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A Comparative Study of English and Japanese Proverbs : With Special Reference to Well-known Japanese Proverbs (4) : 日英諺の比較研究

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A Comparative Study of English and Japanese Proverbs

—With Special Reference to Well-known Japanese Proverbs—(4)
(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), from “*Kotowaza Daijiten*” (1982), and from the books listed in the Bibliography at the end of this paper. In the present paper, the 32 proverbs which are taken up are divided into two categories, as shown in Part II of the Contents. These categories are used solely for the sake of convenience, and should not be considered as a definitive classification. For each category, 16 proverbs for (A) and 16 for (B) have been chosen.

These proverbs were translated into English and provided with a simple commentary, with Related English Sayings 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.

Notations used in this paper : —

Italics : Japanese

() under Japanese proverbs : literal translation from the Japanese

— — : the meaning of each Japanese proverb

“ ” : quotation

II Categories of Proverbs

Category A

A-1 *Ayamachitewa aratamuruni habakaru koto nakare.*
(If one makes a mistake, one must not hesitate to correct it.)

—One should not be afraid to mend one's fault.—

When we make an error, it is important to acknowledge this and amend it as soon as possible, and try not to repeat it. We should have the courage to recognize our errors, because if we do not, it will be the cause of another blunder which cannot be rectified so easily. The most miserable and foolish mistake which mankind can make is bringing on war. Japan made war with many countries and many people, old and young, men and women, lost their lives. And at present, people all over the world are facing the threat and peril of war. We should honestly admit the errors of the past, and we must not repeat the same mistakes.

“He who commits one fault at first and lies to hide it doubles the first fault.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. It is never too late to mend.
2. Repentance never comes too late.
3. Show a good man his error and he turns it to a virtue ; but an ill man doubles his fault.
4. A fault confessed is half redressed.
5. Confession is good for the soul but bad for the reputation.
6. Denying a fault doubles it.

A-2

I-shoku tarite, reishitsu o shiru.

(Well clothed and well fed is well mannered.)

—After one is provided with food and clothes, one knows manners.—

When we find it hard to make a living, and are in want of food and clothing, it is difficult to have good manners. When we are well fed and well clothed, we can afford to have a sense of morality and honour. As a matter of fact, rich children can receive a better education and can have more opportunities to learn a great deal about customs and manners than poor children. For poor people, food, clothing and housing form the first requisites of their life. It is sad that there are so many people in the world who live in poverty and die of hunger. There are many rich people who are poor in mind, while on the other hand there are many poor people who are rich in mind.

《Related English Sayings》

1. Money and good manners make the gentleman.
2. Meat and clothes make the man.
3. Empty sacks will never stand upright.
4. Well fed, well bred.
5. The belly has no ears.
6. A hungry man is an angry man.
7. Dress makes the man.

A-3

Uri-kotoba ni kai-kotoba.

(Buying words for selling words)

—Harsh words bring harsh words in return.—

At first, we have a delightful conversation with our friends, but suddenly, when we hear rude and offensive words from them, we usually lose our patience and make abusive remarks to them in return. Violent language begets violent language, which is likely to lead even to violent acts. Most men who quickly lose their composure and give tit for tat seem to be short-tempered. It is quite absurd to lose our close friends or something precious because of our lack of patience or because of saving our desire to save personal honour. When we argue heatedly with others, it is important to remain calm and tolerant and to watch our language. An unfriendly comment or insult is likely to provoke a similar hostile retort.

“Many have fallen by the sword : but not so many have fallen by the tongue.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. One ill word asks another.
2. A soft answer turns away wrath : but grievous words stir up anger.
3. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
4. A fool's tongue is long enough to cut his throat.

A-4 *Oshiuru wa manabu no nakaba nari.*
(Teaching is half learning.)

—One learns by teaching.—

When we learn something, we often realize that we are lacking in knowledge about many things. When we teach others, we learn how difficult it is to teach others. And then we have to try to learn by ourselves, broaden our knowledge, and make an effort to improve ourselves in order to be good teachers. The basic goal of teaching is not to cram knowledge into the learners' heads but to tell them what their teachers have learned and experienced, and to encourage them to learn of their own free will. Life has an inexhaustible mine of knowledge ; and so, what we can learn while we are alive is limited. Eiji Yoshikawa, a well-known Japanese writer, wrote : *wareigai mina wagashi* (= all but we are my teachers).

《Related English Sayings》

1. Teaching others teaches oneself.
2. Men learn while they teach.
3. Teaching is learning.
4. By doing, a baby acquires experience.

A-5 *Kuchi ni mitsu ari, hara ni ken ari.*
(Honey in the mouth, a sword in the belly.)

—One has a honeyed tongue, but a heart of gall.—

This proverb refers to a person who speaks kindly on the surface, but internally has a hostile feeling towards you. In all ages, there are many people who always try to ingratiate themselves with their superiors but who put on airs with their inferiors or equals. Those who want to have authority or control over others resort to various devices for gaining their end. They speak fine words and have friendly looks, but eventually deceive everyone, including their friends. This is because we are easily led astray by honeyed words and elegant looks. So many people are often cheated out of their possessions.

“Where there is too much courtesy, there is little kindness!”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Bees that have honey in their mouths have stings in their tails.
2. He has honey in his mouth and a razor at his girdle.
3. Where is least heart, there is most tongue.
4. Many kiss the hand they wish to cut off.
5. Full of courtesy, full of craft.

A-6 *Kunshi hyōhen su.*

(A wise man changes like the spots on a leopard.)

—A wise man changes his mind, as the black and yellow spots on a leopard change with the season.—

This proverb means that (1) a wise man changes his mind when he realizes he is wrong, and that (2) he changes his attitude and his way of thinking unreservedly or irresponsibly when he finds himself in a difficult situation. A wise man is flexible ; and so, whatever may happen, he changes his mind or his purpose at once, and tries to get over a crisis. On the other hand, a fool is inflexible, never listens to others' advice. He pays no attention to what others say and do, and he goes on his way, often bringing about his own ruin. We should be quick-witted and try to take such measures as the occasion demands.

“All wise men are opportunists. It is only fools who will not change when times change.” (Pearl Buck)

《Related English Sayings》

1. A wise man changes his mind ; a fool never.
2. A wise man ought not to be ashamed to change his mind.
3. Wise men need not blush for changing their purposes.

A-7 *Keikō to naru mo gyūgo to naru nakare.*

(Better become the beak of a roaster than the tail of a cow.)

—One should try to be the head of a small group rather than a member of a big group.—

There is another Japanese proverb : *tai no o yori iwashi no atama* (= better be the head of a sardine than the tail of a sea bream). Julius Caesar is said to have remarked when he first went to Gaul, “I had rather (or sooner) be first in a village than second in Rome.” There are two types of people ; those who want to hold a high

position at a low level, and those who are satisfied to hold a low position at a high level. “He that serves a good master shall have good wages.” When seeking a job, we usually have a tendency to choose big companies rather than small ones in order to make a good living. But at this time of worldwide economic depression, with a high unemployment rate, we are not guaranteed good salaries even in big companies by Japan’s seniority-based pay system.

《Related English Sayings》

1. Better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion.
2. Better be the head of the yeomanry than the tail of the gentry.
3. Better be a big fish in a little pond than a little fish in a big pond.
4. Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.
5. Better be the head of an ass than the tail of a horse.
6. It is better to be a great noble than a petty monarch.

A-8 *Jinji o tsukushite tenmei o matsu.*
(Try one’s best and leave the rest to fate.)

—Do all that one can and leave the rest to heaven.—

After we have tried every means possible, we leave ourselves to fate in quiet. It depends on God whether we succeed or not in life. We cannot do anything but try our best and wait for the outcome of our efforts. There are many people who do not do their best and only pray to God that they might win or succeed. But as a matter of fact, they can neither win nor succeed, because God does not take sides with lazy people. It is true that ‘practice’ does not betray us and that our efforts will finally be rewarded. Another well-known proverb clearly says, “Heaven helps those who help themselves.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Do the likeliest and God will do the best.
2. Use the means and God will give the blessing.
3. What will be, will be.
4. Man proposes, God disposes.
5. Pray to God to help you and put your hand to work.
6. Fortune favours the brave.

A-9

Sugitaru wa nao oyobazaru ga gotoshi.

(Too much is like too little.)

—There is moderation in everything.—

This proverb teaches us that when we do something we should do it with moderation. This phrase is derived from the Analects of Confucius (B.C. 580). The plea for moderation passed from Latin literature into various European languages : “If the prince be too important, tell him there is measure in everything.” (William Shakespeare). Yoshida Kenko wrote in *Tsurezuregusa*, “*Dai-yoku wa mu-yoku ni nitari* (= a great desire is similar to be no desire).” When our love for another is too strong, it can turn to hatred for the same person. The same can be said of people and things that are exact opposites to each other. “Extremes meet.” It is unnecessary and sometimes even harmful to go to extremes. There is a limit to everything. “Drink moderately, love moderately, live moderately ; everything in moderation.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Too much of anything is no good.
2. More than enough is too much.
3. The orange that is squeezed too hard yields bitter juice.
4. Safety lies in the middle course.
5. The last drop makes the cup run over.
6. Too much spoils, too little does not satisfy.
7. Virtue stands in the middle.

A-10

Shōjin kankyo shite fuzen o nasu.

(The mean man does evil when he is lazy.)

—When one is at leisure, one is inclined to do no good.—

When those who are neither educated nor virtuous are at leisure, they are likely to do evil. It is bad to be too busy to enjoy your spare time, but it is worse to be too free to know how to spend it wisely. “Steady employment keeps one out of mischief.” (Samuel Smiles). Nowadays many crimes are committed by young people when they have nothing to do. Time may hang heavily on their hands, and not knowing what to do with themselves, they are vulnerable to temptation. Idleness is surely the root of all evil. On the other hand, those whose lives are the fullest often find the most time to do what they like, presumably because they keep their affairs in good order. Whether or not our life is happy and valuable depends on whether or not we

know how to make the best use of the time given to us.

“Nothing is more precious than time, yet nothing is less valued.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Those who are doing nothing are doing evil.
2. Idleness is the greatest prodigality in the world.
3. Idleness begets lust.
4. The devil tempts all, but the idle man tempts the devil.
5. The devil finds work for idle hands to do.
6. Idle hands make for the devil’s work.

A-11

Tameru nara waka-gi no uchi.

(One can bend a tree easily while it is young.)

—Bend a tree while it is young.—

A tree will grow in the direction in which it is trained as a sapling. When we influence someone at an early age, we can affect the way he or she will develop later on. Children are quick to change and adapt themselves to whatever conditions or circumstances may befall them. They can easily develop bad habits, so it is important to educate them properly while they are young. Things done by long habit can become part of their characters. “Custom is a second nature.” The proverb that appears in the title applies to children, but at present, many spoiled children cannot assimilate new ideas, customs, or knowledge. On the other hand, there are some old people who are flexible and ready to accept new ways of thinking. They do not stop learning as long as they live, which enhances the value not only of themselves but also of all mankind.

“Life

For some, to live is going up,

For others, going down a hill

For me, ’t will be, until

life’s cup

Is drained, a striving

higher still.”

Kiyoaki Nakao (1916~), Professor Emeritus of Waseda University wrote this poem in the year 2000 when he was 83 years old.

《Related English Sayings》

1. A young twig is easier twisted than an old tree.

2. Old and tough, young and tender.
3. It is hard to make an old dog stoop.
4. You cannot teach an old dog new tricks.

A-12 *Tsumi o nikunde hito o nikumazu.*
 (Detest the crime, but do not detest the criminal.)

—One must condemn the offense, but not its perpetrator.—

When someone commits a crime, we think it natural for the criminal to receive due punishment for what he has done. But this proverb tells us that we should not hate the criminal, because he may have had some reason for breaking the law. We should hate the crime itself. This way of thinking may be based on love for our fellow man. But the feelings of the victims and their families towards the criminal differ greatly from those of people not directly concerned. It is difficult for a person to judge another person. There are many cases when those who had been sentenced to death were acquitted of the charge at a retrial.

《Related English Sayings》

1. One hates not the person, but the vice.
2. Man punishes the action, but God considers the intention.
3. Give the devil his due no matter who he is.
4. The devil is not so black as he is painted.

A-13 *Chie wa bandai no takara.*
 (Wisdom is a treasure for many generations.)

—Wisdom is a precious treasure for many people for many ages to come.—

Wisdom is (1) the ability to use our knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense, and insight, etc., (2) accumulated philosophic or scientific learning and (3) the teachings of ancient wise men. Therefore it is used not only in our age but also in all ages, and is inherited from former generations to the present one and is passed on generations to come. We can find this saying in the textbook *Jitsugokyō* used in *Teragoya* (old-time schools with one teacher only) in the Edo Period. It is of great importance to make sensible decisions or judgements by using wisdom. How true it is that wisdom is a precious treasure that a society or culture has accumulated over a long period! But we should keep it in mind that “If we don’t use it, we lose it.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Wit and wisdom are eternally precious.
2. No divinity is absent if Prudence is present.
3. Better wit than wealth.
4. Wisdom is better than wealth.

A-14 *Chi wa mizu yorimo koi.*
(Blood is thicker than water.)

—The bond between persons of the same blood is stronger than that between those who are not so close to each other.—

Figuratively speaking, blood here means relationship. When we say ‘persons of the same blood’, we mean those who are descended from the same ancestors’. Water, unlike blood, is thinner and less enduring, and it soon evaporates when spilt, leaving no trace afterwards. It is in the nature of things that the ties between relatives are stronger than those between strangers. This becomes dubious especially in time of need. The bond that blood forms between men is strong, potent, and infrangible. There are so many people who are suffering from hunger, disease, war, etc., throughout the world, but we tend to take less interest in those miserable people than in our own children when they only have a slight cold. “Blood may be thicker than water, but money is thicker than blood.” An old Jewish proverb says, comparing the relative strengths of paternal and filial feelings, “One father can support ten children, but ten children cannot support one father.”

《Related English Saying》

1. Blood is thicker than water.

A-15 *Baka ga atte rikō ga hikitatsu.*
(Wise men stand out because there are fools.)

—There are fools everywhere, and so wise men look so much better by comparison.—

There are two kinds of truth : (1) absolute truth (The sun shines. / Man is mortal.) and (2) relative truth (She is beautiful. / I am happy.) Someone (something) is true to a certain degree when he or she (it) is compared with other people (things). To some degree, it is comparison that makes us fools or wise men, and rich or poor. It is precisely because there are so many ordinary people that talented persons are recognized and often respected. So, if there were no ordinary people, they would not

be considered talented. Everyone has his or her own reasons for existence in society which consists of people of all walks of life. Everyone is necessary in society ; and so, we have to help one another.

《Related English Sayings》

1. If there were no fools, there would be no wise men.
2. When everybody's somebody, then no one is anybody.
3. Contraries, being set the one against the other, appear more evident.

A-16 *Furuki o tazunete, atarashiki o shiru.*

(By studying the old, we learn the new.)

—One learns old things in order to know new things.—

This proverb derives from the Analects of Confucius and is followed by *motte shi to naru* (=then we can become teachers) but the abbreviated form *onko chishin* is perhaps better known. The meaning of this proverb is that we should research into what happened in the past and how the ancients lived and behaved, so as to acquire new knowledge and thought. Only to study history is not enough, nor is only to study new things enough. What is important is to relearn in depth what we knew in the past and to create new ideas based on tradition.

“The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too.” (Eugene O'Neil)

“If you want the present to be different from the past, study the past.” (Baruch Spinoza)

《Related English Sayings》

1. Things present are judged by things past.
2. He that would know what shall be, must consider what has been.
3. There is nothing new under the sun.
4. Today is yesterday's pupil.
5. Today is the scholar of yesterday.

Category B

B-1 *Ichī-yō ochite tenka no aki o shiru.*

(With a falling leaf, one knows that autumn has come.)

—The smallest sign is enough to foretell the decay of a country.—

The leaves of the Chinese parasol fir fall faster than those of other trees ; and so, we know that autumn has come when we see one fir leaf falling. This expression is generally used metaphorically, to mean that minor outward changes can be a guide to what is happening, what is about to happen, or what one intends to do. History tells us that those who were wise and farsighted were able to be more successful in life than those who were not. It is impossible to know what will happen in future, but by studying history carefully, we can know that small incidents in the past indicated or revealed momentous future events. Early signs foretell what is going to happen ; and so, we shall be able to make the best of such signs, if we widen our perspective and have a sharp eye and fine sensitivity for everything.

《Related English Sayings》

1. A straw shows which way the wind blows.
2. Coming events cast their shadows before them.
3. Pluck the grass to know where the wind sits.

B-2 *Uo-gokoro areba, mizu-gokoro.*

(If you have the mind of water, I will answer you with the mind of a fish.)

—As you wish, so I do.—

Fish cannot live without water. The relation between fish and water is very close. Fish like to live in the water, and the water gives life to the fish. Favour brings reciprocal favour. When you take a friendly attitude towards others, they will respond in a friendly manner, too. This proverb is basically used in a good sense, but these days, it is often used in a bad sense. For example, suppose there are two parties that have some private objectives in view at the negotiating table. Everything depends on what moves each makes. People are especially influenced by other people's attitudes or words. It is true that we can be a devil or a Buddha, depending on what sort of attitude others take. This means that we are likely to be influenced by outside forces, even if we think we are strong-willed.

《Related English Sayings》

1. Scratch me and I'll scratch you.
2. Claw me, and I'll claw thee.
3. Nab me, I'll nab thee.
4. Give and take.
5. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

B-3

Kaeru no ko wa kaeru.

(The child of a frog is a frog.)

—Tadpoles grow up to become frogs.—

A child usually takes after his parents, not only in looks but also in character. And he also does as his parents do. The child of mediocre parents tends to be mediocre. This proverb suggests that inherited characteristics are not necessarily good ones. A child tends to succeed his father in his profession. Does this depend on inherited characteristics? A child is greatly influenced by his home environment. For example, if his father is a doctor, he knows what a doctor is like, and he also knows how he can be a doctor by watching his father at work. If the child wants to be a doctor, his parents can support him mentally and financially. However it is also a fact that there are many people whose jobs are quite different from those of their parents.

“Children are unpredictable. You never know what inconsistency they’re going to catch you in next.” (Franklin P. Jones)

“The secret of dealing successfully with a child is not to be its parent.” (Mell Lazarus)

《Related English Sayings》

1. Like breeds like.
2. Nits will be lice.
3. Like father, like son.
4. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
5. Blood will tell.
6. If the parents are good, the children follow in their footsteps.
7. The child is father of the man.

B-4

Kasegu ni oitsuku binbō nashi.

(There is no poverty that can overtake industry.)

—One cannot be poor as long as one works hard.—

This proverb emphasizes the necessity of hard work. Ishikawa Takuboku (1886–1912), who is considered to be Japan’s finest modern poet, wrote : *hatarakedo hatarakedo waga seikatsu rakuninarazari, jitto te o miru* (however hard I work, I am still in straitened circumstances, and look fixedly at my hands). However, another proverb says, “Diligence is the mother of good fortune.” But good fortune is not

always the product of hard work even of excessive work. Takuboku was very poor, and died young. He has attained international fame, and his poetry has been translated into most Western European languages and into Russian and Chinese as well.

《Related English Sayings》

1. Diligence overtakes poverty.
2. Diligence and study can do all things.
3. In the labourer's house, hunger looks in but dares not enter.
4. He that labours and thrives spins gold.
5. Keep your shop and your shop will keep you.
6. Want is the mother of industry.

B-5

Koketsu ni irazunba koji o ezu.

(One cannot catch a tiger's cub unless one enters the den.)

—One will never achieve anything if one never takes a risk or makes an effort.—

When we venture into an activity, we often do something that involves the risk of failure. This proverb teaches us : “If we don't throw a sprat, we mustn't expect to catch a mackerel, we must not be afraid of taking a risk now and then.” It is true that fearless courage is the foundation of victory and success, and that where there is money, there is danger. What should we do? Throughout our life, we are sure to meet with times when we must be courageous enough to take a risk and go somewhere or do something that might be dangerous or unpleasant. The important thing is to decide when we should set out to do what we have planned.

“Courage conquers all things : it even gives strength to the body.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
2. None but the brave deserves the fair.
3. The more danger, the more honour.
4. Danger and delight grow both upon one stalk.
5. No pains, no gains.
6. He who would search for pearls must dive deep.
7. There is no catching trout with dry breeches.

B-6 *Kome kutta inu ga tatakarezu ni nuka kutta inu ga tatareru.*

(The dog that ate rice is not beaten, but the dog that ate rice bran is beaten.)

—The dog that ate costly white rice is not struck, but the dog that ate cheap rice bran is struck.—

Those who are guilty of petty thievery are punished for their offenses, but those who have committed big crimes often manage to escape punishment. The ringleader of a group of thieves escapes, but his followers are penalized. The difference between a boss and his followers lies not so much in what the latter can get from their boss but in the power the boss has to get what he wants when he wants it. People in positions of authority and rich men are always treated more courteously and are given more attention ; and so, they have more opportunities than the poor to receive benefits from the law and to build up their fortune.

“The rich man has his ice in the summer and the poor man gets his in the winter.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. The law catches little flies but lets great ones go free.
2. Little thieves are hanged, but great robbers escape.
3. One man may steal a horse with impunity, while another may not even look over the hedge.

B-7 *Shishite no chōja yori ikite no hinja.*

(A living poor man is better than a dead rich man.)

—It is better to be alive, even if you are poor, than to be a rich man who is dead.—

Although we are poor and insignificant, it is more desirable to be alive and enjoy our life than to be wealthy and die early. This way of thinking may be applicable to everyone in the world. However, we can find an interesting example to the contrary in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (1970) : “To the Japanese soldier . . . the dead lion is one thousand times more enviable than the live dog.” There are many people who work too hard and try to save a great deal of money. We cannot take our money to the world beyond the grave. It is completely illogical to think that, while we are alive, we do not eat what we want to, nor do what we want to and that all we do is to devote ourselves to working and saving, and then we die suddenly, leaving all the money we saved.

“Never say ‘die’ ; up, man and try.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. A living dog is better than a dead lion.
2. Better be poor and live, than be rich and perish.
3. A live coward is better than a dead hero.
4. Where there's life, there's hope.

B-8 *Sei-daku awase nomu.*

(One drinks both clear and muddy water.)

—One tolerates both good and bad things in life.—

The meaning of this proverb is that we should accept both what is good and what is bad ; that is to say, we must be prepared for all kinds of different situations and people. Even a clear stream (*seiryū*) turns into a muddy stream (*dakuryū*) when there is heavy rain, but the sea accepts both clear and muddy streams equally. In this proverb, the sea is compared to the open mind of a reasonable person. Life is full of both goodness and wickedness. We cannot hide from evil : we sometimes must fight against it, and must have the strength to beat the enemy, while at other times, we must be broad-minded enough to assimilate all shades of opinion. It is necessary to take an unbiased approach to different ways of thinking and living. “Don't expect your road through life to be always easy. Accept bad times philosophically.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Take the rough with the smooth.
2. Take the sunshine with the rain.
3. You must take the fat with the lean.
4. You must take the sour with the sweet.
5. All rivers run into the sea ; yet the sea is never full.

B-9 *Senjō no tsutsumi mo ari no ana yori kuzureru.*

(Even a ten thousand-foot embankment can collapse because of an ant hole.)

—Even a very small hole can cause a high embankment which seems to be firmly established to collapse.—

Lao-tse, an ancient Chinese philosopher, said, “Many difficult situations in the world are caused by easygoing attitudes and by trifling matters, and great things

have small things as their cause.” While we are working at a job, we may find some small problems in it ; then we should not overlook or ignore them, but should take measures to cope with every small imperfection. Another proverb says, “Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.” This proverb can also be applied to maintaining our health.

“There is nothing so important as trifles.” (Conan Doyle)

“For want of a nail the shoe is lost, for want of a shoe the horse is lost, for want of a horse the rider is lost, and for want of a rider, the kingdom is lost.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. A little leak will sink a great ship.
2. One wrong step may lead to a great fall.
3. One link broken, the whole chain is broken.

B-10

Shō o in to hosseba uma o iyo.

(One should shoot the horse first before one shoots the general on it.)

—If one wants to shoot a general, one should aim at his horse first.—

The latter part of this saying is written as follows : *hito o korosu mo mata kagiriari* (= there is a limit to the killing of people). This is quoted from the Chinese poet Toho, who tells us that it is useless to kill many people in war. When we want to beat the leader of our opponents, we should first try to get all important facts about him. This proverb teaches us that in order to overcome our enemy, we should not aim at him directly, but should try to bring his supporters to our knees in order to control what is vital to the leader. But these days when a leader’s right-hand person (horse) is attacked and defeated (shot), the leader often leaves his post and goes away.

《Related English Sayings》

1. He that would the daughter win,
Must with the mother first begin.
2. Praise the child and you can make love to the mother.
3. Many kiss the child for the nurse’s sake.

B-11

Shōjiki mono ga baka o miru.

(An honest man is exploited.)

—Honesty does not pay.—

An honest man observes the law, and so, he often feels various inconveniences.

He does not like to make easy money, and nor does he want to make a success of his life by committing an injustice. On the other hand, a shrewd man can gain undue profits by evading the clutches of the law. He always pushes himself to the front and enjoys prosperity. When a kindhearted man is cheated for the first time, we think that he is good-natured. However, when he is cheated again and again, we may begin to think that he is not honest but foolish. Some people believe that it is better to be cheated than to cheat, but if they lose their family fortune because of their carelessness or credulity they are not being honest with their family. We should not confuse honesty with naivety. An honest man who is not naive will not be cheated.

“If you deceive me once, you are a fool, if you deceive me twice, I am a fool.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Honesty is ill for thriving. Honesty does not pay.
2. The more honest a man is, the worse luck will be his.
3. Plain dealing is a jewel, but they that believe in using it die beggars.

B-12 *Taiki bansei.*

(A late bloomer.)

—Great talents are slow in maturing.—

As it takes a long time to make a big vessel, so it takes a long time to be a great person. Some children show unusually mental and intellectual development or achievement, and behave as if they were much older than they really are. Some of their parents try to force them to receive special education or training for gifted children. However, children especially while they are at an early age, want to play with friends, experience a great number of things, take outdoor exercise, and enjoy to their hearts' content what they have the privilege of doing only in childhood.

“Very few prize boys and girls stand the test of wear. Prodigies are almost always uncertain ; they illustrate the proverb of ‘soon ripe’ soon rotten.”

“Provided the dunce has persistency and application he will inevitably head the cleverer fellow without those qualities. Slow but sure wins the race.” (Samuel Smiles)

《Related English Sayings》

1. Better late ripe and bear than early blossom and blast.
2. Late fruit keeps well.

B-13

Tsuriawanu wa fuen no moto.

(Unbalanced marriages may cause unhappiness.)

—If one wants to marry wisely, one should marry one's equal.—

When one marries a person whose family background, tastes, ways of thinking and living, etc. are different from one's own, one is likely to see an unhappy end to one's married life. Neither the difference of character between men and women nor their outward appearance is so important, but the difference of upbringing and culture exerts a great influence on one's married life. But many young people today want to get married to wealthy persons regardless of the difference in circumstance, means, and social standing between them and their partners. Although a balanced marriage is important, one can never tell beforehand what sort of person one's future wife or husband is going to turn out to be after marriage.

“Marriage is a lottery.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Like knows like.
2. Matching in marriage must be with equality.
3. There is no pot so ugly that a cover cannot be found for it.
4. Go down the ladder when you marry.
5. Marry above your match, and you get a master.
6. Every Jack has his Jill.

B-14

Ningen itarutokoro seizan ari.

(Wherever you go, there are green mountains.)

—One can always find one's own grave wherever one goes.—

Seizan means : (1) blue and green mountains, and (2) one's grave. Once young people leave their native place bearing a great ambition, they should not come back to their ancestral home until they stand high in their studies and have realized their ambition. There are many green hills fit for a burial place everywhere in the world. This proverb seems to indicate the serious and desperate feeling with which a person leaves his home. Nowadays we can easily establish contact with people or things from many different countries of the world, and we can easily go and live anywhere we like.

“Every soil,

Where he is well, *is to a valiant man*

His natural country.” (Philip Massinger)

“My heart’s in the highlands, it is not here.” (Robert Burns)

《Related English Sayings》

1. To a brave man every soil is his country.

B-15 *Hisashi o kashite, omoya o torareru.*

(One lends an eave and has one’s house taken over.)

—One who leases one’s eaves will find one’s whole house taken over.—

We often lose all we have by lending at first a part which is not so important. This proverb applies not only to human beings but to all living things in the natural world. A cuckoo lays her eggs in the nest of a long-tailed cock. The cock sits on the cuckoo’s eggs together with her own. The cuckoo’s eggs hatch earlier than those of the cock. The cuckoo’s young ones push the cock’s eggs out of the nest. As another proverb says, “The axe goes to the wood where it borrowed its helve,” so the cuckoo repays the kindness of the cock with evil. This proverb teaches us that we should be careful not to be taken in by sweet talk. “There is no rose without a thorn.” However, it is also said that if you feed a dog three days, he will remember you for three years. “One good turn deserves another.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. A falling master makes a standing servant.
2. Let an ill man lie in thy straw and he looks to be thine heir.
3. I give my mouse a hole and she will become my heir.
4. Give a man an inch and he’ll take a mile.

B-16 *Mizu wa hōen no utsuwa ni shitagau.*

(Water conforms to the shape of a square or round container.)

—The shape of the vessel changes the shape of the water in it.—

This proverb is followed by *hito wa zen-aku no tomo ni yoru* (= people become good or bad according to their friends). This is a quotation from the textbook *Jitsugokyō* used in *Teragoya*, and it is said that this textbook was written by Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi) (774~835), a well-known Japanese Buddhist priest who is considered the father of Japanese culture. This proverb means that if one mixes with evil (or good) companions, one will soon be as wicked (or good) as they are. One is easily influenced and changed by the company one keeps as well as by various circumstances of one’s life. Society changes us easily. Adaptability is a necessary quali-

ty in an ever-changing environment. One should adapt one's ideas or behaviour when necessary in order to deal with new situations.

“He that walks with a wise man shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”

《Related English Sayings》

1. Who keeps company with the wolf will learn to howl.
2. He should have a long spoon that supps with the devil.
3. The rotten apple injures its neighbours.
4. Keep good men company, and you shall be of this number.
5. If the stick be crooked, its shadow cannot be straight.
6. Tell me with whom you go, and I will tell you what you are.
7. Evil communications (or companionships) corrupt good manners.
8. He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled.

III Conclusion

The 32 Japanese proverbs in this paper have been selected according to the writer's personal preference in view of their usefulness, the same as in his 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) Many popular Japanese proverbs that were quoted from old writings in Chinese have been taken up. We can find that the basic views on one's way of living are very similar in Japan and China.

(3) As the writer mentioned in his previous papers, there are some social, racial, cultural, and geographical background differences between Japan and the West.

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

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

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

(7) The 32 proverbs in this paper are well known. It is confirmed again that the more research is carried out in the two different cultures through Japanese and English proverbs, the shorter the cultural distance between them grows.

(本学教授 = 英語担当)

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