Japanese Youth: An Interactive Dialogue: Towards Comparative Youth Research□□日本の若者──四者対談──比較若者 文化へ向けて

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Photo (from the left): Noritoshi Furuichi, Mikito Terachi, Tuukka Toivonen and Tomu Ogawa (photo by Akiko Nakazawa).

*This article reviews and assesses two books on Japanese youth:

Goodman, Roger, Imoto, Yuki, and Toivonen, Tuukka (2012) A Sociology of Japanese Youth: From Returnees to NEETs, Abingdon: Routledge (216 pages, \$51.95 paperback, \$155.00 cloth)¹

Furuichi, Noritoshi (2011) Zetsubō no Kuni no Kōfuku na Wakamono-tachi (The Happy Youth of a Desperate Country), Tokyo: Kodansha (304 pages, ¥1,890 cloth)

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The authors' colloquium takes place at GLOCOm, Tokyo on August 29. 「若者」とこれからの日本社会を考える――絶望の国の幸福な若者たちと静かな変革者

1. Introduction

Mikito TERACHI

While striving to provide insights into Japan's young people before and after 3.11, this collaborative article is our first attempt at building a critical platform for international dialogue on youth generally. It is the first substantial product of an ongoing project called PCYR (Project for Comparative Youth Research) .

The format is somewhat unusual: it contains not only a two-way book review in which the lead authors Noritoshi Furuichi and Tuukka Toivonen critically survey each other's recent



contributions, but also a more informal in-depth dialogue. We chose this interactive approach to begin bridging two often disconnected (but potentially mutually enriching) streams of literature, namely, research on Japanese youth by non-Japanese scholars disseminated via overseas publishers, and research by Japanese scholars published almost exclusively within Japan.

The initial idea for this project arose as a result of my encounter, at the European Association for Japanese Studies conference in Tallinn in August 2011, with Toivonen and his research group. Towards the end of this international gathering, the group, led by Professor Roger Goodman of Oxford University, presented an overview of its forthcoming volume A Sociology of Japanese Youth (released in November 2011). It is my impression that youth research in Japan today, highlighting the difficult circumstances faced by many young people, takes a predominantly pessimistic attitude towards its subject. In contrast, overseas youth studies, it seems to me, generally adopt a more optimistic tone. Listening to the presentations of Toivonen and his colleagues, I felt that their group had the potential to help bridge this gap.

At the same time, however, I found myself harbouring suspicions regarding two particular points. First, why focus on 'Japanese' youth to begin with? Second, how and with whom should discussions on 'Japanese' youth be meaningfully shared? Moreover, compared to current research within Japan, some topics treated by Toivonen et al. seemed to lack 'freshness'. Was this simply due to an inevitable informational time lag, or perhaps the result of some peculiar characteristics of the field of Japanese Studies?

I nevertheless felt that if the type of approach set out in A Sociology of Japanese Youth was applied in a more explicitly comparative fashion, the youth field could make significant advances. Both those who carry out their research within the loose field of Japanese Studies and are based abroad as well as scholars who are mainly based in Japan could benefit as a result.

A few days after my return to Japan from the EAJS Noritoshi Furuichi, now the best-known sociologist among Japanese young people in particular, published The Happy Youth of a Desperate Country (Zetsubō no Kuni no Kōfuku na Wakamono-tachi). This controversial book elicited a massive public response, with tens of thousands of readers flooding to various blogs and Twitter to post comments. Furuichi received numerous invitations to appear in online settings, newspapers, magazines, on radio and in prime-time TV programmes such as Close-up Gendai on NHK. He was also invited to become a delegate to a government discussion committee.²

Why did Furuichi's book prompt such an enthusiastic, though critical, reaction? What does this reaction tell us about the status of youth – and indeed the public debate on young people (wakamono-ron) – in 21st century Japan?

I would like to suggest two specific reasons for the powerful response to Furuichi's contribution. It is obvious to me, first, that many found The Happy Youth of a Desperate Country attractive because it had been actually written by someone who was himself a young person (age 26). It must be stressed that in the Japanese context, this was highly unusual and helped raise interest among scholars as well as general readers. While it is true that a critical stream of youth research that rejected 'youthbashing' media discourses emerged in Japan in the 2000s, in that decade issues around youth were still being debated largely in the absence of young participants. I think there was some irritation at the structural conditions that produced such a situation.3 In a country where younger age-groups remain excluded from the sphere of decision-making, many suddenly had



high expectations for Furuichi as a young person writing about young people.⁴



Furuichi Noritoshi at Akamon, Tokyo University

The second factor that generated a roaring reaction was, quite possibly, the fact that the book's title, The Happy Youth of a Desperate Country, seemed to suggest a separation, or even mutual irrelevance, between Japan the nation ('a desperate country') and its young people. It seemed that the author was observing both Japan and youth from the outside, as if the challenges faced by both were someone else's problems. Furuichi's stance was indeed to treat the two rather independently, which probably provoked especially middleaged and older readers. To them, Furuichi's writing style probably seemed precisely like something that 'young people of today' (imadoki no wakamono) would adopt.5

Alongside the wider response to Furuichi's book, I became curious about the author's reflections. What did he now think of the scope of his argument and its impact? At the same time, I wanted readers from outside Japan to discover Furuichi's book because I thought it well captures the mood prevailing in today's Japan. How would foreign readers react to its

observations?⁶

I contacted Toivonen and Furuichi and arranged to meet in Tokyo in December 2011. We were joined by Tomu Ogawa (who is carrying out an historical analysis of Japanese youth discourses from a perspective different from that of Furuichi). Although this was the first time for Toivonen to meet Furuichi and Ogawa, a spirited exchange of ideas immediately unfolded. Since the three showed enthusiasm towards my tentative project, we undertook to turn it into collaborative research.

One important motivation for deciding to carry out a two-way book review — beyond simply introducing as yet untranslated works to one another — was to present, using an innovative format, the arguments and essential backgrounds of these books to a readership outside the language area within which they were written. In the dialogue section, the authors expand on these reviews and take up further issues. Here the four of us consider possible future directions for the development of this project and for the comparative study of youth beyond the boundaries of Japanese society.

Clearly, the last thing we wish to accomplish through this article is to unwittingly reinforce the division between Japan-based research carried out by native scholars and Japanfocused research carried out by international scholars. Nor do we want to end with simply comparing 'topical' phenomena in Japan and overseas. This could easily turn into a discussion of only superficially related, poorly defined phenomena (e.g. NEETs in Finland vs. NEETs in Japan), leading to relapse into 'catchup' thinking (e.g. 'Japan must learn from Finnish education'). An important function of comparison is to find not only distinctions between subjects that are compared, but also commonalities. As a final goal, the approach we are building through dialogue and reflexive comparison should be relevant from the



perspective of individuals grappling with problems that appear personal but that, through sharing, can be discussed more widely, hopefully to the benefit and even joy of a wide range of people.

These goals are furthered by the fact that we are publishing this article simultaneously in both English and Japanese. Needless to say, parts of the English and Japanese versions are not mechanical word-for-word linguistic translations of one another but instead strive to communicate the meaning accessibly and in ways appropriate to each language and underlying academic tradition.

We plan to develop this project further and welcome contacts from potential collaborators and other interested individuals or organizations. To this end, we have set up a Facebook page where we will record our progress and facilitate open discussion on youth issues in both English and Japanese. We would be grateful to have your thoughts on how to develop a more reflexive, academically robust yet personally relevant approach to studying youth in and beyond Japan from a global standpoint.

Finally, this is a project that the four of us have launched on our own initiative based on a collaborative, spontaneous spirit. In other words, resources are scarce and we are in sore need of supporters. To ensure the continuation and flourishing of this project, we therefore warmly welcome any kind of support that individuals and organizations who share our goals may be able to provide.

2. A Sociology of Japanese Youth That Could Not Have Come about in Japan

A review of: Goodman, Roger, Imoto, Yuki, and Toivonen, Tuukka (2012) A Sociology of Japanese Youth: From Returnees to NEETs, Abingdon: Routledge (216 pages, \$51.95 paperback, \$146.81 hardcover)

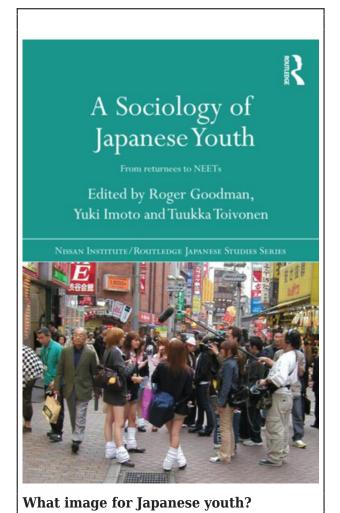
Noritoshi FURUICHI

There are two reasons, to my mind, why it would have been very difficult for researchers trained in Japan to write the chapters collected in A Sociology of Japanese Youth. First, this book stands out for the 'coolness' that the authors maintain throughout. Fittingly for sociologists, the writers set out to analyse 'youth problems' (one of the book's key concepts) from a strictly detached standpoint. As explained in Chapter 1, the analytical framework adopted in the volume is a variant of the social constructionist approach to social problems. This approach postulates that, rather than asking whether a given social problem, such as enjo kosai [compensated dating], exists or not, we ought to examine the claims-making activities and other processes through which particular issues come to be raised as social problems.

I might point out here that, among Japanese sociologists, social constructionism emerged as something of a fashion in the 2000s. Consequently, this sociological approach has typically been either praised too highly or too unfairly criticized. Despite all the interest, however, regrettably few studies have attempted to rigorously apply constructionism to the study of youth problems.

Owing to its consistent constructionist orientation, some readers of A Sociology of Japanese Youth may feel that the volume adopts something of a 'mean' attitude towards the topics it tackles. In Chapter 7 that examines the issue of NEETs (those not in education, employment or training), for example, a simple table is used to show the tremendous extent to which the perceived prevalence of this 'problem' has been made to vary by manipulating its definition (p. 145). Most people ascribe an objective character to statistical figures, but in actuality we find that while one study uncovers 760,000 NEETs, another discovers as many as 2.5 million.





Why is there such a large discrepancy? One answer has to do with the age-range applied when defining the underlying category of 'youth'. For instance, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and related bodies currently define 'young people' [wakamono] as those between the ages of 15 and 34, but this vast age bracket is in fact the outcome of continuous expansion in the postwar period. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s the popular term 'working youth' [kinrō seinen] referred to those aged 15 to 19, during the 1980s, the upper limit for 'youth' was pushed up to 24. This was further extended to 29 in the 1990s and finally to 34 in in the 2000s. Toivonen points out that one reason for the extension of the category of 'youth' to 15-34 is that certain policy-makers' wish to capture the so-called

lost generation (those who experienced the 1993-2005 hiring freeze [shūshoku hyōgaki]) as a target for policy intervention. In short, the large NEET figures that were publicized in the 2000s were, to some extent, an artefact of statistical data and choice of definition.

The driving factors underlying the problematization of NEETs are likewise analysed in a somewhat 'mean' fashion in Chapter 7. Although several actors are said to have been involved in the construction of this category, an important role was played by researchers from the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT) and The University of Tokyo's Institute of Social Science (ISS). With the shrinking of research budgets, Toivonen observes, many scholars in Japan have felt pressured to publish results that are not merely of high quality but that also lead to more funding due to being closely aligned with central government concerns. This is clearly one reason why the 'discovery' of NEETs, and the emergence of this group as an object of heated debate, unfolded entirely in the absence of the voices of young people themselves.

We thus see that social problems - including youth problems - do not have a neutral existence at all. A Sociology of Japanese Youth argues persuasively that youth discourses are created through the interaction of a diverse set of actors. Just as Stanley Cohen explained with reference to his classic concept of moral panic, in many cases a social problem surfaces around a single incident or a small group that is then made to represent some putative wider 'malaise' (that goes beyond that particular incident or group). This is why otaku, for example, has come to be debated (i.e., constructed into a social issue) in entirely different ways in different periods so that this group at first represented youth deviance but later came to be held up as a symbol of 'cool Japan'. Not infrequently, this process turns 'young people' into nothing but material for adult' narratives about the society they live in.



Whatever the reason, the types of cool-headed analyses collected in A Sociology of Japanese Youth have been rare in the Japanese literature on young people. The authors posit that Japanese youth have in fact been discovered as 'vulnerable' again and again, not only in public discourse but also within presumably valueneutral sociological research. Such a critical, reflexive awareness has been all but missing within Japan.

Perhaps this difference in orientation between A Sociology of Japanese Youth and mainstream scholarship published in Japan is best illustrated by reference to a recent volume edited by Ichiyo Habuchi. The title of this particular publication, Doko ka 'mondaika'sareru wakamonotachi [The problematization of Japanese youth] (Tokyo: Kōseisha-Kōseikaku, 2008), taken alone, would seem to suggest an approach highly similar to that of Goodman, Imoto, and Toivonen. Doko ka 'mondaika'sareru wakamonotachi is clearly a book with strong cultural-sociological coloring. Despite this, however, it addresses, with obvious concern and from a normative standpoint, topics such as 'the increase in 'furītā' [freeters] who lack fulltime employment, and 'the flexibilization of employees in younger age groups'. It goes on to propose policy solutions based on a belief in 'the importance of public support systems'. To me, going this far appears like something that policy scholars rather than those studying the problematization of youth should attempt. (Of course, this is not to suggest that Japanese sociology is always this explicitly political and that overseas sociology is not. To the contrary, my impression is that overseas youth research is usually quite attuned to the prevailing policy/political context.)

As Peter Berger famously writes, sociology can be unpleasant when it exposes how the world that people perceive as self-evident is constructed. Yet, the more unpleasant it is, the more it also 'succeeds' as sociology. In particular, for Japanese readers (sociologists included) who have repeatedly constructed youth as 'a vulnerable party', the detached orientation of this book may feel unpleasant. That, however, is precisely what proves its sociological relevance.

A second major aspect that stands out about A Sociology of Japanese Youth is that it analyzes several themes that are only rarely included within the scope of youth research in Japan. As the table of contents indicates, the book's case studies comprise bullying [ijime], returnee children [kikokushijo], compensated dating [enjo kōsai], corporal punishment [taibatsu], child abuse [jidō gyakutai], social withdrawal [hikikomori] and non-employed youth [NEET]. Apart from enjo kosai, hikikomori and NEET, these are topics that have rarely been taken up in the context of the sociology of youth within Japan. There, corporal punishment would probably be discussed within the sociology of education, while child abuse would be located within family sociology. In any case, most Japanese sociologists would not usually define these issues as 'youth problems'. In this sense, A Sociology of Japanese Youth serves also as an unintended inventory of what categories overseas sociologists apply a priori when thinking of 'Japanese youth'. What is symbolic, in this respect, is the photograph on the cover of the book. It shows a camera crew engaged in the construction of media reporting on young people, something that Japanese researchers did not, until now, consider to be within the scope of studies on Japanese youth. How, then, do sociologists inside and outside Japan problematize Japanese young people? This is one of the novel research questions invited by A Sociology of Japanese Youth.

By way of conclusion, I want to raise one somewhat more critical point. One of the themes that recur throughout this book is a criticism of Nihonjin-ron (theories of Japaneseness) and theories of Japanese uniqueness in general. As explained in



particular detail in Chapter 8, 'Japanese culture' has frequently been employed by commentators to 'explain' phenomena such as enjo kōsai or ijime. Yet, as Roger Goodman stresses, youth problems arise at specific times and then fade away. Youth problems undergo fads [būmu], so that at one time it's enjo kōsai and at another, furītā. If youth problems really were functions of 'being Japanese' or a product of 'Japanese culture', the editors argue, then that should not be the case.

This book does not, therefore, describe the kinds of youth problems covered in its chapters as being something unique or peculiar to Japan. I entirely agree with this basic point. But though I agree in principle, for all the emphasis placed on Japan's similarity with overseas, it seemed to me that substantive comparison was somewhat thin. In Chapter 7 there is a partial comparison between the category of NEET in Japan and the United Kingdom, which I found interesting. In the United Kingdom, NEET was predominantly defined as a problem of those social classes with the lowest rates of entry to high school and tertiary education, and hence the social integration of such classes was held up as a central policy goal. In Japan, by contrast, the NEET problem has been predominantly talked about as a concomitant of the crisis of the middle classes, and an image of NEET as lazy and lacking in self-esteem has become widespread. As someone from Japan with limited knowledge of foreign societies, I found this kind of a comparison fascinating and would have liked to read more of it.

Even if we rule out Japanese exceptionalism, I would venture to say that paying greater attention to the differences between Japan and various overseas societies would have made this book attractive to a wider readership. Of course this is asking for something that is far from straightforward. Yet I would like to put this request — essentially for more and better comparative youth research — not only to the authors of A Sociology of Japanese Youth but to

all scholars who choose 'Japanese young people' as the object of their scholarly research. This includes researchers based overseas, researchers in Japan, myself and it might also include you, the reader of these lines.

3. The Happy Youth of a Desperate Country and Japan's Shifting Wakamono-ron

A review of: Furuichi, Noritoshi (2011) Zetsubō no Kuni no Kōfuku na Wakamono-tachi (The Happy Youth of a Desperate Country), Tokyo: Kodansha (304 pages, ¥1,890)

Tuukka TOIVONEN

In my view, two dominant perspectives marked the debate on youth in the 1990s and 2000s within Japan. The first held that youth are lazy moral degenerates with no work ethic ('ima doki no wakamono wa keshikaran'). The second, spearheaded by Genda Yūji of The University of Tokyo and others (see Genda 2001/2005), was that youth are in fact the underdogs who shouldered disproportionate costs during Japan's two so-called Lost Decades (they lost the most jobs and/or became nonstandard or marginal workers). The first was the default perspective in the domestic media, while the second line of argument was, and still is, endorsed by sympathetic bureaucrats, commentators and policy experts (see Toivonen, forthcoming). The foreign media has usually sided with the latter camp while taking its cue largely from misleading popular categories such as parasite singles, hikikomori and NEETs.

But what if both sides are off the mark? What if young people are not the losers they are made out to be, hanging desperately on the margins of a society that denies them access to jobs and all forms of success? What if the whole debate so far has mainly been, well, rubbish?

This is precisely the not-so-subtle stance that Furuichi Noritoshi, a well-known writer and



doctoral candidate at the University of Tokyo, advances in his best-selling 2011 book Zetsubō no Kuni no Shiawase na Wakamonotachi (The Happy Youth of a Desperate Country). His core argument - shocking to those who have subscribed to the two dominant perspectives set out above - is simple: According to publicly available statistics, over 70 percent of Japanese youth in their 20s reported being 'satisfied' with their lives (seikatsu ni manzoku shiteiru) as of 2010. This contrasts with an average happiness rate of 60 percent in the high-growth 1960s and with a low point of 50 percent in the 1970s. Mysteriously, young adults' happiness levels shot up to their current heights in the late 1990s, just when Japan was supposed to be entering its most stagnant, depressing lowgrowth era. How to explain this?

Furuichi provides a barrage of insights into this mystery in what is probably the most exhilarating, humorous and daring exposition on the state of Japanese youth ever published in print. The thing to note at the outset about Zetsubō is that it virtually represents a new genre of writing. While mixing academic analysis with blogging-style writing and meshing astute observations of both offline and online interactions, it wields a scalpel that is essentially sociological. Providing an advanced example of wakamono-ron-ron, Furuichi queries - with necessary detachment, skepticism and an unusually high degree of reflexivity - how youth have been constructed and debated in mainstream Japan. The prose alternates, in a uniquely entertaining fashion, between concise references to scholarly sources, witty commentary and humorous cynicism (without leaving the reader confused).

Zetsubō confronts various absurdities and myths regarding Japanese youth head on. First, it exposes two key patterns that have recurred in the Japanese youth debate ever since the early 20th century. In pattern one, adult commentators engage in 'othering' young people, branding them as different and inferior

compared to their own generation. This othering has clearly served as a handy pretext for punitive interventions such as 'managed education' (kanri kyoiku) and corporal punishment (taibatsu), as made clear elsewhere in this journal (Miller & Toivonen 2010). In pattern two, commentators treat youth as convenient pawns, commending them as the beacons of 'hope' and 'a better future' only to send them off to die in wars, to sacrifice themselves in the hell of brutally long working hours, and to become obedient consumers or entrepreneurs at their own risk. In both patterns, adult discourses offer little constructive support or new opportunities to young people. Furuichi does not hide his frustration at the persistence of these patterns: 'In sum, the quality of the youth debates waged by 'adults' has not progressed one iota in the span of an entire century' (p. 66). With even high-profile commentators positing that 'present-day youth are becoming just like monkeys' or developing 'game brains', this frustration is easy to share.

Sociologists as well as historians are likely to benefit even more from Zetsubō's explanation of the very emergence of the concept of 'youth' (wakamono) in the Japanese context. While the two patterns just discussed were evident from the early 20th century onwards (and while the word wakamono itself appears already in classic Japanese literature), it seems that the kind of youth discourse Japan is currently known for took shape as recently as the early 1970s. Why?

A key factor, according to Furuichi, was the establishment of the famous 100 million middle class myth (ichi-oku sō-chūryū). It was this belief in a universal middle-class that simultaneously promoted a homogeneous image of 'young people', defined not in terms of class, ethnicity, place of origin or even gender, but exclusively in terms of age. Such strong assumptions of homogeneity continue to shape youth discourses and indeed policy discussions



up to the present, as I was shocked to find when studying Japan's emerging youth activation policy in the mid-2000s. (In the case of NEETs, the policy debate focused solely on Japanese middle-class youth to the exclusion of ethnic minorities and working class young adults).

The other main underpinnings of Japan's postwar wakamono-ron that Furuichi identifies are (1) larger, more affluent young cohorts from the late 1960s onwards, which turned 'youth' into a major consumer group; (2) a distance of several decades from 1945, making it possible to contrast present youth with supposedly 'superior' young people in the preceding decades (tagging the former as 'the generation that never directly experienced X' [war, poverty, high growth, the 1990s...]); (3) the rise of a distinct youth culture, including manga, anime and communication technologies (which, beginning with the radio, have consistently been linked to forms of withdrawal); and (4) the near-universal reach of national media, including TV. This elucidation is a welcome contribution that nicely complements our accounts in A Sociology of Japanese Youth, which focus on particular youth debates and labels but do not necessarily trace the history of Japan's wakamono-ron in this more general sense.

Zetsubō contains far too many further insights to be introduced here, so I will fast-forward over several interesting sections on nationalism, responses to 3.11 and the desire for social contributionm to the book's conclusions regarding 'happy youth in a desperate country' (the dialogue section below will touch on the issue of how youth have responded to 3.11).

Despite the continuing glorification of permanent employees (seishain) and claims that present 60-year-olds may, on average, end up about earning 100 million yen more than present 20-year-olds (lifetime wages and social

security benefits), Furuichi holds that the latter would still not want to transport themselves to the 1960s or the 1970s after having lived in the 2010s. This is not just because schoolchildren were far more often beaten up by their teachers in those supposedly golden decades (when corporal punishment was not yet considered particularly problematic; see Miller 2012), but because more young people now possess decent livelihoods, defined as the ability to 'play Wii with one's lover and friends' (!) (p.243).

Put more formally, the majority of youth living in today's Japan enjoy the two central goods of economic welfare and recognition from peers. With respect to economic welfare, it is the family, i.e. parents, who keep millions of young adults from slipping into poverty, which is thus not an immediate concern within the experience of everyday life. Here, it is important to clarify that Furuichi indeed chooses to focus on mainstream, middle-class young people in Japan, which is something most sociologists (who typically prioritize various 'minorities' in their studies) have not done. The internet and social networking offer an unprecedented range of tools, in addition to cheap restaurants and fashion items, for connecting with others. Many do report feeling insecure (fuan), but this should not be misinterpreted as implying that young people are longing for the dreary old salaryman lifestyle.

It is too bad that, as Furuichi explored at length in his previous book (Kibō Nanmin Go-Ikkōsama: Peace Boat to 'Shōnin no Kyōdōtai', 2010), all this well-being and social connectivity may be cooling down young people's aspirations for 'changing the world'. Even the demonstrations and fund-raising activities that unfolded in the wake of 3.11 seem to have been more about connecting more closely with friends than helping victims and genuinely reforming society (another point to which we return in our taidan).



The implications of Furuichi's book for how youth are studied and discussed in Japan are vast. Controversially, but with good reason, Zetsubō suggests that not much will necessarily change in terms of young people's lives simply due to the triple disaster of March 2011. It also questions accepted wisdom regarding social disparities (kakusa) by suspecting that youth may, in fact, not become particularly unhappy even if Japan grows more unequal. Foreign reporters, meanwhile, will learn that it is time to stop asking why Japanese youth are 'politically passive', for it is rather rational for them to have given up hope in a political system where they have little potential for influence (although political activism may also be taking on new, more implicit forms; see below).

It should be mentioned that Zetsubō has been criticized heavily in Japan. This reflects the book's popularity as well as its refutation of numerous cherished myths and popular assumptions. It has, moreover, been misinterpreted as claiming that 'all Japanese youth are happy' and that nothing, in particular, should thus be done to support groups of young people. This is beside the point, however, for Furuichi does not deny that some young people in Japan, especially those who do not enjoy the support of the nuclear or extended family, face tangible poverty and educational exclusion, for example.

To my mind, Furuichi captures, successfully, and with great ethnographic nuance, the spirit of the contented majority within Japanese 20-somethings. Without exaggeration, he has set a new, more self-aware and critical agenda for the study of Japanese youth in the 2010s. By clarifying a range of juicy dilemmas that are open to further empirical scrutiny, his book will continue to provide a trove of terrific research ideas for Japanese and international scholars for years to come. It needs to be translated into English as soon as possible.

Of course, all books have their shortcomings, and some may be disappointed to find that Furuichi delivers few tangible policy prescriptions or sophisticated statistical analyses. Some will moreover doubt the validity of the standard happiness statistics Furuichi employs and may long for a deeper engagement with the vast international 'happiness studies' literature which has developed various sophisticated approaches to measuring this dimension of human existence. It is possible to respond to such criticism by pointing out that Furuichi is clearly merely exploiting 'happiness' - not his main concern per se - as a useful tool for de-stabilizing existing youth discourses (that many now agree have been excessively gloomy to the point of gravely distorting various research endeavours). Nevertheless, the author could have added at least one substantial section, perhaps towards the end of his volume, where the considerable methodological challenges of measuring human well-being could have been dealt with in greater depth.

Also, quite little is said in the book regarding the role of young creative leaders, including social entrepreneurs such as Kogure Masa (Table for Two) or Komazaki Hiroki (Florence). Such 'quiet mavericks' (see Toivonen, Norasakkunkit & Uchida 2011) may be a key to the constructive re-organization of society in the near future and thus warrant more attention from social scientists in Japan and beyond. Incidentally, Furuichi's present research activities seem to focus on both the role of young entrepreneurs as well as so-called nomad workers (nomado wākā), suggesting that his future publications may place greater emphasis on young adults' agency and new work styles.

Finally, the key prediction that Zetsubō makes regarding the future is that there may no longer be such a thing as a meaningful wakamono-ron (i.e. a distinct public debate on 'youth') once the pillars of this enterprise —



most saliently, the 100-million middle-class myth — erode further. While other perspectives such as class are likely to re-emerge as focal points for scholarship and public debate, the crucial thing is that the entire Japanese mainstream population is now adopting what used to be viewed as a 'youth' culture, making 20-year-olds far less distinctive a group in all respects except age. Whether one agrees with this view or not, Furuichi does have a point when he reminds us that we live in an era in which even Tokyo University sociologist Ueno Chizuko tweets.

4. Dialogue: Towards Comparative Youth Research

Edited by Tomu Ogawa

*This discussion was held in Jinbōchō, Tokyo on April 6th, 2012.

Two important books on Japanese youth, both distinctive in terms of approach, were published in 2011. The Happy Youth of a Desperate Country [Zetsubō no Kuni no Kōfuku na Wakamono-tachi] by Noritoshi Furuichi, a 'young' researcher aged 26 at the time of publishing, and A Sociology of Japanese Youth, co-edited by Roger Goodman, Yuki Imoto and Tuukka Toivonen. Both books problematize Japanese youth issues and discourses from partly overlapping but original standpoints. For this conversation, we asked the two authors, Furuichi and Toivonen, to begin with a brief commentary on each other's books and to then move on to a spontaneous open discussion on 'Japanese youth after 3.11' as well as on future research possibilities.

The problematization of youth in Japan

Terachi: What thoughts crossed your minds while you were reviewing each others' books?

Furuichi: When I read Tuukka's observation that many books about young people in Japan are written with the aim of leading the reader to agree with a specific policy goal, I thought: that is absolutely true. But I would like to add that there are two main types of youth research in Japan. First, there are contributions like certain books on otaku that are completely uninterested in questions of policy and rather pursue a kind of 'closed' cultural critique. Then there are accounts such as books on nīto or furītā that are written with a view to promoting specific policies. In a sense, though the first are 'value-neutral' (in the sense that they do not call on youth to conform to certain lifestyle expectations), they are policy-oriented and they are not social science. The second stream emphasizes quantitative analysis, so in a sense its methods are socially scientific, but the conclusions skew towards specific policies. I have the feeling that until now, most Japanese books on youth have tended towards one of these two extremes. There have been few highquality studies that have not fallen into these two boxes. Tuukka's book, on the other hand, applies social constructionism, which is a very 'cool' and detached way of looking at society. I really enjoyed reading it. I had the sense that the contributors to A Sociology of Japanese Youth were effortlessly accomplishing something that would be difficult for a Japanese researcher to do.

Toivonen: Reading Furuichi's book, I thought it should definitely be made generally available to overseas readers. I think it would deal a shock to foreign [non-Japanese] media in particular. For example, The New York Times recently asked why Japanese young people do not hold more demonstrations and why they do not protest more against the presumably 'deplorable' state of their society. Clearly, overseas media have their own biases and agendas. They have certain implicit expectations for what kind of society they want Japan to be. In fact, they expect Japan to fulfil ideals that they wish could be fulfilled by their own countries, such as the United States. For instance, they demand that Japan become a more equal society. Surprisingly, even the



supposedly conservative British magazine The Economist follows this pattern. What I enjoyed in Furuichi's book was that where before the discussion was only about whether the youth are a 'problem' or whether they are 'losers' and 'underdogs' that we should feel sorry for, he sends out a simple message that, hey, twothirds of young people claim that they are quite happy. I suspect this kind of an approach could be applied to youth discourses in other countries as well. When writing about youth, analysts tend to problematize them and end up preoccupied with those perceived as a 'problem', or those who are believed to be most 'at risk'. I think Furuichi's contribution is an important in broadening our attention so that we come to notice all kinds of layers of young people and that reality is multi-dimensional.

Terachi: Furuichi, as Tuukka just pointed out, you argue that young people who are usually described as unfortunate are actually quite happy. Is there not, however, a risk of triggering a backlash whereby the public comes to think that if there is no need to feel sorry for young people, there is also no need to provide them with any support?

Furuichi: It seems to me that since the late 2000s, people have come to problematize 'pitiful youth' [kawaisona wakamono] in this way, but ultimately this has led to only halfhearted results. Even though people often talk about how hard things are for the 'lost generation' [rosujene] or for irregular employees [hiseiki], it is doubtful whether this has had any real policy impact. I think that is because few young people themselves have been able to participate in the debate. In reality, not that many young people are unhappy including many in irregular employment who perfectly fit the lost generation stereotype. When I began to seriously consider these issues. I realized that there were clear limitations to framing the problem in terms of 'pitiful youth'.

In a nutshell, if you want to discuss young people in a policy context, you need to transcend arguments that call for more support 'because young people are suffering' or 'because youth are in an unfortunate position'. I think that a more productive way of framing the discussion is to say that young people are useful to society, and that if we do not empower youth then society will cease to be sustainable. Another danger is that if you buy into the premise that 'youth are in a pitiful situation', that can lead to a progressively uncharitable, or mean, attitude towards young people. Basically, the risk is that we become less and less accommodating, to the point that we start criticizing youth by asking questions like 'why don't you stand up for yourself since you are in such a terrible situation?' This feels wrong. Because there is no reason to believe these problems impinge on young people exclusively, given that they have wider societal and sustainability-related implications, it does not make sense to reduce them to 'youth problems'. This is an assumption that underlies my thinking.

Toivonen: In every country, the transition to post-industrial society is proceeding in a similar way and youth unemployment is rising, but in the case of Japan, this transformation in the state of society was immediately blamed on young people. If you look, on the other hand, at European countries such as Finland or the United Kingdom, for example, where there are still echoes of social democracy, problems are blamed not on individuals but on social institutions and labor demand. When it comes to explaining why this labeling and problematization of youth occurs in Japan, I think that an important underlying reason is that young people are excluded from spheres of decision-making concerning policy, as you have just pointed out. They are a so-called 'muted group' [koe naki shūdan].

Furuichi: It seems to me that in Japan, until recently, there was such a close relationship



between schools and the labor market that it was not necessary to think about those who fell in the grey zone in between. Because people were either in work or in education, it was enough to have an education policy and a labor policy, and there was no need to think seriously about policies for young people who were in between the two. I think one could also say that because there were no policies in place for young people, discussions of young people were prone to being reduced to 'cultural' discussions. Conversely, in Europe, since it has long been common in many countries that people in their 20s go back and forth between education and the labor market, perhaps it is the case that turning 'youth' into a policy issue and considering how to support them via social policy is something that simply could not be avoided.

Japanese youth after 3.11

Toivonen: From the point of view of international readers, such as those who follow Japan Focus and who are examining Japan from the 'outside', your book contains some rather surprising arguments. For example, you write that Japanese youth have not particularly changed as a result of the triple disaster that hit their country on March 11, 2011; you suggest that actions that did unfold were essentially 'within the realm of prediction' [sōteinai].

Terachi: I think that in the past, too – including when the Great Hanshin Earthquake struck the Kansai area in 1995 – there was a strong expectation that young people would somehow stand up. Even if you hold that major changes in youth behaviour did not take place in the wake of 3.11, do you see any differences at all between the period before and after this recent calamity?

Furuichi: I do of course agree that there was a surge of activity immediately after the disaster. Especially in the Kantō area, amidst worries that electricity could go out and that

radioactive materials might be coming in, there was a widespread trend of youth taking action (as stakeholders), whether through demonstrating or participating in volunteer activities in the disaster-stricken areas. But when it comes to the question of whether these activities have been sustained in the long term, the answer is no. On the other hand, if you consider a variety of groups and focus on those committed to a specific geographic area, then many of these have continued longer than you might have expected. In other words, although the aftermath of 3.11 was a momentary 'festival' [matsuri] for many youth, for a minority it served as a trigger for greater social contribution [shakai kōken]. Either way, it is not sensible to exaggerate the extent or importance of such activity.

For me, the crucial question is how to effectively support young people's involvement through policy action. To begin with, though the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake initially led to enthusiastic talk about 1995 being the 'year zero of volunteering' [borantia gannen], when you examine the stats you find that the number of people actually involved in volunteering did not increase very much. Granted, it is true that the NPO Law was put into place in the wake of the disaster, and that there have been continuous developments in this sphere since. When it comes to 3.11, while it is not unimportant to observe what young people were doing right after the calamity, I would say it is far more constructive to ask how we can lend solid support to those few young people who did act. How can we back them up through policy? Of course, as I sit here talking about what I think should be done, many active exchanges are already taking place between 'young people' and 'grown-ups', including discussions led by certain government departments and well-established NPOs.

Toivonen: Whenever we begin to wonder aloud why young people did not react as actively to an occurrence as we might have liked them to, why they were not more active than they were, it is all too easy to revert to typical wakamonoron, or entrenched theories and assumptions regarding the nature of Japanese youth. We start giving reasons such as 'young people are introverted' [wakamono wa uchimuki da], 'they lack courage', 'they are passive' - that is why they did not act. The critical thing to ask, however, is: if we agree that young people really did not act and respond to a sufficient extent, what can be done to activate them? This is but one example, but when I was researching a student-led organization called Youth for 3.11 that dispatches student volunteers to disasterstruck areas [see Toivonen 2011], I noticed how young people were confronted with all kinds of significant obstacles and problems, and how the leaders worked hard to overcome them to enable more youth to volunteer. To successfully send more young people to the front lines, Youth for 3.11 created a viable 'business model' that helped them identify potential sponsors and collaborating institutions, which eventually made it possible for student volunteers to travel to the disaster-affected areas for free [as opposed to typical travel costs of 30,000-40,000 yen, depending on distance].

I found it extremely interesting to observe this group and the battery of serious obstacles that hindered student volunteering, including systemic barriers and resistance from large organizations as well as parents. Whenever young people in Japan fail to act in the face of a pressing situation, I would argue that this is at least half due to societal reasons - it is not necessarily true that young people lack motivation at the individual level. Following 3.11, many young people wanted to work in the front lines to provide relief, but their parents did not welcome this. Many lacked the money to pay for transport, and many had a hard time taking days or weeks off from university. These kinds of obstacles, among other challenges, prevented many a young person from acting. Shockingly, most universities were extremely reticent to support relief activities - in the case

of universities in the Kansai area for which I found figures, only about 0.6 percent of their students were sent to the disaster-stricken areas through university-based schemes. There were very few universities that dispatched more than one percent of their students. When universities did send students to Tohoku, it was usually for short periods such as three days and typically was not counted towards course credits. On the positive side, because there is an increasing number of social entrepreneurs such as those who lead 'Youth for 3.11' and who search for intelligent solutions to overcome precisely these kinds of barriers, now is a great time to examine new mechanisms that can empower young people. Rather than thinking in terms of 'motivation' at the personal level or young people's 'character', research that takes such a dynamic perspective is likely to yield constructive results.

The future of Japanese society

Terachi: Even if, as Furuichi-san has said, today's young people consider themselves happy, some would argue that the situation is likely to change in one or two decades' time. What do you think will change for Japanese society and Japanese young people in the near future?

Furuichi: I have in fact already had the opportunity to craft two possible scenarios. One scenario that I wrote for a magazine recently, describes a hopeless situation in the year 2042 ('2042: Shūen o matsu kimyō na kōfuku-kokka' ['2042: A strange happiness state that awaits its end'], Shincho no. 45, May 2012). The other scenario called 'Japan in 2050' was presented at a conference organized by the Cabinet Office.8 You might not believe it but there really was such a conference to consider this country's situation in the year 2050! In fact, the particular committee I joined was called 'the happiness section of the frontier subcommittee', which sounds more like the name of a religion [laughs].9

For the moment, pessimistic future scenarios feel most 'real' to me personally. To be more exact, what I mean by a hopeless scenario is one in which stable employment gradually disappears, younger age groups increasingly leave Japan, and a society that is characterized by widening disparities [kakusa shakai] comes to be taken for granted. Within such a scenario, the shift towards class polarization continues, meaning that the dream of social mobility all but evaporates. People's main reference groups will therefore come to comprise those closest to them within the same social class. Hence in this possible future scenario, people's sense of inequality may increase very little despite an 'objective' rise in inequality, and for this reason riots or protests may not be triggered. You could, in this situation, imagine a last-resort social security system that relies heavily on the wide dissemination of antidepressant drugs and a restricted basic income scheme. It is a vision of what will happen if we pursue a particularistic as opposed to universal policy that treats each social class and reference group. Other more favourable scenarios hinge, to some extent, on reaching an agreement as a nation on the distribution of public burdens. In short, in this kind of an alternative scenario, whoever is able to work works, irrespective of age or gender. Whoever can pay taxes pays them. No separation is made, as is done currently, between the 'active generation' [gen'eki sedai] and the 'elderly'. In the conference I just mentioned, we called this second pattern the 'total participation society' [zen'in-sanka-gata shakai]. The possibility of something like it emerging is not zero. Of course, at this point we do not know which of these two futures will be realized.

Toivonen: Relating to this topic, I might add that Generation X, the baby boomers and others born immediately after WWII, naturally judge the world from their own points of view and they often that warn society is moving in an undesirable direction. This is the case within sociology, with people like Beck, Sennett, or

Putnam. In the sociology of work as well, including studies of the so-called 'new economy' especially, you quickly realize that many pundits demonstrate considerable nostalgia when they denounce the current situation of increasingly flexible and mobile individual trajectories. Looking through this kind of a nostalgic lens, you cannot help but feel pessimistic about society. On the other hand however, when you head out and interview real young people living in today's society, they are not necessarily concerned about successes of the past. In other words, if vou switch evaluative lenses, the future does not necessarily look so bleak. So there is a problem: the way in which you forecast the future depends on whose lens you adopt. Authors of pessimistic theories are, generalizing somewhat, British or American, aged 50s to 60s, and one reason they see a largely dark future is that they themselves grew up in an employment-based society. Now they are seeing it fall apart, and they think 'this system has no future': we will never be able to match the old level of pension payments; social protection is crumbling; and so forth. I think the first thing to do is to become strongly conscious that such biases are at work.

Furuichi: Emblematic of your book is the final chapter by Roger Goodman. The message there is that Japan is a rather good country, after all. A good country in the sense that average life expectancy is high, that it is a safe place to live, and that people have social capital. I think it is possible to maintain that even though it faces various different problems, Japan continues to seem attractive when viewed from abroad. If we closely scrutinize different countries around the world today, there really are not that many we can consider 'successful'. In fact, the future of the European countries is far from certain when you consider the impact of the economic troubles spreading via Greece and Spain. I personally agree with those who find Japanese writers too pessimistic.

It may be that it is possible for me to hold these views since I work in both the academic and corporate world, I belong to neither sphere exclusively. It is true that nowadays it is no longer clear whether being a regular employee of a large firm offers good long-term prospects. Because the seniority wage curve is still there, while you are young they make you work hard for a low salary, except that now there is a chance the company itself may go bankrupt in the future. On the positive side though, provided you manage to stay outside this hopeless system, I think there has also never been a freer time. In that respect, I have certain expectations, a certain degree of hope. Setting aside the question of how to provide effective policy support towards this more hopeful scenario, which requires a separate discussion, the present era is more free in terms of the possibilities open to individuals, so I am not convinced things are really so bad.

Toivonen: There are all kinds of resources here in Japan: there is incredible wealth and there are dense linkages within the global economy. And there is ample social capital. If you decide to undertake a project, you benefit from preexisting relations of trust and things move forward quickly. Because of this, if people in Japan come to increasingly belong to a multiplicity of social contexts - which is one suggestion you have put forward elsewhere information is likely to circulate even faster and all kinds of combinations and new ideas become possible. So I think that Japan, through new rearrangements and intensive sharing of resources, can multiply its current resources. There are countries, including some in Eastern Europe, where there is practically no such social capital, and there you really could say that circumstances are 'hopeless'. But Japan has these basic relationships of trust and this organizational potential.

Towards comparative youth research

Terachi: I would like to hear your current ideas

regarding the future development of research on young people, whether with reference to the domestic or global dimension.

Furuichi: I am really interested in youth-related phenomena overseas. I view each country, each administrative area as a site of continuous policy experimentation. The fact that social institutions are so different in each country despite being the creation of the same human species is remarkable – every country has its particular history, its particular institutions, whereby the present-day situation is the result of a very long process. Since it is not possible to set up more than one large experiment in a given area at a given time, it is incredibly interesting to study diverse countries as 'laboratories' where different experiments are being carried out.

Toivonen: In the place of the kinds of experiments conducted in the natural sciences, in the social sciences the comparative method plays a comparable role. However, the cost of comparative studies tends to be high and they always straightforward are methodologically, either. In the field of youth studies, because you inevitably operate within the 'fog' of emotionally charged theories and assumptions about youth [wakamono-ron] that are deeply entrenched in any society, this often influences the aims and targets of research without one's even noticing it. For example, from any sensible scholarly standpoint, a project that that sets out to compare NEETs in Europe and the US with those in Japan based on the contention that there are an increasing number of NEETs in the latter country would be a frightening case in point. In these kinds of studies, key actors (not necessarily with any bad intention, but certainly with particular goals in mind) end up applying to other countries categories that are strongly colored by the Japanese context. I do not think it is possible to obtain neutral data from such research - this is a variety of research marked by strong biases and preconceptions from the



start. That is why in order to conduct sound comparative research on youth, one needs to be firmly aware of dominant theories and assumptions about young people. This includes understanding who defined existing categories and why. One must then search for an independent approach better suited to comparison. In this sense, we wrote A Sociology of Japanese Youth as a first step towards the comparative study of youth, and I think Furuichi's book, too, is an extremely valuable guide to understanding how presumably scientific research has been influenced by the biases implicit in youth discourses.

Finally - and this applies equally to countryspecific research as well as to international comparisons - there is a higher chance one will produce original results when going beyond a single paradigm or analytical dimension to examine several relevant dimensions. Gosta Esping-Andersen, who might be called the father of comparative social policy, crafted a theory of welfare state regimes that draws on several key dimensions [decommodification, stratification, defamilization; see Esping-Andersen, 1990]. One could say that the impact of Furuichi's book derives from the fact that it puts forward an unconventional analytical axis - that of happiness - which is not reducible to more established dimensions such as 'economic growth' or rates of 'regular' vs. 'irregular employment'. The effectiveness of employing new analytical axes springs from their power to unsettle unconscious preconceptions. So just by switching the analytical lens, an alternative reality may become visible, and another possible future may come into view as well. The comparative method is profound, and I would like to propose it as a new fundamental method for the field of youth research.

Furuichi: I might add that Esping-Andersen's work is of course well-known for its criticism of convergence theories that hold that any society, provided economic growth continues long enough, will ultimately develop the same kind of welfare state. Though I am not sure whether it is appropriate to draw a simple parallel between youth and welfare state studies, in any case, we can think of countless studies in both areas that fail to free themselves from the author's own normative ideas regarding the 'ideal society' or the 'good society'. I believe most pundits are therefore tacitly building convergence theories or models in their minds. Within such a scholarly context, sound comparative studies can potentially make a very valuable contribution. Ultimately, I do not think there is that much sociology can do. 'Comparing', 'dividing' and 'naming' is about the limit. Of these, I expect that 'comparing' will become even more valuable than it is already.

Terachi: In order to compare, you need to pay attention both to points of commonality and points of difference. In that sense, I think there will be an increasing need for platforms that make it possible to also discern similarities between different societies and contexts. What we are striving to achieve with this project could, I think, become such a platform for international comparison in the future. Thank you both for this initial discussion.

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Author profiles

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Tuukka Toivonen holds a Ph.D. in Social Policy from the University of Oxford. He serves as a Junior Research Fellow at Green Templeton College, University of Oxford, and as a visiting scholar at the Research Institute for Economics and Business Administration (RIEB) of Kobe University. His current scholarly work is centered around youth, policy and social innovation. He is now recruiting research collaborators for a new global project on social innovation communities, based on the observation that such dense online/offline communities best explain socially entrepreneurial activities by young people. A co-editor of A Sociology of Japanese Youth: From Returnees to NEETs, his monograph, Japan's Emerging Youth Policy: Getting Young Adults Back to Work (Abingdon: Routledge) will be published later this year.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express, on behalf of our entire team, my sincerest thanks for the enthusiastic cooperation afforded to us by Japan Focus and particularly for the editorial stewardship of Mark Selden. Our principal translators Mikael Bourqui and Takayuki Yamamoto at the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies of the University of Oxford also deserve a heartfelt recognition for their concise work.

Recommended Citation: Noritoshi FURUICHI (古市憲寿), Tuukka TOIVONEN (トイポネン・トゥーッカ), Mikito TERACHI (寺地幹人) and Tomu OGAWA (小川豊武), "Japanese Youth: An Interactive Dialogue: Towards Comparative Youth Research," The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol 10, Issue 35, No. 3, August 27, 2012.

Notes

- (1) A Sociology of Japanese Youth was first made available in November 2011 (though with 2012 set as the official year of publication).
- (2) Some reacted to Furuichi's book with fierce criticism. This criticism may have partly been triggered by Furuichi's complex writing style, which is simultaneously frank and detached. Hence, though possessing the sensibility of a contemporary young person himself, Furuichi analyses youth as if from the outside, but in a way that is decidedly different from the way adults usually debate (and one-sidedly criticize)



'today's youth'. Ultimately, Furuichi commits to a reflexive sociological stance. His accounts have, it may be added, attracted criticism from those who believe that a 'true researcher' is someone with overwhelming knowledge who can talk confidently and imposingly about their specialty. Others, meanwhile, have been critical towards Furuichi because they would like him to do more to defend young people by speaking up actively so as to help overcome a deplorable status quo. However, both of these streams of criticism are proof that 'youth' remains a topic considered worth discussing in Japan. Further, the responses prompted by Furuichi's work may offer an occasion for those with a certain fixed idea of 'what a true researcher should be like' - including those who have stood aloof from this particular youth debate - to reflect on their own reactions and perhaps think of what they might be able do that Furuichi has not managed to accomplish.

- (3) It is true that in the beginning of the lost generation debate that flared up in the mid-2000s, young people's voices received a fair bit of attention, but I would say that these authentic voices then quickly became a secondary concern (as certain general assumptions regarding the losu-jene took hold and were spread by leading pundits).
- (4) To be more exact, many people probably welcomed the volume because it was one of the few 'youth books' where the starting point was the author's own immediate surroundings. Two things made this possible. First, by virtue of being a young person himself, thinking about youth issues and thinking about his own immediate surroundings were closely related tasks for Furuichi. Second, the societal image of consumption-oriented yet socially concerned young people that Furuichi describes in his book was an image generally being applied by many to the author himself. Thus, instead of expecting him to be a 'representative' of or 'advocate' for youth, many looked to Furuichi as someone who could shed light on the shared

consciousness of, and challenges faced by, today's Japanese youth.

- (5) I think that these two points relate closely to two images of youth discussed by Furuichi in his book, 'convenient collaborators' (tsugo-no-ii-kyoryokusha) and 'strange Others' (ishitsuna-tasha). See Section 3 for further context.
- (6) For further discussion of these points, see this recent dialogue between Furuichi and Eiji Oguma. Also see this blog article by Naoto Mori.
- (7) See individual profiles at the end of this article regarding our evolving personal research interests. These interests will partly inform the direction of this collaborative project.
- (8) The conference material written by Furuichi.
- (9) Website for the happiness section that Furuichi mentioned. The Frontier Subcommittee report (overview) has tentatively been translated into English.

日本の若者についての対話——若者研究の国際 展開を目指して

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*この記事に含まれる書評が対象としているのは、以下の2冊である。

Goodman, Roger, Imoto, Yuki, and Toivonen, Tuukka (2012) A Sociology of Japanese Youth: From Returnees to NEETs, Abingdon: Routledge¹ (明石書店から『若者問題の社会学』 (仮) として近刊予定)

古市憲寿,2011,『絶望の国の幸福な若者たち』



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- 『絶望の国の幸福な若者たち』と日本の変わっていく若者論(トイボネン・トゥーッカ)
- 4. 対談: 若者研究の国際展開を目指して
- 5. 文献、参考資料、著者プロフィール

*英語版の内容とは完全に対応していない箇所がある。

1. はじめに

寺地幹人

共同作成されたこの記事は、日本の若者についてのトピック(例えば、3.11以前と以後)をとりあげるだけでなく、それをきっかけとして比較的なアプローチによる若者研究のためのプラットフォームを構築するための、最初の試みである。また、進行中のPCYR(Project for Comparative Youth Research)と称するプロジェクトの初の成果物でもある。

お気づきのように、この記事は、トイボネン・つに、この記事は、トイボネン・ で著作りに、この記事の最近の著作りで、著作りての著語のない。 内容をさらに掘りている。 はいりにはないないではないではないではないではない。 ないののではないののではないののではないのではないのではない。 こののではないではないののではないのではないのではないがではないがではない。 この経緯を簡潔に説明したい。 その経緯を簡潔に説明したい。

企画のきっかけは、筆者が2011年8月にエストニアで開催されたヨーロッパの日本研究の会議(EAJS)で、日本の若者について研究するTuukka Toivonen氏らのグループと出会ったことだった。彼らは会議で、刊行直前の『A Sociology of Japanese Youth』(2011年11月刊行済)をベースとした報告をしていた。

筆者の個人的な感触であるが、今日の日本の若

者研究は、若者が置かれた困難な状況と共振するように、「若者」を語ることの困難に対してpessimisticである。対して、海外の若者研究は、「若者」を語ることにややoptimisticであるように映る。Toivonen氏らのグループは、この間を縫うような、非常に堅実な議論を展開する可能性を有しているように感じた。

しかし同時に、なぜ「日本の」若者なのか、それを論じる意義を誰とどのように共有ると思内にという点にでは、議論の余地が、若干新のの最新の研究の関心と比較すれば、若干新れる日本解究の最新の研究の関心と思じたのだがグのからに情報が届くまでに生じるタイクさよ、変をに情報が届けるように生じるタイクさな、ががあれているのかいと思った。いないと思いば、日本研究(Japanese Studies)と日本国内で行われているかの有益な示唆をもたらすのではないかと考えた。

そして、その会議から帰国した直後の2011年9月、今や日本でもっとも有名な「社会学者」となった古市憲寿氏の『絶望の国の幸福な若者たち』が刊行され、大きな「反響」を呼んだ。「反響」の大きさは、個人のTwitterやブログに著書に対する感想が次々と書かれただけでなく、刊行以降、彼がさまざまな媒体(Web上の記事、新聞、ラジオ、雑誌、テレビなど)に登場していることや、政府の会議に委員として招集されたことからも伺える²。

日本で展開される「若者」論になじみがない人 に向けて、その背景を簡単に説明しつつ、古市 氏に対する「反響」の大きさの理由を述べるな らば、以下の2点3を押さえたい。1点目は、26歳 (刊行当時)の「若者」自身による「若者」論 だという点が評価されたこと。俗流若者論や若 者バッシングに対して、データに基づく若者論・ 論(メタ若者論)が対抗言説として一定の地位 を確保するようになったのが、2000年代。しか し、依然として多くの人たちは、「若者」が不 在のまま「若者」のことが語られざるをえない 状況や、そうした状況を規定する構造に対する もどかしさを感じていたように思う⁴。若年層が 意思決定の場から遠くに置かれる日本で、比較 的多くの人たちが、「若者」である古市氏に 「若者」について語ることを期待した5。2点目は、



国や(自らも含む)若者をどこか他人事のょうに評していると感じられる『絶望の国の幸福な若者たち』というタイトルや、両者の間に楔を打つ彼のスタンスに対して、「今どきの若者」っぽさを感じて、盛り上がる人たちが(特に中高年層に)一定数いただろうということ。

こうした「反響」の大きさの一方で、古市氏の議論の射程と「反響」が成立する範囲について、彼がどこまで自覚的かという点は気になった。また率直に、今の日本の雰囲気が詰まった⁶彼の本を、そうした雰囲気の外に生きる人たちにも読んでほしい、どのように何を感じるか聞いてみたいと思った。

こうした思いのもとにToivonen氏と古市氏の双方に声をかけ、小川豊武氏(日本の「若者論」「若者語り」の歴史的分析を古市氏とは別の角度で行っている)を加えた4人で初めて集まったのが2011年12月。Toivonen氏と古市氏・小川氏にとっては初顔合わせだったが、そこからお互いの関心を交換していきつつ、筆者のかなり漠然とした構想に興味を示してくれ、一緒に企画を実現していくこととなった。

相互書評の意図の1つは、翻訳されていない2つの書籍を互いに紹介し合うことだが、それ以上に、それぞれの本が書かれた言語圏外の読者に、本の内容と背景をユニークな観点から説明することを目指している。また対談では、相互書評で議論しきれなかった点を整理し、本企画の継続的な進展のための方向性について4人が話をしている。

もちろん、単に日本の内部と外部という区別を 置き比較することが重要なのではない。 比較研究の試みは、ややもすれば、異なる社会の興味 深い事象を取り上げたり、キャッチアップを 指すだけのものになってしまう。そうではな』 古市氏が本のあとがきで「その(『自分くこと 『自分のまわり』の世界を明るくしていたら 『自分のまわり』の世界を明るくしていたら 僕は嬉しい」と述べるように、「『僕』の問題 を「『僕』の問題ではない」範囲の人たちとシアする可能性を広げることこそが、肝要だ。

今後も継続予定の本プロジェクトは、関心をもってくれる全ての個人・団体の参加を歓迎する⁷。Facebook上に本プロジェクトのページを作成しており、その進行を記録していく予定なので、そこで議論し、それぞれの「『僕』の問題」

について考えてもらえると嬉しい。また、本プロジェクトは4人が自主的に始めた活動であり同人的性格をもつため、資源に乏しい。継続のためにも、その趣旨に賛同された方にさまざまな支援をいただけると幸いである。

2. 日本では生まれ得なかった「日本の若者」の社会学

書評対象[]Goodman, Roger, Imoto, Yuki, and Toivonen, Tuukka (2012) A Sociology of Japanese Youth: From Returnees to NEETs, Abingdon: Routledge (明石書店から『若者問題の社会学』(仮)として近刊予定).

古市憲寿

□A Sociology of Japanese Youth』は、二つの意味で日本の研究者には中々書けなかったものだと思う。

本書の一つ目の特徴は、そのクールさだ。著者たちは社会学者らしく、日本の「若者問題」(不会をおして、日本の「若者問題」で分析しようとする。1章で述べられているように、本書は「社会問題の構築主義」を分析フレームでは会問題の構築主義」を分析フレームをして採用している。つまり、援助交際など何らかの社会問題が存在するかどうかよりも、それがいかに社会問題化されるかという「意義申し立て」のプロセスを重視するという手法だ。

日本の社会学界において、構築主義自体は2000 年代以降ある種ブームとして、時には過剰に賞 賛され、時には過剰に非難されてきた。しかし 構築主義を「若者問題」に応用しようとする研 究は決して多くなかった。

本書の視点は、ある読者には「いじわる」に映るかも知れない。たとえばニートが主題となった8章では、「ニート」の数が定義によっていかに変わってしまうかがシンプルな表で示されている(p145)。統計の数字を人は普通「客観的」なものと考えてしまうが、実は「ニート」はある統計では76万人だし、別の統計ではなんと250万人にもなってしまう。

なぜこんなに数字の開きが出てきてしまうのか。 一つの鍵は「若者」を何歳から何歳までと定義 するかということにある。たとえば現在、厚生 労働省などは青年の定義を15歳から34歳までと しているが、日本において「若者」は戦後どんどん延長されてきた。たとえば1960年代や1970年代で「勤労青年」といえば15歳から19歳のことを指したが、これが1980年代には24歳に引き上げられ、1990年代には29歳になり、そして2000年にはついに34歳になってしまう。特に2000年代において34歳までを「若者」に含んだのには、就職氷河期を経験したロスジェネ世代を含みたいという政策担当者の意図もあったという。つまり、これだけ多くのニートは、ある意味でデータによって生まれたというのだ。

「ニート」がなぜ社会問題化されたのかという 分析も、だいぶ「いじわる」だ。「ニート」を 社会問題化したアクターは複数あるが、その中 で重要な役割を果たしたのが独立行政法人労働 政策研究・研修機構や東京大学社会科学のの リサーチャーたちだ。予算が減らされての 研究者たちはただクオリティが高いだけでな く、中央政府に寄り添い、資金を集めている。 果物を公表するプレッシャーにさらされている。 よれが、当事者の声が不在のまま「ニート」は 発見され、論争は盛り上がった理由の一因では ないかというのだ。

このように「若者問題」を含めた「社会問題」を含めた「社会問題」を含めた「社会問題」ではない。ではないって中立的に存在するものではないっての言説は多様なアクターの相互作用による。いり出されるとを本書は主張クとを事性のよって、多くの場合問題というに、多くの場合問題というに、多の事件やさいにない。その語られ方(社会問題化のされ、方)はまるでよってその語られは往くにして、「であったとえば同じ「社会問題化のされた方の語られた方の「社会問題化の苦者」をりまる。

本書のようなクールな分析は、なぜか日本の若者研究には少なかった。著者たちは日本の若者は繰り返し「弱者」として発見されてきたと述べているが、その指摘は本来価値自由であるはずの社会学にもあてはまる。

たとえばタイトルだけ見れば本書と似た問題意識を持っている羽渕一代編『どこか〈問題化〉される若者たち』(恒星社厚生閣、2008年)と比べるとわかりやすいかも知れない。『どこか〈問題化〉される若者たち』は文化社会学的な色彩が強い本である。それにも関わらず、「フリーター

の増大」や「若年層の雇用流動化」を問題にして、「公共的支援の重要性」などを提案する。これは、どちらかといえば政策学者の仕事だろう(もっとも、これは日本の社会学が政治的であり、海外の社会学が政治的でない、という話ではない。むしろ総じていえば、海外のほうが政策・政治的な文脈に寄り添った若者研究が多いという印象もある)。

ピーター・バーガーが述べるように、人々の自明な世界を揺るがす社会学は、時には不愉快なものだ。しかし、不愉快であればあるほど、それは社会学として「成功」したことに発見して発見して、若者を繰り返し「弱者」として発見して発見して、若者を繰り返し「弱者」として発見して、本きた日本の読者(社会学者を含む)にとって本書の「いじわる」さは不愉快なものに映るか義知れない。だが、それは本書の社会学的な意義を証明することになる。

□A Sociology of Japanese Youth』の二つ目の特 徴は、日本の若者研究では中々題材にされない テーマが多く扱われていることだ。章構成を見 てもらえばわかるように、「いじめ」「帰国子 女」「援助交際」「体罰」「児童虐待」「ひき こもり」「ニート」が主なトピックスだ。「援 助交際」「ひきこもり」「ニート」以外は、 中々「若者」の社会学としては取り上げられる ことの少ないテーマである。「体罰」は教育社 会学、「児童虐待」は家族社会学などで扱われ るのだろうが、少なくとも日本の多くの社会学 者はそれが「若者問題」だとは認識していない。 その意味で図らずも本書は、海外の研究者たち がどのようなカテゴリーをアプリオリのものと して「日本の若者」を考えているかを提供する 材料になっている。象徴的なのは表紙の写真だ。 それは、翻って、日本の研究者たちが何を「日 本の若者」と考えてこなかったかを明らかにも している。一体、内外の社会学者は「日本の若 者」をどう「社会学的問題化」してきたのか。 本書の存在は、そのような新しい社会学的問い を誘発する。

最後にひとつ「ないものねだり」をしておこう。 本書を貫く視点の一つに、日本人論など日本特殊論に対する批判がある。特に8章で詳しく述べられているように、いじめや援助交際を説明さる時にはしばしば「日本の文化」がその理由とされる。しかし、若者問題は特定の時期に現れ、そして消えていく。ある時は「援助交際」、ある時は「フリーター」とったように若者問題が「日本はブームがある。もし本当に若者問題が「日本



人」の性質や「日本文化」に由来するものならば、そのようなことは起こらないはずだという のが編者の主張だ。

そこで本書は、日本の「若者問題」をもない。 をものとは考えない。その指摘はの共通に対してある。 を置くあるが、海外の比較の部分にがにがるがに、 では、ないるが、海外の比較の部分にではいるでははいるででははいるでではないではではでいるではないではではでいる。 では、大きないのではないではではでいる。 では、大きないではいかでは、大きないではない。 では、大きないではないが、大きないではない。 では、大きないではないが、大きないではない。 では、大きないが、大きないが、大きないというながにはない。 では、大きないが、大きないはないが、大きでのような人間は特に、 にでいるないといるないといるないといるないとい。 でのような人間は特に、 にないたないないないないないないないないないないないないない。

日本特殊論は論外だとしても、それでもなお残る「日本」と「海外」の違いに対する目配りがあったら、本書はより多くの読者にとって有益なものになったのではないか。もっともこれは「ないものねだり」であって、それを引き受けるのは「日本の若者」を研究対象にする「私たち」(それは海外の研究者かも知れないし、この文章を読んでいるあなたかも知れない)である。

[]. 『絶望の国の幸福な若者たち』と日本の変わっていく若者論

書評対象: 古市憲寿(2011)『絶望の国の幸福 な若者たち』講談社.

トイボネン・トゥーッカ

日本における90年代から00年代にかけての若者 論は2つの主な見方から成り立った怠け者とう。1つ目は、若者をモラルに欠けた怠け者という。1つ目は、若者をモラルに欠けたないもし、労働倫理のかけらも持っていからし、労働倫理のかけらも若はけしからしている。一方、東京大学の玄田有史見方に大学の玄田有史見方。などに代表される2つ目のだ。などに代表される2つ目のだったの時期、若者におないより、非正規雇用の見方を投している)の間、たちは別にの見うこととない。第一の見方を取る議論は、若者に対して「理解」 を示す官僚・言論人、そして政策の専門家から支持されてきたし、現在も支持されている(トイボネン forthcoming)。海外のメディアは、たいていの場合は2つ目の立場を支持するが、ポピュラーだが誤解を招きやすい「パラサイトシングル」「ひきこもり」「ニート」などのカテゴリーを無批判に報道している場合も多い。

しかし、もし両方の見方が要点を外しているとしたら?就職やあらゆる類の「成功へのアクセス」を拒絶するような社会の中で、若者たちはその社会の端っこに絶望的にしがみついているような敗者ではないとしたら?今までの若者をめぐる議論が、実はほとんどナンセンスなものばかりだったとしたら?

これらの「…としたら?」こそが、古市憲寿氏 (東京大学の大学院生でありながら、いまや有 名な言論人でもある)が2011年のベストセラー である『絶望の国の幸福な若者たち』(以下、 『絶望』)で表明したスタンスである。彼の論 点はいたってシンプルだ。上述の2つの見方に与 していた人々にはショックであろうが、2010年 の政府統計によると、日本の20代の若者の70パー セント以上が、自身の生活に「満足している」 と回答したのだ。この数値は、高度経済成長期 の1960年代において平均的な生活満足度が60パー セントであったこと、低いときには1970年代 に50パーセント程度であったことと比べると、 非常に対照的な結果である。不思議なことに、 若者たちの生活満足度は1990年代の後半の時点 ですでに現在のパーセンテージまで上がってい た。ちょうど日本が不景気・経済成長低迷期に 入っていた時期であるにもかかわらず、若者た ちの生活満足度は高かったのである。このパラ ドクスはどのように説明できるのだろう?



らだーーこの作業には、対象との適度な距離・ 懐疑的なスタンス・並々ならぬ柔軟性が必要若 される。かくしてこの著作は、類まれな「若者 論・論」の一例となったのだ。独特のエンタ テインメント性を有するこの『絶望』では、専 門書からの簡潔なリファレンス・ウィットにあ ふれる解説・ユーモラスな皮肉がかわるがもる 表れる(そうでありながら、読者を混乱させる こともない)。

『絶望』はその社会学的メスを振るい、不条理で「神話」的な若者論を切り裂き・燃やし・埋葬する。この著作はまず、20世紀初頭以来、日本の若者論で幾度となく繰り返されてきた2つの主要なパターンを白日の下に晒す。

パターン 1: 年長世代の言論人は若者を「異質な他者」として扱い、「若者たちは年長世代と比べ、異質で劣った世代である」との烙印を押す。本誌の別号で明らかにされたように(ミラー、トイボネン 2010)、劣った世代への「管理教育」や「体罰」などの懲罰的介入に対し、この「他者化」が手軽な口実となっていたのは明らかだ。

パターン 2: 年長世代は「希望」や「よりよい 未来」への導き手として若者たちを誉めそやし ながら、彼らを「都合のいい協力者」として扱 う。この扱いは、ただ若者たちを死地へと追い やり、地獄のように過酷な長時間労働の犠牲に し、自己責任の名の下に従順な消費者・起業家 にさせるためのものでしかない。

いずれのパターンにせよ、年長世代の語る言葉が建設的なサポートや新たな機会を若者に提供することはほとんどない。それらのパターンが確固として残る状況へのフラストレーションを、古市氏は包み隠さず語る。「有識者たち」は石者たちを「ケータイを持ったサル」や「ゲーム器」とみなすのが適切だと思っている節もあることから、古市氏のフラストレーションは多くの読者には容易に理解できるだろう。

『絶望』では、日本の文脈における「若者」という概念の出現に関する説明がなされており、歴史学者はもちろんのこと、社会学者たちもこの説明の恩恵に与っている。上述の2つのパターンは20世紀初頭以降から認められるものである(「若者」という言葉自体は日本の古典文学にすでに現れているが)のに対し、最近になって流布している若者論の類は1970年代初めに形成されたように思われる。1970年代の初頭に何が

あったのか?

戦後の若者論を説明しうるその他の要素を、古 市氏は以下のように整理している。

- 1) 1960年代後期以降の、より豊かなたくさんの若者によって形成される。この頃、「若者」というカテゴリーは多数の消費者層を表すようになった。
- 2) 1945年という節目からの何十年もの隔たり。この隔たりは、現在の若者たちと、「優れていた」と思われている何十年か前の若者たちとの比較対照を可能にする(現在の若者たちは「戦争」「貧困」「高度経済成長」「90年代」などを直接に経験したこのない世代、として見られることになる)。
- 3) マンガ・アニメ・コミュニケーションテクノロジーなど、明らかに「若者文化」と呼べるものの出現(ラジオの登場にはじまるこの流れは、その後一貫して「ひきこもり」的なライフスタイルとリンクしてきた)。
- 4) テレビを含む、国民的メディアのほぼ全面的な普及。

これらの説明は、私がグッドマンと井本と共編したSociology of Japanese Youth(『日本の若者の社会学』)において必ずしも十分に検証されていない、若者問題の歴史的形成についての大切な解釈である。

『絶望』には、ここで紹介し切れないほどの多くの洞察が詰められている。そこで本稿では、

興味深いテーマであるが仕方なく「ナショナリズム」・「3.11への反応」・若者の「社会的貢献意欲」については省略することにする。『絶望の国の幸福な若者たち』についての古市氏の基本的な結論だけをまとめてみよう(なお、若者たちの3.11への反応については、4.の対談で触れられている)。

いまだに正社員像は美化され続けているし、現在60歳の世代が平均として稼ぐ生涯賃金(賃金と社会保障)は、現在20歳の若者たちょりも1億円も多い、という主張もある。だがそれでも、2010年代を生きる現在の若者たちは、自身を1960~70年代に送り込むなど真っ平ごめんだと思っている、と古市氏は述べる。これはただと思っている、時代とされる当時に生きての当時、体罰は特段問題とは考えられていなかったりいるがけではなく、いまや多くの若者がそれなりの生活水準に達しているからだーー要するに、「恋人や友だちとWiiで遊ぶ」(p. 243)ことができる生活レベルだ。

古市氏が前著『希望難民ご―行様――スボしたスボーとに検えるとは、で詳細なってがりなすっとがりなす。これを変えないをきがいたがりないとは、若者したはまれながりできれないをもしまえないをもしたがりでは、本者によったなりには、本者によったがあるといるがあるといるがりたいとの論点にでいるのがある。。

日本の中で、若者たちがどのように学び・議論 しているのかについて、古市氏の著作が示唆す るものは膨大だ。たとえば、3.11という惨事だ けでは若者の生活が大きく変わらないであろう、 という『絶望』の提起は、良い意味で議論する 余地があるだろう。『絶望』は、一般的に語ら れる格差問題にも疑問を投げかける。なぜなら、 たとえ日本社会がもっと不平等になったとして も、若者たちは実際問題、とくに不幸にはなら ないだろうと薄々感じられるからだ。一方、海 外の記者たちは、「なぜ日本の若者たちは『政 治的に受け身』なのだろうか」と問いかけるこ とをやめる時機なのだ、と今こそ学習するので はないだろうか。なぜなら、現在の政治システ ムの中ではほとんど影響力を持ち得ない「若者」 という世代にとっては、政治への希望を棄てて しまうことが何より合理的であるからだ。

もちろん、世の中のあらゆる本には必ず欠点がある。古市氏の本には詳細な政策提言や洗練された統計分析がないことに、がっかりする人もいるかもしれない。また『絶望』では、若くてクリエイティブなリーダーの役割にはほとんど



最後に、『絶望』が示唆する将来像について述 べておこう。それは、いったん若者論の柱とな る前提ーーもっとも重要なのは、もちろん「一 億総中流神話」である――が侵食されてしまっ た後は、意味のある若者論(つまり、「若者」 に関する的を射た言論)のようなものは、もは や存在しないかもしれないということだ。一方 では、学者たちの間や言論界で、今まで語られ てこなかった「階級」のような視点も再び現れ ようとしている。しかし重要なのは、いまや日 本人全体が、かつては「若者」文化としてみな されてきた物事に適応している、ということだ。 このことは、20代の人々を年齢以外の点で識別 することをより困難にする。以上の見方に賛否 両論があるにせよ、古市氏が「上野千鶴子もツ イートする」時代にわれわれが生きていると思 い出させるとき、彼の言葉は核心を衝いている といえるのだ。

4. 対談: 若者研究の国際展開を目指して

編集: 小川豊武

2011年、日本を舞台にこれまでにないスタイルの2冊の若者研究が発刊された。著者自身が当時26歳の若者だった古市憲寿の『絶望の国の幸福な若者たち』。海外研究者の視点から日本の「若者問題」を問題化したトイボネン・トゥーッカ他編『A Sociology of Japanese Youth』。今回の対談(2012年4月6日、東京の神保町で実施)では二人の相互書評を出発点にして、日本の若者や若者論、そして今後の若者研究の在り方などについて、縦横無尽に語ってもらった。

日本における「若者」の「問題化」

【寺地】お互いの本の書評をしてみて、どうい うことを思いましたか。

【古市】トゥーッカさんが、日本の若者論には ある政策目標に誘導するために書かれたものが 多いと仰っていて、たしかにその通りだと思い ました。ちなみに僕は日本の「若者研究」は、 大きく2つに分けられると思います。一つは、政 策のことなんてあまり考えていないオタク論の 様なある種の閉じた文芸批評的なもの。もう一 つは政策誘導的な形で書かれたニート論やフリー ター論の様なもの。前者は政策的ではない分、 価値中立的だが社会科学的ではない。後者は統 計分析などを重視し、手法は価値中立的だが、 結論が政策寄りすぎる。これまでの日本の若者 論はこのどちらかに偏りがちだった気がします。 どちらでもない良質な研究は非常に少なかった、 というのが僕の印象です。しかし、トゥーッカ さんの本は日本の社会というものを、社会構築 主義という、ある種、社会をすごいクールに見 る見方で切り取っていったところがすごく面白 かったですね。日本の研究者ではなかなかでき ないことをさらっとされているなあ、という気 がしました。

【トイボネン】古市さんの本は海外でももっと 読んでほしいと思いました。海外のメディアに とっても衝撃的な内容だと思います。例えば、 『ニューヨークタイムズ』では日本の若者はな ぜもっとデモをしないのか、なぜもっと今の 「最悪の」社会状況に反発しないのかと言って いました。ここで反省の余地があるのは、やは り海外のメディアも海外のメディアのバイアス やアジェンダがあって、こういう社会を抽出し たいという思惑があるということです。例えば、 アメリカで起きてほしいことを、日本を理想化 した上で、日本に要求しているんですね。日本 はもっと平等で日本はもっと素晴らしい社会に ならなきゃいけないというように。驚くことに 『エコノミスト』というイギリス発の経済誌も このパターンです。そして、古市さんの本が面 白かったのは、若者は問題なのか、それとも敗 者やアンダードックでかわいそうなのか、その2 つの議論しかなかった中で、実は6~7割の若者 は自分たちを幸福だと思っていますよとシンプ ルなメッセージを伝えたことです。これは別の 国にも応用できると思います。若者論といえば 若者を問題化することで、問題になっている若 者、あるいは「リスク」に直面しているとされ る若者に注目をしてしまう。そうではなくて、 いろいろな層があって現実というのは多元的で



細かいんだという議論に目を向けさせる、大きな貢献だったと思います。

【寺地】今のトゥーッカさんの話にあったょうに、古市さんは、これまでかわいそうと言われて来た人たちに関して、そうじゃなくて幸福なんだよと主張しましたが、それが、バックラッシュ的な効果をもつことはないのでしょうか。若者がかわいそうではないのだったら別に支援などしなくてもいいのではないか、というように。

【古市】2000年代後半からそういう、「かわいるできたできれてきれてきたと思うのってと思うな若者」が問題化やされてされたと思うなおまないまながないます。はないますがいるといるといるといるという。といてはいるという。という問題のでは、「若者がかわいると、「若がかわいると、「若がかわいると、「若がかわいると、「若者がかわいると、「若者がかわいると、「若者がかわいると、「若者がかわいると、「方には限界があるように思ったんです。

若者をもっと政策として取り上げていくのだっ たら、若者が辛いからとかわいそうだからとい う当事者運動の次元に留まるのではなくて、社 会にとって若者は有益だからとか、若者のこと をちゃんとエンパワーメントしておかないと社 会全体が持続可能ではなくなりますよというフ レーミングの仕方のほうが有益だと思ったんで す。あともう1つは、「若者はかわいそうだ」っ ていう前提に立ちすぎると、どんどん不寛容に なっていくのでは、という懸念です。つまり、 「お前はかわいそうなはずなのに、なぜ立ち上 がらないんだ」という風にどんどん寛容ではな くなっていく。これも気持ち悪いなと思ったん です。別に若者だけの問題ではないはずなのに、 若者の問題として全部帰責されてしまうことは おかしいんじゃないか、そういう意識はありま したね。

【トイボネン】どの国においても同じょうに脱産業化が進んでいますし、若者の無業率や失業率が上昇していますが、日本の場合は、そのように社会の状況が悪化した瞬間に、若者のせいにされたんですね。ヨーロッパだったらい、人のはフィンランドやイギリスに目を向けると、少し社会民主主義的な色があって、そこでは個人のせいではなくて社会の制度や労働需要のせ

いにされる。ではなぜ日本では若者というラベリングがされて問題化されるのかというと、1つは若者が政策を決定する場に入っていないからだと思うんですね。いわゆる「muted group」(声なき集団)になっているという状態。

3.11後の日本の若者に新しい動きはあったのか

【トイボネン□□Japan Focus』読者の様な海外から日本を見ている人たちから見れば、ちょっと意外なことが古市さんの本には書かれています。例えば、この本では、3.11後に日本の若者が大きく変わったわけではなく、想定内の動きしかしなかったと述べられています。

【寺地】阪神大震災の時など、これまでも何かあったら若者が立ち上がるということはあったと思います。大きくは変わっていないとしても、3.11以前と以後で、何か違いがあると思いますか。



評価しても仕方がない。

これを政策的にどう支援していけるかという話 が重要だと思うんですね。そもそも阪神淡路大 震災の時も、ボランティア元年と言われながら も、別にボランティアの数がそこまで増えたわ けではなかったということが、いくつかの統計 を見れば分かります。しかし、あの時は結 局NPO法ができたわけですし、状況はちょっと ずつ変わって来ています。だから3.11に関して も、若者がどう動いたかということは当然大事 ですが、動いた若者をどうバックアップしてい くか、動いたとしてもどう政策的に支援してい けるか、ということを考える方が建設的なので はないかと思います。もちろん僕がここで「思 います」なんて言っている間に、行政や老 舗NPOといった「大人」と「若者」との交流は 既に始まっているんですけどね。

【トイボネン】われわれは、なぜ若者が動かな かったのかを考えている時に、すごく「若者論」 的になってしまいやすいんですよね。若者は内 向きだし、臆病だし、パッシブだし、だから動 かなかった、と。しかし、若者が動けないのだ としたら、彼らをいかにアクティベートするの かが重要になってくるのです。あくまで一つの 例ですが…、「Youth for 3.11」という組織を研 究しているなかで、若者は小さい色々な障害や 問題に直面していて、非常に苦労していて、ひ とりひとり考え、乗り越えようとしていること を知りました。その組織はどうやったら若者が 障害を乗り越えて現場に行けるのかを考えて、 無料で被災地へ行けるようにスポンサーや協力 団体をつけるといったビジネス・モデルを作っ たのです。

 度による妨げによって若者がレスポンスできないという側面もあると思います。と同時に、「Youth for 3.11」の他にもこのような妨げに賢く対処しようとしている社会起業が増えているので、若者をエンパワーする新しい仕組みを研究するのに、今はとてもいいタイミングですね。個人の「モチベーション」や若者の「本質」を狭く考えることより、そうした観点からの研究の方が、ずっと期待できるでしょう。

将来の日本はどうなっていくのか

【寺地】古市さんが言うように今の若者は自分たちが幸福だと思っていたとしても、10年、20年経てば状況は変わるという意見もあります。今後、日本社会と日本の若者はどうなっていくと思いますか。

【古市】既に2パターン書いています。1つは雑誌用に書いた、2042年のどうしょうもなくなっている日本と(「2042・終焉を待つ奇妙な幸福国家」『新潮45』2012年5月号)、もう1つの方は僕が参加している内閣府の会議で議題になっている「2050年の日本」⁸。2050年の日本を考えましょうという会議があるんですよ。フロンティア分科会の幸福(のフロンティア)部会⁹。宗教みたいな名前ですよね(笑)。

絶望的な未来のほうが、今のところ僕としては リアリティーがあります。どうしょうもなくな るっていうか、どんどん日本において安定雇用 がなくなっていって、若年層がもっと海外に出 て行って、魅力的な場所じゃなくなっていって、 もはやもう格差社会なんてものが当たり前にな る。そして、そこの中で階級社会化が進んで、 階級上昇の夢さえも断たれる。すると、準拠集 団を所属階級内の、自分にとって身近な集団に 持つから、社会的不公平感も高まらず、暴動と かも起こらないという未来が1つありうると思い ます。最低限の保障は抗うつ剤や、用途制限的 ベーシックインカムで行われている、という想 定です。部分最適を突き詰めていった、という イメージですね。もう1つの未来に関しては、ど こかのタイミングで国民的な負担の合意ができ る可能性に期待したもの。つまり、働ける人が 年齢や性別を問わずに働く。税金を払える人が 払う。今のように単純に世代で「現役」と「高 齢者」を区切らない。会議では「全員参加型社 会」と呼んでいますが、そんな風になる可能性 もなくはない。このどちらになるのかは今の所 はまだわかりません。

【トイボネン】この点についてちょっとだけ言 わせてもらうと、ジェネレーション[]とか、ベビー ブーマーが自分たちの観点から見て、社会が酷 い方向に向かっているのではないかと懸念して いるんですよね。これは社会学も同じです。ベッ ク、セネットやパットナムもそうです。ニュー エコノミーとか仕事の社会学もそうで、多くの 人がノスタルジーを感じて、みんな個人ベース になって流動化して酷くなっていると言うので す。そういうレンズで見てしまえば確かに悲観 的にしか思えない社会ですが、今の若い人にイ ンタビューをすると、あんまり昔の成功という 概念にこだわっていなかったりする。つまり、 レンズを替えれば必ずしも酷い将来が見えると は限らないのです。だから、誰のレンズから見 て将来を予想しょうとしているのかという問題 があるのではないでしょうか。悲観的な論を書 いている人はだいたい、イギリス人とかアメリ カ人で、50代とか60代で、リストアップもしょ うと思えばできます。だいたい暗い将来を見る のは自分たちが労働ベースの社会を生きてきて、 それが崩れていくのを見て、「これはもう将来 がない」「以前と同じょうな年金を払ってもら えない」「社会保障が崩れる」と考える。そう したバイアスが働いていることをまず強く意識 したほうがいいと思います。

【古市】トゥーッカさんたちの本で象徴的なのが最後のRoger Goodmanにょる章です。日本で象徴日本にいる章です。日本にいる章です。日本にいるですない。当年の一方の本での一方のでは、一方の表にはあり、一方の影響ではある。日本での一方の影響である。日本での一方の影響である。日本での一方の影響である。日本での一方の影響である。日本の影響である。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本の音を記している。日本にはいる。日本の音を記している。日本の音をはなる。

しかし、それは僕自身が企業社会やアカデえるでアカデえるでアカデえるでアカデえるでから言える企業ないたけに入っていたの時代、大ととは、あまり先があることは、あまり先があることはであるない。まだいのではあるから、若いうちは安けけどででたくさん働かさることは間違いないもしないででたくさん働かさることは間違いないものにでである。それにも逆にその絶望的なシステムと思います。それにと自由な時代もないと思います。それに

関しては、ある種、期待というか希望を抱いています。それを政策的にどうサポートしていくのかというのはまったくべつの次元の話で、個人の可能性の問題として、今の方が自由な時代であり、そこまで悪い時代ではないんじゃないかと思いますね。

若者研究の国際展開を目指して

【寺地】今後、若者研究をある程度ドメスティックに展開するのか、それともグローバルに展開するのかということについて、現時点のお考えを聞かせてください。

【古市】海外のことには単純に興味があります。 それぞれの国、それぞれの自治体って、政策に 関する実験を絶えずしているような動物がいる うんですね。同じょうな人間という動物がいる のに、各国でこれだけ社会制度が違うという とは、それぞれ固有の歴史があって、固有の 度があって、その流れの中に、結果として現 があるということ。大きい実験を1つの国の いくな国々で実験がされていると考えな 他の国を見ることすごく興味深いですね。

【トイボネン】自然科学のような実験の代わりに、社会学では「比較」が非常に有効です。ただ、コストが高くて方法論的に簡単ではない。若者の分野においては、感情的な「若者論」という「霧」がどの社会にも強く存在しないうちで、研究趣旨やターゲットが意識しない。何えば、「日本でニートが増えているから、ヨーロッパとアクリカのニートと比較しよう」というプロジェク

トは、学問的に判断すればその恐ろしい一例だ と言えるかもしれない。あるアクターたちが(特 に悪意はないがある目的をもって) 日本で作ら れた色合いが強いカテゴリーを、他の国にその まま応用しょうとすること。こんな研究からは 決して中立的なデータは得られないと思います。 最初からbiasと思い込みにあふれている。ですか ら、冷静な若者の比較研究では、例外なく「若 者論をしっかりと意識し、そのカテゴリーは誰 かなぜ作ったのかを考えた上で、自分でより比 較にふさわしいアプローチを探求する」という ことが必要です。その意味で『A Sociology of Japanese Youth』は比較研究の第一歩として書 いたつもりだったし、古市さんの本も若者論に 含まれるbiasの学術研究への影響が理解できる大 切なガイドだと思っています。

そして、最後に、国内研究も国際比較も基本的 に同じですが、一つの「判断基準」あるいは分 析軸よりも、複数の軸があると面白い発見が増 えるでしょう。比較社会政策の父ともいえ るGosta Esping-Andersenの研究も、いくつかの 次元 (de-commodification, stratification, defamilialization)を統合した有名なレジーム論を生 んだし、古市さんの本も「経済成長」でもなく 「正規・非正規雇用」でもなく「幸福」という 新しい分析軸を打ち出したから衝撃を与えたの だと考えられます。なぜこれが有効かというと、 無意識の思い込みを揺るがすことができるから です。前も言いましたが、分析のレンズを変え てみると、オルタナティブな現実が見えたりす るし、もう一つの可能な未来も見えるかもしれ ない。僕は「比較」という奥深い方法が若者研 究の分野において基本となることを提案したい のです。

いうことに関しての価値は、今まで以上に高まっていくでしょうね。

【寺地】比較をするためには、共通点と差異が必要です。そう考えると、共通点を発見するためのプラットフォームのようなものが、ますます求められてくると思います。この企画の目指すところは、そうした国際比較のためのプラットフォームになることだと思います。ありがとうございました。

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古市憲寿:東京大学大学院博士課程、慶応義塾大学SFC研究所訪問研究員、有限会社ゼント執行役。専攻は社会学。現在、若手社会企業家とるのコミュニティについて、研究を進めてるるでとりあげた、『絶望の国の幸福なおとりあげた、『絶望の国の本語事でとりあげた、『絶望の国の本語をでとりあげた、『絶望の国の本語をでとりませた。『徳望の世紀で移士論文を執筆し、それをベースにした『希望難民ご一行様』に、それをベースにした『希望難民ご一行様』に、それをベースにした『希望難民ご一行様』に、一下をである。との時代、遠足型消費の時代、遠足型消費の時代なぜ妻はコストコに行きたがるのか?』(中沢ある。

トイボネン・トゥーッカ: 社会政策学のPh.D.をオックスフォード大学で取得し、現在同大学のグリーン・テンプルトン・カレージの研究員および神戸大学経済経営研究所の客員研究員。主な研究テーマは「若者」「政策」「社会的イノベーション」。現在、若者による社会起業を説明する上で大切な要因となる「社会的イノベーション・コミュニティ」について新しい研究企画を立ち上げている最中であり、共同研究希望者を募集している。2012年秋に、単著 \Box Japan's Emerging Youth Policy: Getting Young Adults Back to Work \Box (Routledge:Abingdon) を出版予定。

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寺地幹人: 国際大学GLOCOM研究員・助教。専攻は社会学。日本社会の「努力」像の社会学的分析を課題とし、教育、労働、若者といった領域を往還するスタイルで研究を行っている。また、日本研究・若者研究の国際交流の促進にも関心をもつ。



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辂憶

この記事は、JapanFocusおよび同セルデン・マーク氏のご厚意によって、英語と日本語の双方で掲載することができた。また、この2言語同時掲載は、オックスフォード大学日産日本問題研究所のブルキ・ミカエル氏と山本貴之氏の丁寧な翻訳によって可能になった。ここに記して感謝したい。

注

- (1) A Sociology of Japanese Youthは、書誌情報では2012年刊行となっているが、実際には2011年11月に初版が刊行された(なお、明石書店から『若者問題の社会学』(仮)として日本語版が近日刊行される予定)。
- (2) こうした「反響」の大きさの一方で、一定 数の非難・批判も存在する。論じる対象とフラ ンクに接しつつも冷静に見つめ、同時にその冷 静さが徹底されるほど、若者とされない立場の 側に与することと「若者」を語ることの違いが 際立っていく。そんな社会学者的スタンスこそ 古市氏の等身大のあり方である。こうした彼の キャラクターに対して、例えば、「学者とは、 圧倒的な知識と教養を持って堂々とその専門領 域について語る存在だ!」という学者像をもつ 人たちは、非難の言葉を浴びせる。また、「もっ と積極的に若者に寄り添い、声を上げなければ さらに不利な立場に追い込まれる現状を打破し てほしい」という期待を込めた批判をする人た ちもいる。しかし、そのような批判が向けられ ること自体が、「若者」がしばらくは語られる に値しうるテーマであることの証左と言えない だろうか。また、強固な学者像をもつ人たちや

静観している人たちにとっても、古市氏の「反響」の大きさを自身の鏡とし、彼にはできずに自身でこそ可能なことは何なのかを考える、そんなきっかけにならないだろうか。そしてこの企画に対しても、その期待や専門性をもとに、何かしらのコメントをいただければ幸いです。

- (3) この2点は、古市氏が著書の中で整理した、「都合のいい協力者」と「異質な他者」という2つの若者像に重なるだろう。
- (4) 2000年代中盤に盛り上がったロスジェネの議論でも、当の世代からの声はそれなりの反響を呼んだが、「『若者』自身の声かどうか」は二次的な問題だった(となっていった)ように思われる。
- (5) さらに詳しく述べれば、自分やそのまわりの物事を考えることから出発している。これたことは重要だろう。これたことは重要だろう。な自分によって可能に、次の2つのことによって可能で、自分にで、著者」であるのまわりの物事を考えることとでいる。1つは、彼が「若者」である「若者」といるのまわりの物事を考えることとでいることにが著書のなが比較かで描く、のまかが出きのなる「若者」のよいが著書である「おきに重ね合わせられていることには、ずなはに単なる代弁者を期待するだけ題を出るに、「若者」の実感を伴った現状認識や、「反響」を大きくしたように思う。
- (6) この点に関するWeb上のレファレンス(日本語)として、古市氏と小熊英二氏の対談(Link [2012/08/13取得])、森直人氏のブログの記事(Link [2012/08/13取得])がある。
- (7) 私たちの個々人の研究関心については、記事の最後にあるプロフィールを参照。この関心が、この共同作成された記事の方向性をいくぶんか示している。
- (8) 以下は古市氏が作成した資料(第3回会議で配布) Link (2012/08/13取得)。
- (9) 古市氏が言及している幸福のフロンティア部会については以下のページを参照 (2012/08/13取得)。また、国家戦略フロンティア分科会の報告書の概要(日本語版)は以下の通り(2012/08/13取得)。