on Well-known Japanese Proverbs—(2)

(日英諺の比較研究)

Kengo Tamura

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I Introduction

The Japanese proverbs used in this paper have been selected from “*Seigo Daijien*” (1995), “*Kotowaza Daijiten*” (1982), and the books listed in the bibliography at the end of this paper. In the present paper, the 45 proverbs which are taken up are divided into three categories, as shown in part II of the Contents. These categories are used solely in this paper for the sake of convenience, and should not be considered as a definitive classification. For each category, I have chosen 16 proverbs for (A) ; 16 for (B) ; and 13 for (C).

These proverbs were translated into English and provided with a simple commentary, with related English proverbs listed below each.

By the word ‘proverb’ as used in this paper is meant a short, popular, and witty saying

which expresses some truth or useful knowledge or idea.

II Categories of Proverbs

Category A

A-1 *Akusai wa hyakunen no fusaku.*

(A bad wife causes a poor harvest for a hundred years.)

—He who has a bad wife is unhappy throughout his life.—

A man's happiness mostly depends on whether he can choose a good wife or not, and so we cannot be too careful in choosing our partner. Nobody thought his wife bad at first ; he was satisfied with her. But why has he come to think her a bad wife? There are many reasons, but we can say that it mostly rests with her husband to make his wife good or bad, because generally speaking, husbands mainly have the greatest influence over their families, especially in Japan. This proverb was based on the predominance of men over women. But women may probably think that 'if she has a bad husband, her hell begins on earth.'

《Related English Proverbs》

- An ill marriage is a spring of ill fortune.
- Three things drive a man out of his house—smoke, rain, and a scolding wife.

A-2 *Ui tempen wa yo no narai.*

(Life is ever full of vicissitudes.)

—Life always has ups and downs.—

Ui is the perpetual change caused by karma, and *Tempen* is mutation. This life is not always stable ; there are always changes and opportunities. It is difficult to escape from the vicissitudes of this world. Everything in this world is ephemeral, but when we are happy, we wish that happy times will be long-lasting, and when we are sad, we wish that bad times will be short-lived. As happiness does not last forever, so sorrow will come to an end someday. Time definitely heals every agony and grief.

《Related English Proverbs》

- All worldly things are transitory.
- There is change in all things.

A-3 *Okame hachi-moku.*

(A bystander sees eight moves ahead.)

—When people play *go* or *shōgi*, a bystander sees better than the players themselves.—

When we deal with some matter, we tend to be subjective and dogmatic. On the contrary, those who are not concerned can take an objective view, and so they can cope with the situation more efficiently. It is said that even the most skilful surgeon has difficulty in conducting an operation on his own child. Parents who are good teachers at school are not always able to teach their own children effectively at home.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Lookers-on see most of the game.
- Dry light (a clear impartial view) is the best.
- Two heads are better than one.
- Kings have long arms (hands). (=Do not quarrel with a king, as his power and authority reach to the ends of his dominion.)

A-4 *Kyō wa hito no mi, asu wa waga mi.*

(Today for you, tomorrow for me.)

—What is the fate of another today might be ours tomorrow.—

We tend to think that others' misfortunes will not fall on us, and that we can avoid them, but actually such is not the case.

When we are happy, we are likely to be inconsiderate of others who are not happy. Tomorrow you might become unhappy, as nobody knows what will happen tomorrow. Therefore, as another proverb says, "In fair weather, prepare for foul." We must think of adversity even when we are fortunate. If we provide for the worst, the best will take care of itself.

《Related English Proverbs》

- What's a bad turn today, may be yours tomorrow.
- Whatsoever chances to one man may happen likewise to all men.
- Laugh before breakfast, and you'll cry before supper.

A-5 *Gen wa mi no aya.*

(Words are the style of a man.)

—We know a man by his words.—

We think and feel with words. We can choose words as we like, and so we are responsible

for what we say and what we write. Our words show our character, dignity, and thought very clearly. We should be very careful in our use of words. There are similar proverbs, such as “Words cut more deeply than the sword,” “Bad words find bad acceptance.” Short-tempered persons, when they are angry, tend to use harsh words against their will. In order to use refined language, you must control your feelings, broaden your minds, and heighten your cultural level.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Speech is the picture (index) of the mind.
- A bird is known by its notes, a man by his words.

A-6 *Tazei ni buzei.*
(Few against many.)

—A small number of people cannot fight against a great number of people.—

Tazei means many and *buzei* few. Generally speaking, a ‘great number’ is stronger than a ‘small number,’ and in a democratic society, the party that obtains the majority of seats in the Diet becomes the government. There is a popular Japanese saying, *Aka shingō minna de watareba kowakunai*. (=We are not scared if we cross the street together with many people even when the signal is red.) There is strength in numbers. But minority opinions should be evaluated. When we look back on our history, we know that there were a lot of great men who at first were ignored, persecuted and even killed by the majority or by those in power, but later on, some of them came to be accepted and respected by the people.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Hercules himself cannot deal with two.
- It is ill (difficult) contending with the master of thirty legions.

A-7 *Tada yori takai mono wa nai.*
(Nothing is more expensive than what is given free.)

—What is given is the costliest after all.—

When we are given something free of charge by somebody, we thank him for his kindness, and we usually think we should make some return for his goodwill, and eventually we often realize it would have been much better to buy it with our own money. As another proverb says, “A hedge between keeps friendship green,” there should be courtesy between close friends, between wife and husband, even between a child and his parents. We should always have a sense of gratitude for the kindness shown us by others. We are

basically equal. We have to rely on one another in this life, and so if you are helped by others, you must help them.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Nothing costs so much as what is given us.
- Who receives a gift sells his liberty.

A-8 *Nandemo koi ni meijin nashi.*

(A person who is good at doing everything cannot be a master.)

—Just because a person can do everything does not mean he can do it well.—

A person who has talents in many areas often attempts to do many things, and he will find it difficult to accomplish even one thing well. Thus, it turns out that he will not be expert at any. Except for some geniuses who can do everything perfectly, if ordinary people run after two hares, they will catch neither. Those who can do everything well should be proud of their talents, and make the best of them. But those who cannot should know that continuation is power and everything will be achieved by prolonged efforts.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Doing everything is doing nothing.
- He who commences many things finishes but few.
- A little of everything, and nothing in the main.
- Jack of all trades, and master of none. (=A person who follows many diverse occupations is never expert at any.)

A-9 *Hara ga hette wa ikusa ga dekinu.*

(No one can fight on an empty stomach.)

—You cannot fight when you are hungry.—

When we start doing something, we have to satisfy our hunger first. To be hungry means to be in a bad condition. Japan made war on America in the Second World War. It is said that a lot of people, especially mothers in those days, believed that Japan would not win the war. There was a great difference in military power and national wealth between the two countries. Not only many Japanese civilians but also soldiers in the front lines died of hunger. Supplies of food are as important to an army as arms and equipment.

《Related English Proverbs》

- An army, like a serpent, goes on its belly.
- Mills will not grind if you do not give them water.
- An empty sack cannot stand upright.

A-10 *Baka wa shi-na-nakya naora-nai.*

(A fool is not cured until he dies.)

—A person who is born a fool is a fool throughout his life.—

The definition of a fool is not so easy to give as we imagine. For example, a well-educated person of high social standing commits a crime for a temporary pleasure, or an ordinary person commits a murder in a fit of anger. They are both arrested and punished, and they lose everything. Do you think they are foolish or cruel? The definition of a fool differs depending on the individual. What is clear here is that there are no completely foolish and completely clever people. Moreover, everyone has the potential to become either a fool or a wise man.

《Related English Proverbs》

- He who is born a fool is never cured.
- Fools will still (always) be fools.
- There is no art that can make a fool wise. (*Baka ni tsukeru kusuri nashi.*)

A-11 *Hito o mite hō o toke.*

(Tell the Buddhist law after you look at the listener.)

—When you make a speech, you must take care whom you are talking to.—

It is said that Buddha preached the truth to his audience in clear and easy words taking into consideration the listeners' ability, character, situation, and so on. As similar proverbs say, "So many men, so many minds," "There is no accounting for tastes," there are all sorts of people in the world, and they have different tastes, and so when we make a speech, we have to adapt ourselves to the different people that make up our audience. Also teachers and parents should not teach their children forcibly, but should help them understand what they are made to study and let them develop an interest in learning.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Beware what and to whom you speak.
- All meat is not the same in every man's mouth.

A-12 *Bō hodo negatte hari hodo kanau.*

(One asks for a pole, but receives only a needle.)

—Though we ask much, we get only a little.—

Especially when we are young, we tend to ask much, but we get only a little. This proverb has two interpretations: (1) You ask a lot, but you cannot get as much as you want. Such

is life ; and so you should not be disappointed. (2) You can get only a little, even if you ask a lot ; and so you should ask as much as possible.

Both these two ways of thinking may be correct, because we have to admit that life does not always fulfill our wishes. But as a matter of fact, if we do not have the highest hopes, we will not be able to attain our wishes.

《Related English Proverb》

- Seek much, and get something ; seek little, and get nothing.

A-13 *Horeta hareta wa tōza no uchi.*

(Hot love does not last long.)

—It is only for a short time that a man and a woman love each other ardently.—

When a couple fall passionately in love, they are likely to say to each other, “I was born to love you !” “I can’t live without you !” “You are my destiny. I’ll follow you to the end of the world !” etc. The love between a man and a woman does not last long, and so they will soon regret having rashly said honeyed love words when they first fell in love. When we are in love, we get excited easily but easily cool down too. An immoderate love does not last. Remember this proverb, “Love me little, love me long.”

《Related English Proverbs》

- Time wears away (out) love.
- Everything is good in its season.
- Time tries all things.

A-14 *Mukashi wa ima no kagami.*

(The past is the mirror of today.)

—The past mirrors today. Something in the past is a mirror image of something at present.—

We can understand new things by exploring the old. When we are happy, we are not likely to look at the past, but when we are unhappy, we look back on the past, and it gives us a hint about how to get through our present troubles. The past serves as the criterion by which the present may be judged. To know the past correctly is to see the present properly. Those who try to pervert historical truth and even conceal it are definitely blind to both the present and the future. Those who forget history are condemned to repeat it.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Things present are judged by things past.
- Today is the scholar of yesterday.

- History repeats itself.

A-15 *Me wa kuchi hodo ni mono o iu.*

(The eyes speak as much as the mouth.)

—The eyes are as eloquent as the mouth.—

This proverb means that even if we do not speak, we can convey our feelings or thoughts to others with our eyes and facial expressions. The eyes are very often more expressive and persuasive than words. When we scold a child, looking into his eyes is sometimes more effective and persuasive than saying a lot of words. The Japanese in former times seem to have used their eyes to express and make known their delicate and complex feelings to others.

《Related English Proverbs》

- I know your meaning by your winking.
- The eyes have a language which is understood everywhere.

A-16 *Yoku ni itadaki nashi.*

(Avarice has no limit.)

—The more we have, the more we want.—

After animals have satisfied their hunger in the jungle, they leave the remains behind. They do not eat more than they need, but human beings have a strong desire to possess things, especially things that belong to someone else. They want more than they need. We have all been told that we cannot take our money with us after we die. Death makes all men equal. While we are alive, we should enjoy our life. It is a key to happiness that we should not be covetous but be moderate in many things.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Desire has no rest.
- Poverty wants some, luxury many, avarice all things.
- The more one has, the more he desires.

Category B

B-1 *Ichī-byō sokusai.*

(A single illness, good health.)

—Even when you are ill, you can be in good health.—

When you continually suffer from a chronic illness, you become careful about your health, and so you will not be seriously ill in any other way, and can enjoy good health and a long life. Those who are very healthy and have never suffered from serious illness are likely to be overconfident of their health, often ruin their health, and suddenly suffer from a dangerous disease. On the contrary, it often happens that the chronically ill outlive the healthy. Even when we become ill, we should not be discouraged. If you take good care of yourself, you can prolong your span of life.

《Related English Proverbs》

- A creaking gate hangs longest.
- A disease known is half cured.

B-2 *Omoi tatta ga kichijitsu.*

(The day on which you resolve to do something is your lucky day.)

—The very day you decided to do something is the best day to start it. Now is the best time.—

Kichijitsu means a ‘lucky day’. The day when you make a plan could be lucky. We should remember that a ‘lucky day’ does not come very often, so when an opportunity to do something on which you have set your heart suddenly arises, you should take full advantage of it, for there is no guarantee that the ‘lucky day’ comes again. Other proverbs say, “Haste makes waste,” and “Slow and steady wins the race.” But nowadays it is also true that if you are not ahead of others, you will not win; “First come, first served.”

《Related English Proverbs》

- Never put off till tomorrow what may be done today.
- Procrastination is the thief of time.
- Strike while the iron is hot.

B-3 *Katte kabuto no o o shimeyo.*
(Fasten your helmet tightly even after a victory.)

—We must be on our guard even after a victory.—

When we succeed in doing something, we are likely to be elated and often neglect to make a continuous effort. There is another proverb which says, “Good and bad luck are interwoven like strands of a rope.” Victory and defeat are next-door neighbours as well as good and bad luck. Nobody knows what happens in the future, and so, we should not be too intoxicated by success, nor be disheartened by failure. It is important to win with modesty and accept defeat gracefully.

《Related English Proverb》

- Don't halloo until you are out of the wood.

B-4 *Kiji mo nakazuba utaremai.*
(A pheasant will not be shot if it does not cry.)

—If a person says nothing, he is unlikely to get into trouble.—

This proverb tells us that we will meet with misfortune if we carelessly say something unnecessary. Matsuo Basho, the Japanese *haiku* poet, said in one of his seventeen-syllabled *haiku* poems, “*Mono ieba, kuchibiru samushi aki no kaze.*” (=If one says something, the lips are cold in the autumn wind.) There are some courageous people who get accidentally involved in trouble by saying or doing what is right, injured, or even killed. This applies not only to individuals but also to society at large. Everybody should tackle this difficult problem squarely.

《Related English Proverbs》

- It is better to sit still than to rise to fall.
- Quietness is best, as the fox said when he hit the cock's head off.
- He that never climbed never fell.

B-5 *Kiyomizu no butai kara tobioriru.*
(One makes a daring leap from the stage at Kiyomizu Temple.)

—We take a decisive step in our lives, although we are not sure of success or failure.—

Kiyomizu Temple is located on a high hill on Kyoto, and the main hall, one end of which extends over a cliff, has a spacious veranda that affords a panoramic view of Kyoto, and it is noted for its height and beauty. If a person leaps from this veranda of the Temple, he is sure to lose his life; and so, this proverb refers to a person's decisive resolution.

《Related English Proverbs》

- To cross the Rubicon.
- To shoot Niagara.

B-6 *Kurushii toki no kami danomi.*

(One invokes god in time of distress.)

—When we face hard times, we pray to god, but when they are past, we easily forget the divine favour.—

People tend to be selfish opportunists. When we are suffering, we ask somebody for help. Someone kindly may help us, but as time goes on, (1) most of us remember having been helped, but do nothing special in return for his kindness ; (2) some of us thank him, and if they have a chance, they might help him in return ; (3) some forget him soon, and do not want to remember the past ; (4) a small number are extremely grateful to him, and remember his kindness throughout their life, and are ready to do everything they can for him in return.

《Related English Proverbs》

- The danger past and God forgotten.
- Vows made in storms are forgotten in calm weather.
- You would do little for God if the devil were dead.
- Some are atheists only in fair weather.

B-7 *Suezen kuwanu wa otoko no haji.*

(It is a man's dishonour not to eat what is offered him on a platter.)

—It is disgraceful for a man to refuse a woman who offers herself to him.—

Suezen basically means 'a meal set before a person' ; but here the expression is used to mean 'a woman woos a man.' In the past, it was very rare for a woman to approach a man amorously especially in Japan ; and so, a man might have thought it honourable to accept her offer. But nowadays, young girls have become very outgoing, and they are willing to woo good-looking boys. On the other hand, boys look more shy and delicate than girls.

《Related English Proverb》

- When petticoats woo, breeches may come speedily.

B-8 *Tatami no ue no suiren.*

(Swimming practise on the tatami.)

—Even if you practise swimming hard on land, you will not be able to swim.—

In the case of learning how to swim, you should first get used to staying and enjoy being in the water, and then you should practise and learn to swim in the water. In this proverb, the theory may follow the practise, and as for foreign language acquisition, both theory and practise are equally important even when the learner can have a chance to stay in a foreign country for a long time. In order to get some knowledge and skills, we should reconcile theory with practise, although many people believe that experience without learning is better than learning without experience.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Practice is better than precept.
- Knowledge without practice makes but half an artist.
- Practice makes perfect.

B-9 *Tsuno o tamete ushi o korosu.*
(Bend the horns and kill the cow.)

—We often kill a cow by trying to give its horn a desired shape.—

This proverb tells us that we sometimes ruin the whole by trying to correct a part. When we are too engrossed in something, and are confused and unable to grasp the situation totally and objectively, we tend to concentrate on minor details. In order to see something as a whole, we should first try to keep cool, listen to others' advice, and study the matter in depth.

《Related English Proverbs》

- The remedy is worse than the disease.
- To burn the house to get rid of the mice.
- To burn the house to roast the pig.
- Better a child with a snotty nose than a child with no nose at all.

B-10 *Tōkute chikaki wa danjo no naka.*
(A man and a woman may appear far apart, yet are close to each other.)

—The relationships between a man and a woman may seem to be remote, but they soon become familiar.—

If there were no men in this world, most women would use no makeup, nor try to make themselves look beautiful and attractive except for rare occasions. If there were no women, most men would not be so keen on working. Men and women are drawn to each other like a magnet and give no thought to the disparity in their ages, social standing and so on.

Nowadays, artificial insemination is often carried out, but except for unavoidable occasions, men and women are indispensable to each other not only to leave an offspring but also to enjoy life as human beings.

《Related English Proverb》

- A woman is flax, a man is fire, and the devil comes and blows the bellows.

B-11 *Doku o motte, doku o seisu.*

(Poison drives out poison.)

—Control poison with poison.—

When a person is made ill by getting poisoned, poisonous medicine is used for that treatment. In order to get rid of one poison, it is often effective to use another poison. The wicked know the ways of their kind, and so it is best ‘to set a thief to catch a thief.’ In order to live happily, you should know how to deal with wickedness as well as goodness, because it is impossible to have nothing to do with wickedness in our society. We should have a great understanding of both good or evil.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Diamonds cut diamonds.
- Contraries cure contraries.
- Like cures like.
- The smell of garlic (or leek) takes away the stink of dunghills (or the smell of onions).
- Fight fire with fire.

B-12 *Tori naki sato no kōmori.*

(A bat in a village without birds.)

—A bat cannot fly better than a bird, but in a place where there are no birds, the bat is king.—

This phrase refers to a person who is similar to a bat. For example, a man who is weak takes pride in his strength in a place without strong men. To our surprise, there are many people of this kind. They might not have had such a chance to be the head of his group before, but when the chance came, he could not help being too proud of his position. Another proverb says, “Better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion.” People basically want to be the head of a group. It depends on the individual whether he will choose to be ‘head’ or ‘tail’ when the chance comes.

《Related English Proverbs》

- In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed is king.

- For want of a wise man, a fool is set in the chair.

B-13 *Nyōbō to tatami wa atarashii hō ga yoi.*
(Wives and tatami are better when they are new.)

—The newer the wife and straw-mats are, the better they are.—

It is certain that newly married wives are fresh and charming, and the new Japanese tatami is beautiful with the scent of straw. As time goes on, the husbands are likely to lose their first fresh impression on their wives, and to change to take interest in another young girls. But you should keep it in mind that your wives also may be thinking in exactly the same way as you think.

As time passes, everyone definitely changes and becomes old. The thing is that we should believe that each age has different blessings.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Everything new is fine.
- All men commonly rejoice at new things.

B-14 *Hayane hayaoki yamai shirazu.*
(Early to bed and early to rise knows no illness.)

—Those who go to bed early and get up early are always healthy.—

When we have a cold, we go to see a doctor and take medicine. But we often have to work and sit up till late at night, and so, we cannot get rid of our cold for a long time. On the contrary, in the old days, there was neither gas nor electricity ; and so, when people had a cold, they had no choice but to go to bed early and take a rest. The best way to cure a cold is to take a rest. A good sleep is the best medicine.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.
- The early bird catches the worm.
- He who will thrive must rise at five, he who has thriven may sleep till seven, he who will never thrive may sleep till eleven.

B-15 *Bōzu nikukerya, kesa made nikui.*
(He who hates a bonze will hate his surplice, too.)

—If you do not love a Buddhist priest, you will hate all that belongs to him.—

When we hate a person, we often hate everything and everyone related to him in any way. As a matter of fact, once you come to hate a teacher of mathematics, you often hate

math, too. Such an attitude is unwise and absolutely groundless. This may be the way of human nature, but in order to enjoy life, you should be reasonable, and understand that it is foolish to hate people and all things connected with a person you hate. Those who are narrow-minded and emotional are missing a lot. You should be broad-minded and think about all matters calmly.

《Related English Proverb》

- Love me, love my dog. (=Who loves me will love my dog also.)

B-16 *Marui tamago mo kiriyō de shikaku.*

(Even a round egg can be easily cut square.)

—A boiled egg can be changed in shape depending on how we cut it.—

This proverb is sometimes followed by another, which goes, *Mono wa iiyou de kado ga tatsu.* (=Words may sound offensive by the way they are spoken.) ‘Soft words make the going smooth, and harsh words make the going rough.’ It is very important not to hurt others’ feelings by using harsh words. Even between close friends, giving tit for tat can lead to a quarrel. We should be very careful of how to say as well as what to say.

《Related English Proverbs》

- Many a good tale is spoiled in the telling.
- A soft answer turns away wrath.

Category C

C-1 *Ichī-hiki, ni-sai, san-gakumon.*

(First, connections ; second, ability ; third, learning.)

—This is the order in which one succeeds in life.—

In order to succeed in life, connections, ability and learning are important, but it is worthy of note that the top priority is connections. As a matter of fact, this seems to be true in our society. Even a person of considerable ability who has a good academic career often fails to get a good position if he does not have connections with influential people. It almost seems that our life will be directed by how many influential people we meet with. Still, you should not forget that if you make an untiring effort to develop your abilities and enrich your knowledge, you can meet people who will recognize your true worth.

《Related English Proverbs》

- A friend in court is better than a penny in the purse.
- It's not always what you know, it's who you know.

C-2 *Ichi-Fuji, ni-taka, san-nasubi.*
 (First, Mt. Fuji ; second, hawks ; third, eggplants.)

—Three dreams, in priority order, of being lucky.—

This saying dates back to the Edo Period. The implication of this proverb is that if we can dream about Mt Fuji, hawks or eggplants on the 2nd night of the New Year, we will be lucky throughout the year. There are several views on the origin of this proverb: (1) The above three were favourites of *Shōgun* Ieyasu in Shizuoka. (2) Fuji rhymes with *fushi* (immortal), that is, perpetual youth and longevity are things to be hoped for ; *taka* rhymes with *takai* (high), that is, we hope to go up the ladder of success in life ; we have a better harvest of eggplants (*nasubi*) than of other vegetables, that is, we want to leave a numerous offspring. Is it possible for a foreigner who has not seen Mt Fuji to have a dream about it? Of course not, but if we believe we shall be lucky, then we may be lucky. We make our own luck.

C-3 *Edo no kataki o Nagasaki de utsu.*
 (To take revenge in Nagasaki on an enemy in Edo (Tokyo).)

—One takes revenge on somebody at an unexpected place or for quite a different reason.—

Nagasaki is far away from Edo. That a person persistently pursues his enemy to Nagasaki means that he devotes himself to the fulfillment of his vow to take revenge. But it is a very painful and unfortunate thing to keep on bearing a grudge against another person. To take revenge requires immense energy. It would be much better to direct one's energies to improving oneself or doing something helpful to other people.

C-4 *Tatte-iru-mono wa oya demo tsukae.*
 (Make use of even your parents if they are standing.)

—When you have something to do at once while you are seated, you can ask anyone who is near at hand, even your parents.—

The implication of this proverb is that it is generally considered inexcusable for a child to make use of his parents while he remains seated, but this saying recommends us to take a rational and efficient way of thinking, and suggests that we should behave flexibly. This proverb shows that parental authority is great, as the Japanese proverb says, “Things most dreaded are earthquakes, thunder, fires, and fathers.” But parents these days do not have

as much authority over their children as before, and there are many children who think it a matter of course to make use of their parents without thinking whether they are seated or standing.

C-5 *Tsuchi issō kane issō.*
(One-*shō* of soil, One-*shō* of gold.)

—One *shō* of soil is supposed to be worth the same amount of gold.—

Edo no man-naka (the centre of Edo) *wa* precedes this saying. *Shō* is a measure of capacity generally used in Japan until just recently. One *shō* is about 0.48 US gallon. This saying means that the value of land, especially in residential and commercial areas, although it depends on the location, is extremely high. And so, the land in such areas is thought to be worth its weight in gold. In the centre of the big cities, the price of land is unbelievably high. But these days the price of land in Japan is coming down every year. Ups and downs in land prices are normal. The Japanese people used to believe that land prices are sure to soar without dropping, but they should realize that it is dangerous to rely on land as an investment.

C-6 *Tsutta sakana ni esa wa yaranu.*
(A caught fish is not fed.)

—A woman is not given presents by her husband after marriage.—

Before marriage a man sends many presents to his future wife, but after she becomes his wife, he does not give any presents to her, and what is worse, he does not try to treat her more kindly than he did before. He may think that a married woman must be different from an unmarried woman. On the contrary, his wife wants him to treat her as an unmarried woman the same as before, but he does not ; and so, she complains of his sudden change of attitude towards her. She also tends to be more self-centred and indifferent to her husband than before marriage.

C-7 *Naku-ko to jitō ni wa katenu.*
(One cannot prevail over a crying child or the lord of the manor.)

—We can do nothing about a crying child or a government official.—

Jitō was a military estate steward appointed by the Kamakura shogunate from among the warrior vassals. Whatever reason we may have, we are helpless in the presence of an unmanageable child or the authorities. We sometimes have no choice but to yield from the viewpoints of education in one case or the protection of our life in the other. But we must

not lose our dignity as human beings. This proverb mostly applies to a crying child at present.

《Related English Proverb》

- We must fall down before a fox (or a lion or fortune) in season.

C-8 *Nido oshiete ichido shikare.*

(Teach twice, scold once.)

—When a child repeats a mistake, teach him patiently, and scold him a little.—

This proverb derives from *Kawaikuba itsutsu oshiete mittsu home, futatsu shikarite, yokihito ni se yo* (=If you love your child, teach him five times, praise three times, scold twice, and make him a good child). When a child does not listen to his parents and does not behave himself, if we scold him too severely he will become bad-tempered, and so, we should teach him patiently and praise him for what he has done well, and encourage him to learn of his own accord. A child grows after much trial and error. Remember what advice and discipline had a good effect on you when you were a child.

《Related English Proverb》

- Haste makes waste, soft fire makes sweet malt.

C-9 *Hanashi jōzu wa kiki jōzu.*

(A good talker is a good listener.)

—A good conversationalist listens willingly to others very well.—

A person whose conversation is attractive usually tries sincerely to find out what and how his listeners' reactions to his words are. He listens to them and tries to understand sincerely, and so, he can know many things and deepen his knowledge and broaden his mind. On the other hand, those who do not want to listen to others and keep on saying what they want to say, tend to close their ears and will not be able to learn much, and so, they cannot widen their horizons. It is of great importance to try to understand others and to know their views on different fields. To listen to others and to let them hear us is a basic principle of achieving a harmonious human relationship and of enhancing our own value.

C-10 *Hikaremono no kouta.*

(A little song sung by a man being taken to prison.)

—When a condemned criminal is marched to his execution ground, he sings a little song to show his courage in his desperate situation.—

A *hikaremono* was a criminal who was taken on an unsaddled horse in the city of Edo,

with a paper flag on which his crimes were written, and afterwards was executed, as a warning to the people. This punishment was used in the Edo Period. These days, this proverb refers to a person who does not want to admit his defeat, and who talks big to cover his weakness. When you are defeated, you should accept your defeat frankly without making any excuse, and even when you are driven to a critical situation as a result of your defeat, it is important not to lose hope. You should pluck up the courage to overcome your opponent.

《Related English Proverb》

- Many a one sings that is full sorry.

C-11 *Heike o horobosu wa Heike.*

(The Heike clan destroyed the Heike.)

—The destruction of the Heike clan came from within.—

The Heike clan was one of the great families that dominated court politics during the Heian Period. The Heike were destroyed by the Genji in the battle of Dannoura, Yamaguchi Prefecture, in 1185. This proverb says that the reason why the Heike were defeated was not only because of the superior power of the Genji but also as a result of destruction from within. It is said that while the Heike were at the zenith of their prosperity, they indulged in luxury and were addicted to vices, leading to their eventual collapse. There is another proverb which says “*Ogoru Heike wa hisashi karazu.* (=The haughty Heike did not last long.)” This means “Pride goes before a fall.” We will meet with many ‘enemies’ while we are alive, and sometimes we have to contend with them all, but the toughest opponent is ourselves.

C-12 *Heta no kangae yasumu ni nitari.*

(Useless thinking is similar to taking a rest.)

—Even if you think for a long time, you sometimes cannot find a good solution. Such thinking is useless and a waste of time.—

When a man plays a poor game of *go* or *shōgi*, he takes so much time that his opponent uses this saying, “Carry on, go ahead, it is useless to think, your thinking is similar to napping!” However this proverb does not always refer to all men equally. Those who are quick-witted can think quickly of a good solution or idea while those who are prudent and cautious sometimes find it difficult to arrive at a quick answer, yet after long consideration, they can find an excellent idea or solution. Each person has different abilities, and so, you should not let unreasonable people bother you or interfere with you. You should trust

your ability, and go your own way.

《Related English Proverb》

- Mickle (much) fails that fools think.

C-13 *Te ni toruna yahari no ni oke rengesō.*

(Do not pluck the Chinese milk-vetch. Let it grow and bloom in the fields.)

—The Chinese milk-vetch grows outdoors. Leave it where it is.—

Wild flowers look the most beautiful in the fields and they should be allowed to grow wild there ; but these days, nature is being destroyed everywhere in the world in the name of development. This environmental destruction is contributing to global warming and other natural disasters. Especially, people all over the world should try earnestly to halt the destruction of the ozone layer. These days, Japanese children have few opportunities for close contact with nature. Human beings are happiest when surrounded by nature, and so we want to keep our love of nature.

《Related English Proverb》

- Dogs are fine in the fields.

III Conclusion

The 45 Japanese proverbs in this paper have been selected according to the writer's personal preference in view of their usefulness, the same as in the previous papers. Consideration of these proverbs has led the writer to reach the following conclusions.

- (1) There is a great deal of similarity between English and Japanese proverbs which deal with universal truth and basic human feelings.
- (2) The Japanese tend to take life and nature as they are.
- (3) In the past, Japanese and Western people had similar views on women. In Japan women were under the control of men, and in the West, women seem to have been respected on the surface, but in fact, if we examine the world of proverbs, we shall find that they have been often ignored by men.
- (4) The basic views on health are very similar both in Japan and in the West.
- (5) In social and everyday life, the Japanese think much of harmony in human relationships.
- (6) As I mentioned in my previous paper, there are some social, racial, cultural, and

geographical background differences between Japan and the West.

(7) Most Japanese proverbs take an abbreviated form. Most English ones are in complete sentence form with subjects and verbs.

(8) Japanese proverbs are metaphorical and the expression is exquisitely varied. English proverbs, on the contrary, are logical, powerful, and straightforward.

(9) Japanese proverbs are greatly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Oriental culture and civilization, while English ones show traces of the influence of Christianity and Western culture and civilization.

These 45 proverbs are well known. It is confirmed again that the more I carry out research in the two different cultures through Japanese and English proverbs, the shorter the cultural distance between them grows.

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