

**Course No. 3507/3508**

**Contemporary  
Japanese Culture  
and Society**

free michelle gun elephant : chicken zombies



**A 1999 cut**



**thee michelle gun elephant :  
chicken zombies**

# **Thee Michelle Gun Elephant...**

**The name derives from *Machine Gun Etiquette* by the Clash... a classic case of mangled English.**

**The band members are mostly Meiji Gakuin graduates, by the way. Broke up in 2003.**

***Meiji Gakuin  
proudly presents  
prominent human  
rights activist  
ARUDOU DEBITO***

***Topic: What is  
'racism'?***

**Thursday, Sept 26,  
Room 825  
1.25 pm**



# Arudou Debito (有道出人)

**Coordinator of the award-winning human rights website Debito.org, regular *Japan Times* columnist and a prolific author of books on life for foreigners in Japan, changed his name from David Aldwinckle when he became a naturalized Japanese citizen in 2000. His successful struggle to sue a bath-house in Hokkaido for refusing admittance to foreigners, a landmark in the battle to secure human rights for foreigners, is documented in his book *Japanese Only* (2004).**

**In this presentation, he offers an alternative view of racism, grounded in postmodernist and postcolonial analysis. Racism based on biological constructs errs because racialization processes are social constructs rooted in the distribution of power in societies. The shifts in power over time account for the shifting definitions of 'race'. Arudou will discuss how racial discrimination occurs in Japan and other societies, and offer thoughts for a more harmonious multiracial future.**

***“A dragonfly on an elephant’s  
bum”*** -- Kenzaburo Oe





# 日本列島



# Naming issues

Japan used to be known by its Chinese name as “Wa” (倭) or “*Wagoku*” (倭国) in Japanese or *Woguo* in Chinese... meaning “[country of] dwarfs” in Chinese.

Japan adopted the name, but added “Great” (大), so the country was called “Great Dwarfs” for a while. Then they changed 倭 to 和 so the country was called “Great Peace” and pronounced YAMATO.

# 日本=SUN ORIGIN

**In the 7th century a top Japanese diplomat changed the country's name to 日本 Nippon, which means Sun Origin, hence “Land of the Rising Sun”. (It is the direction of the rising sun when seen from the west, i.e. China)**

**In the 13th century Marco Polo recorded the Cantonese name for Nippon, “Cipangu”, which then got mangled quite a lot more to become... JAPAN.**

*... what a mess.*

**Then again, in Japanese there are 2 words for Britain/UK/England, イギリス IGIRISU and 英国 EIKOKU. The first is a failed attempt to pronounce “England” and the second is “E” for England with the character for “country” stuck on the end. And both words are totally ambiguous as to whether they mean England or Britain.**

# America, land of rice

America = アメリカ AMERIKA or 米国  
BEIKOKU

米 RICE “ME” “MERIKA” “ME-  
KOKU”

But 米 is more often pronounced  
“bei” ... hence BEI-KOKU.

**It just goes to show...**

***... what a great cultural distance there is. Neither Japan nor Britain/America has got anywhere near pronouncing the other country's name right.***

# By the way...

There are 2 different ways of pronouncing 日本.

1. NIHON – informal, low-key, everyday word. *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* (Japan Economic Newspaper)
2. NIPPON – plosive, used in official, patriotic contexts. ***“Ganbare Nippon!”***  
(Come on Japan!”)

**Left-wing internationalists:**

**“Nihon”**

**Right-wing nationalists:**

**“Nippon”**

**(You can tell a lot about a Japanese person’s politics from the way they pronounce their country’s name... a bit like people saying “England” or “Britain” or “Great Britain” or “the UK”)**



# United Kingdom of Japan?

- **Honshu**
  - **Kyushu**
  - **Shikoku**
  - **Hokkaido**  
(annexed 1869)
- Ainu territory –  
cf Scotland**





**Okinawa...  
annexed 1879.  
Formerly the  
independent  
kingdom of  
the Ryukyus...  
own language,  
own culture.**

**Cf Cornwall???**

# ***Colonial adventures***

**(Japan also annexed Taiwan in 1895, Korea in 1910, Manchuria in 1931, the Philippines and Singapore in 1942... etc. But these acquisitions had to be handed back in 1945... otherwise they might still be part of Great Japan.)**

# Population of Japan

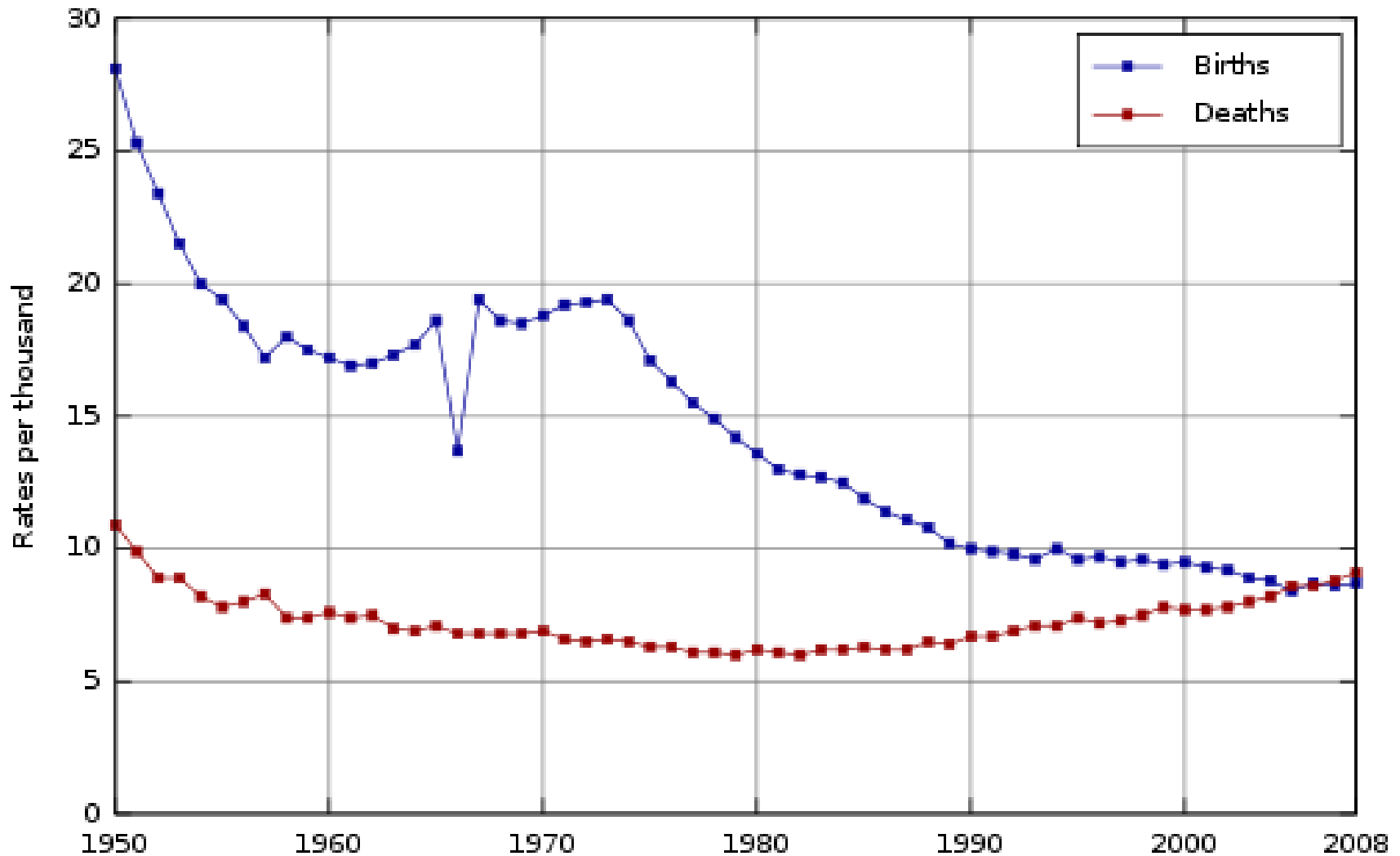
**127 million people**

**World #10 [20 years ago: #7]**

**UK: 60 million US 300 million**

**China 1,300 million Russia 140 million**

# *A historic crossroads*



# ***Aging well...***

**Life expectancy: 82**

**Women: 86**

**Men: 79**

***Japanese people live longer than almost anybody else in the world (only 4 tiny states -- Monaco, Macau, San Marino and Andorra -- are ahead)***

# ***But not many kids around***

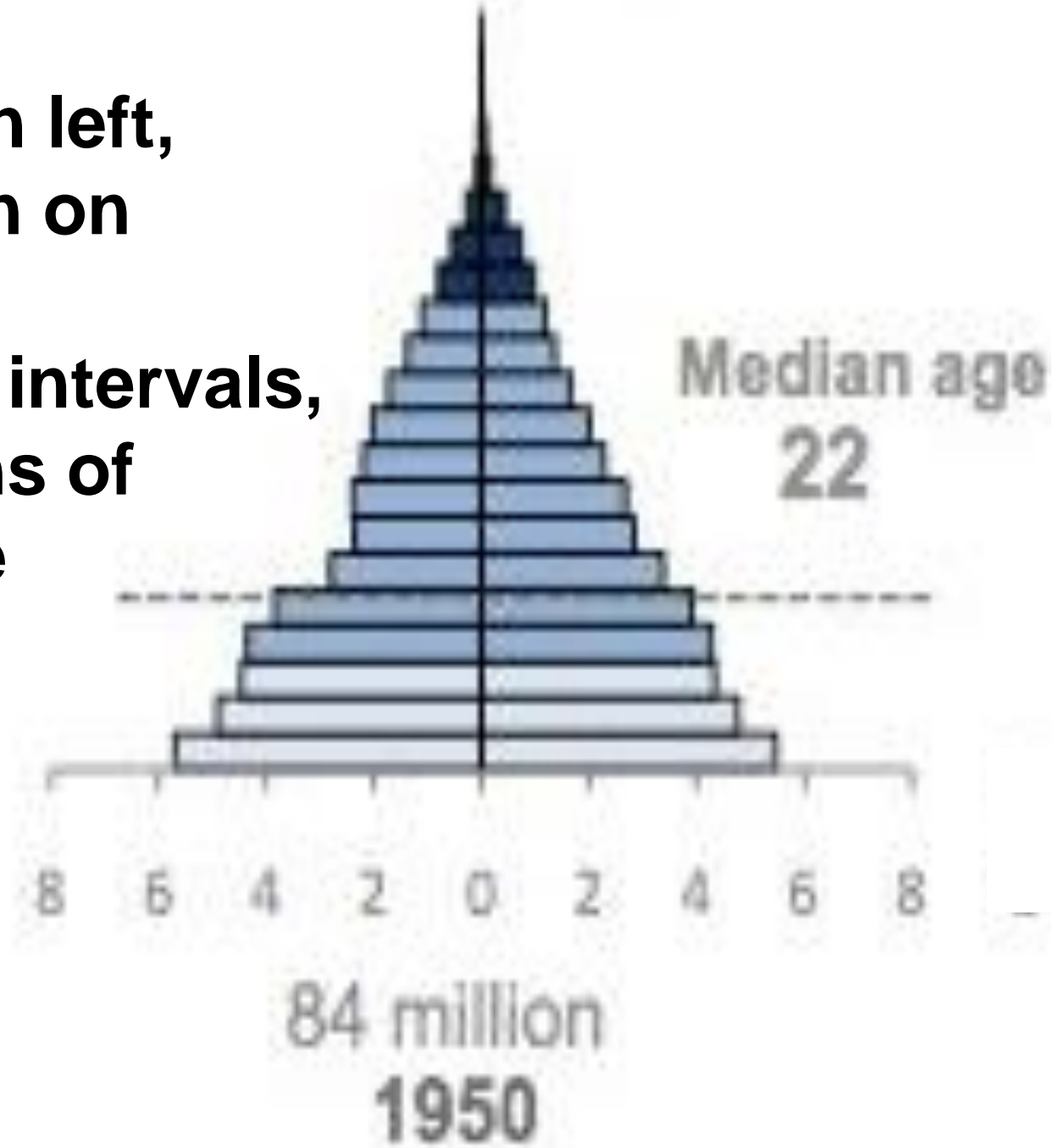
**The average Japanese woman gives birth to 1.20 children in her lifetime.**

**The lowest figure in the world (except Macau, Hong Kong, Singapore, Hong Kong) UK: 1.92 China: 1.54 Uganda: 6.73**

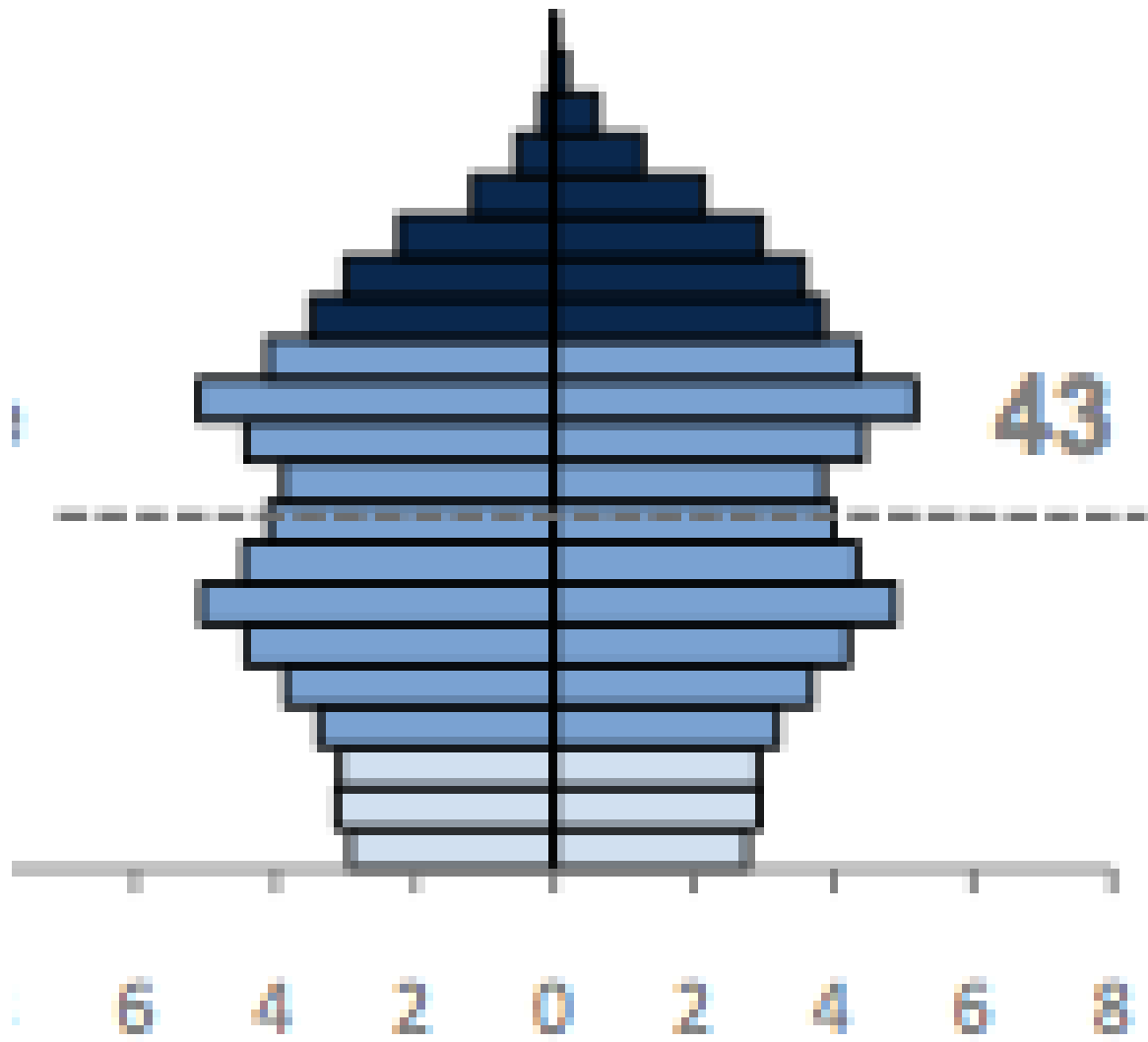
**Replacement rate: 2.06**

***Result: A slowly dwindling and rapidly aging population.***

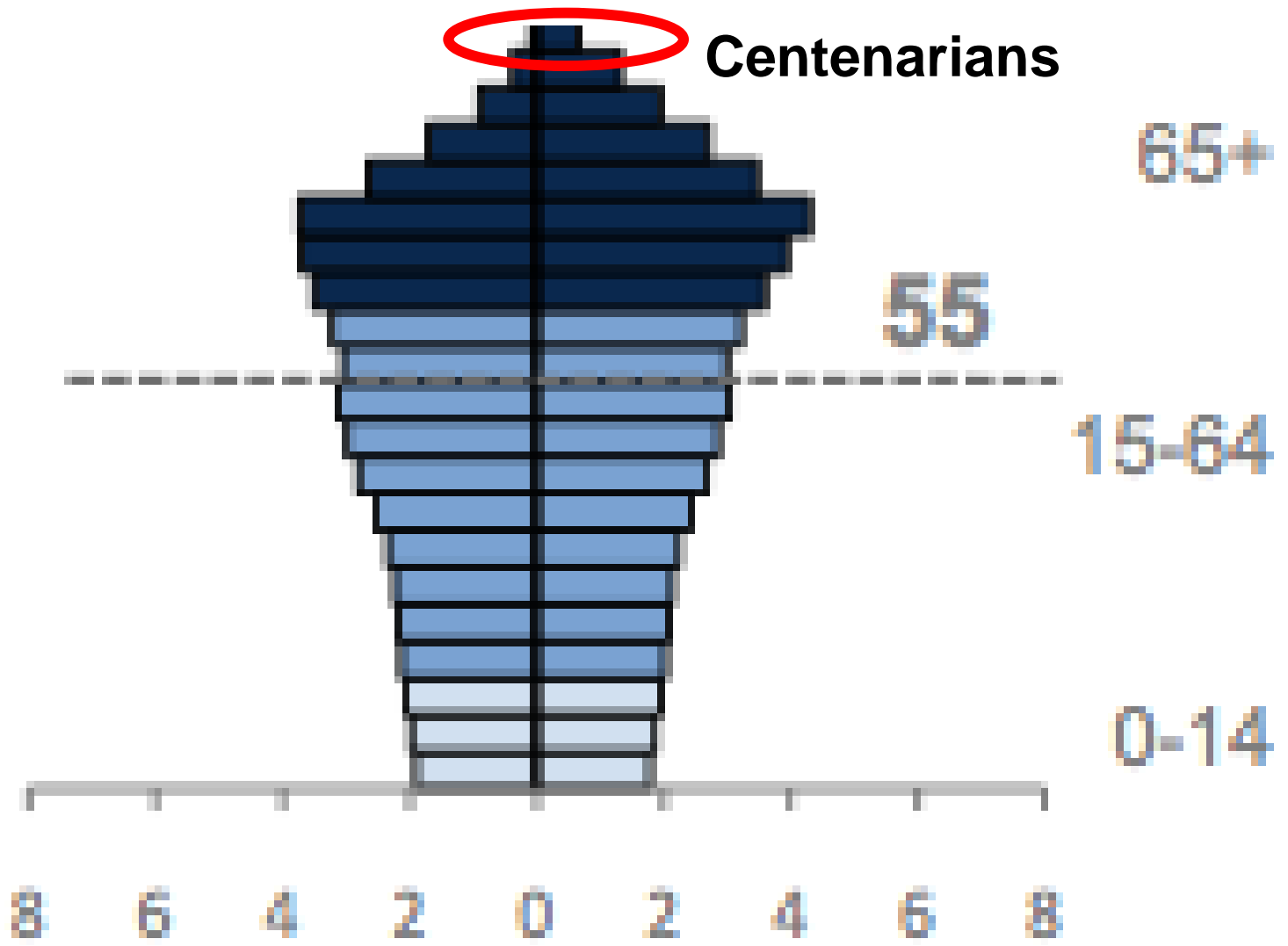
**Men on left,  
women on  
right  
5-year intervals,  
millions of  
people**







128 million  
2005



103 million  
2050

(Projection)

**A study reported recently in the U.S. magazine *Science* claims the continuing increase in Japanese female longevity shows no signs of abating and could reach **100** by 2060.**

# Implications

- 1. National pension system risks bankruptcy.**
- 2. Higher taxes to pay for medical and nursing care.**
- 3. Dwindling workforce means lower GNP. (Overtaken by China in 2010 to fall from world's 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest economy to 3<sup>rd</sup>...)**
- 4. *Nasty tendency to blame old people for economic troubles.***

***But, I hear you say,  
isn't Japan a very  
overcrowded  
country?***

***Yes and no.***

# Shibuya Crossing, Tokyo



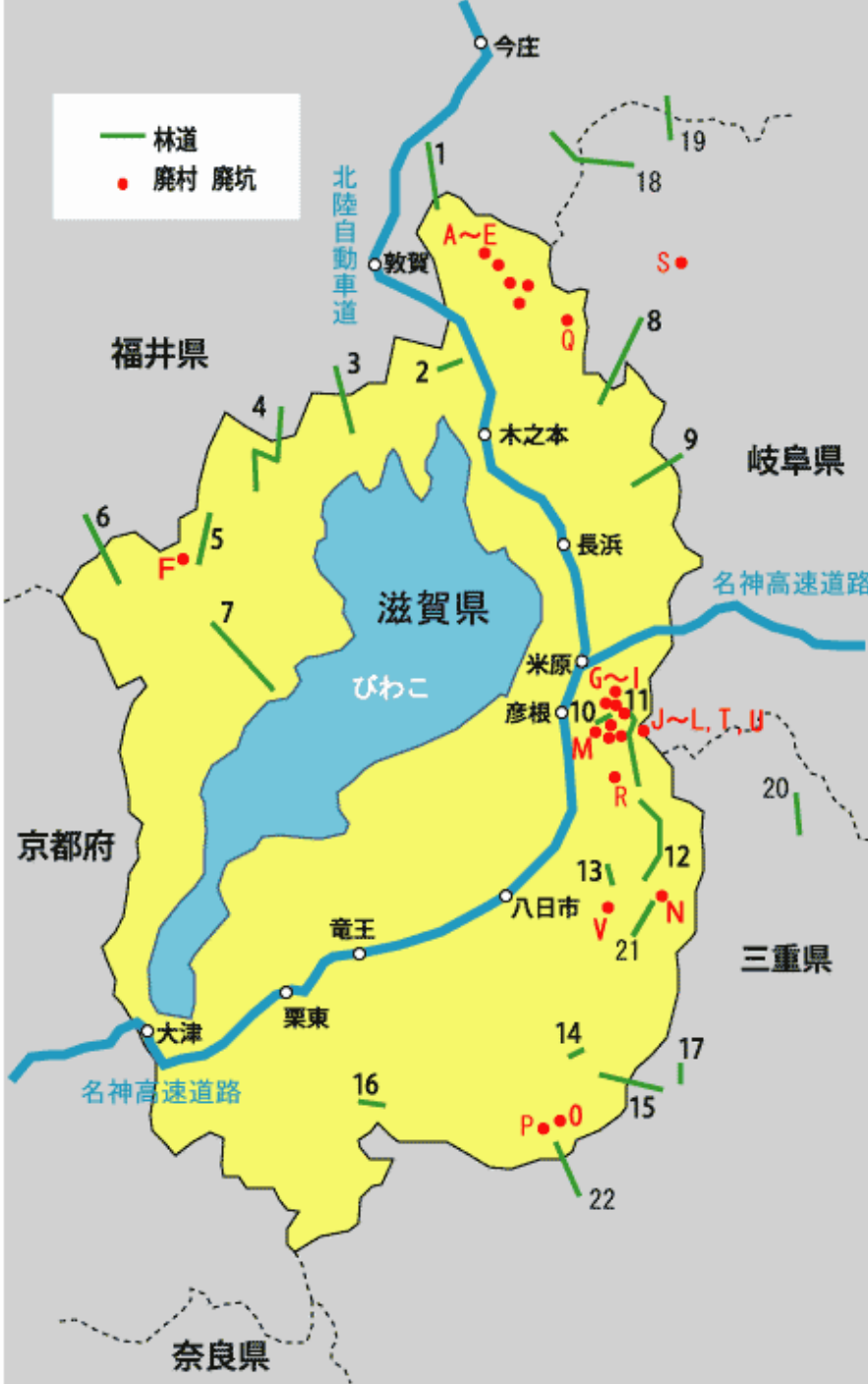
# Abandoned villages... this one 50 miles from Tokyo







# Map of abandoned villages around Lake Biwa (Shiga prefecture, near Kyoto)



# **HASHIMA 端島**

**Abandoned island, Nagasaki**



***5,000 people used to live here – coal miners and their families***



**Return of  
wildlife... the  
Asian black  
bear (still on  
WWF  
critically  
endangered  
list)**



**The Japanese boar**



**Japanese monkey**



**Deer**

# 5 foot Green General (Aodaisho) crossing the road



**Overcrowded cities...  
depopulated countryside.**



# Solutions?

**1. Make better use of “old people power” (老人力 rojin-ryoku)...**

**BUT most Japanese companies have a retirement age of 60. They do not want to keep older employees on longer because they have to pay them more than youngsters under the “seniority system” (年功序列 nenko joretsu)**

**In fact many employees are re-hired after retirement, on short-term, insecure contracts and pay of about half of what it was when they were full-time, permanent employees... and are supposed to be grateful.**

## 2. Encourage bigger families?

The government has tried various campaigns.

**2007: Child allowance raised from 5,000 yen (35 pounds) a month to 10,000 yen (70 pounds a month)**

**2010: Raised again to 26,000 yen (200 pounds a month) and extended from age 12 to 15**

**But tax breaks for children reduced and then abolished, clawing back about half of that...**

***chicken feed.***

# ***Why so few children?***

**Old-fashioned, sexist society makes it very difficult for women to combine career with child-rearing. Typically they leave the labour force at marriage or childbirth, returning when kids complete education, at low wages and low-skilled jobs. Many women prefer to stay single, or married but childless.**

# 3. Immigration

*A ban on unskilled migrant labour means that Japan cannot look to immigration as a quick way to restore balance to her population.*

Japan still maintains a very conservative immigration policy. Foreign residents account for about 2% of the total population.

# **This is the burning issue in Japan today**

***How to reverse the declining  
birth rate and stop the  
demographic pyramid  
inverting. Who is going to meet  
that challenge?***

# **SYLLABUS**

**(Subject to  
modification)**

**【第1回】Introduction: A guide to the course and instructor**

**【第2回】Theories of Japaneseness: attempts to explain ‘the Japanese mind’**

**【第3回】Questioning Nihonjinron. Is the concept of ‘national character’ really useful?**

**【第4回】Class and status: are wealth/status fairly distributed in Japan?**

**【第5回】The legacy of World War II**



**【第6回】The Japanese workplace: a crucible for class and gender struggle**

**【第7回】Town and country; old and young**

**【第8回】The aging population and dwindling birthrate**

**【第9回】Social control hard and soft: police, social sanctions, indoctrination etc.**

**【第10回】Social freedom: the limits of control**

**【第11回】Film: The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On**

**【第12回】Exchange morality: How transactions glue Japanese society together**

**【第13回】The ritual year: festivals and rites of passage**

**【第14回】Religion: The role of Buddhism and Shinto**

**【第15回】Religion: Some less well-known religious influences**

**【第16回】The role of the media**

**【第17回】Egalitarianism and  
hierarchy in the Japanese  
education system**

**【第18回】Mid-term test**

**【第19回】The Japanese military**

**【第20回】Film: Tokyo Story**

**【第21回】Gender relations at home, at school, in the workplace.**

**【第22回】Sexual morality, including prostitution, pornography etc.**

**【第23回】Guest lecture: Robert Yoda on alienated working-class youth**

**【第24回】Lessons from the disasters of March 11, 2011**

**【第25回】Lessons from the disasters of March 11, 2011 Part 2**

**【第26回】Insights from  
children's TV programs**

**【第27回】Sport and leisure**

**【第28回】Gambling in Japan**

**【第29回】Manga and anime**

**【第30回】Final class  
discussion**

# Evaluation

**Attendance (出席):**

**30 points.**

**Mid-term test (中間テスト):**

**30 points.**

**Term paper (レポート):**

**40 points.**

**Max. 100 points.**

# Japanese 日本語

I sometimes add a little Japanese explanation to my slides... *but the exam and term paper must be written in English.*

たまにはほんの少し日本語の説明を  
スライドに加えますが、試験とレポートは英語ですよ！

# The wonderful world of *manga*





# Something of myself

**Tom Gill...**  
**Born**  
**Portsmouth,**  
**U.K., 1960.**  
**English.**



# First encounter with Japan... on kibbutz in Israel, 1980



# Picking fruit with a guy called Kazu



**This isn't him!**

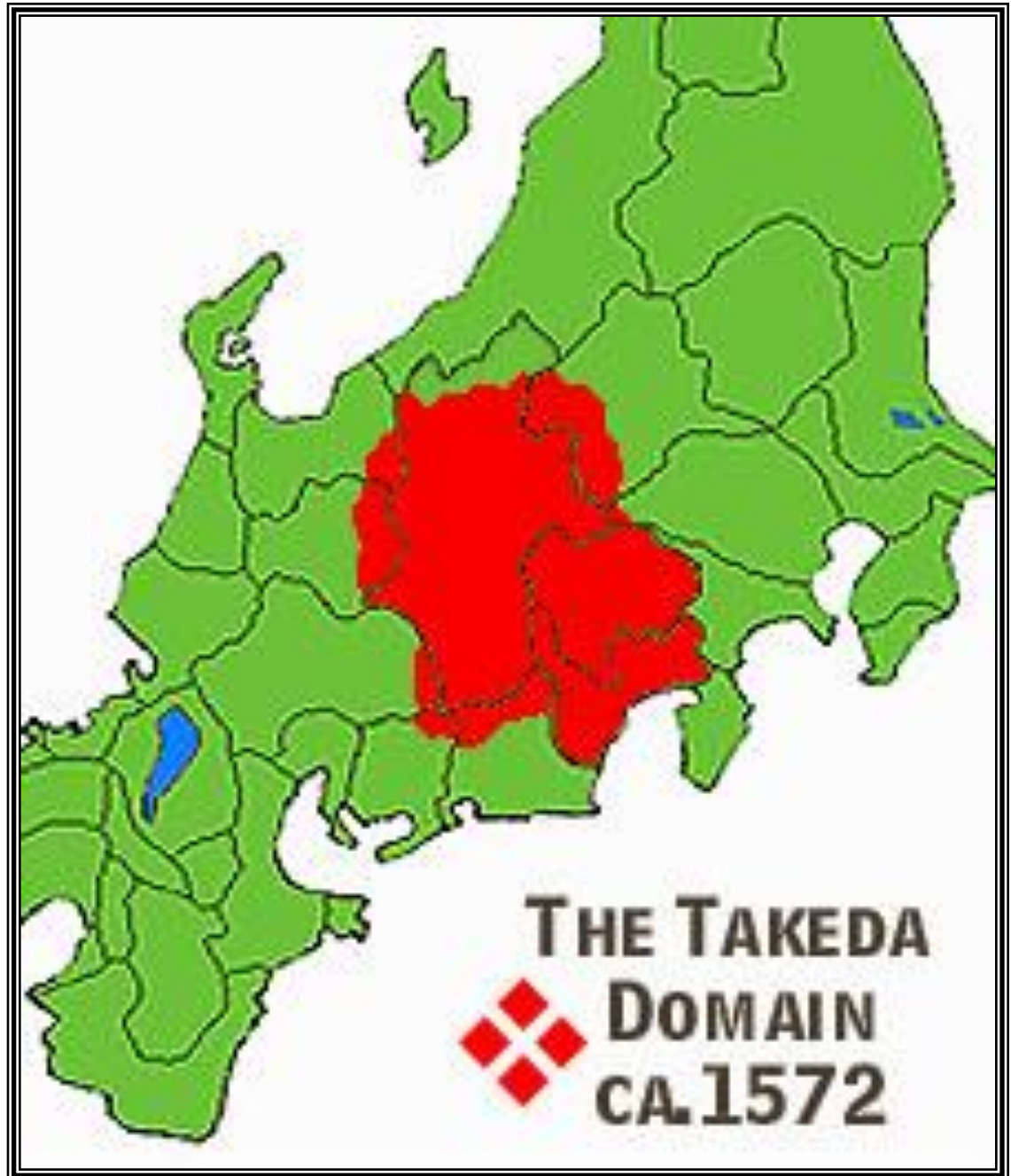
# 1983: Kofu, Yamanashi

山梨県  
甲府市

Takeda Shingen  
(1521-1573)  
monument  
武田信玄の銅像



**Why Kofu  
should be  
capital of  
Japan...  
according  
to Kofu  
folk.**



# 武田信玄 ... 無敵

**Takeda Shingen was never defeated in battle. His untimely death left his son Takeda Katsunori to fight Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu (the two most famous shoguns in Japanese history) at the Battle of Nagashino in 1575. Outnumbered 3 to 1, the Takeda army was crushed. If Shingen had still been alive, things could have been very different!**

***Kofu could be the capital of Japan... and Tokyo a little-known provincial town.***

信玄の早死にがなければ、武田氏は信濃戦闘で勝利し、徳川幕府ではなく武田幕府になり、現在甲府は日本の首都で東京は小さな田舎の町になった... かもしれない。

# 信玄公祭



**Annual Shingen Festival (1<sup>st</sup>  
weekend in April)**



# “Peace Street”



平和通り

**Takeda Shingen – ancient  
violence.**

**Peace Street – modern  
pacifism. “*Very Japanese*”??**

**信玄像 – 昔の暴力**

**平和通 – 現在の平和主義...**

**とても「日本的」??**

# **Sundai Boys' High School (1983-5)**

**Motto: “Education through  
love.” A surprisingly  
progressive school. Private.**

**駿台甲府高等学校 「愛情教育」**

# Next door: Kofu Industrial High School

甲府工業高校



まったく別な惑星

*... a different planet.*

# Two planets

**Sundai Kofu:** Tolerant, liberal, but obsessed with getting kids into famous universities. Uniform rules not enforced. Terrible at sports except tennis (individualistic).

**Kofu Industrial:** Tough, almost fascistic. Grim black uniform worn on all occasions. Baseball powerhouse. Few graduates go on to university.

# Taught me 2 things:

1. The dangers of generalization.
2. Cultural systems not necessarily the same as in the UK.

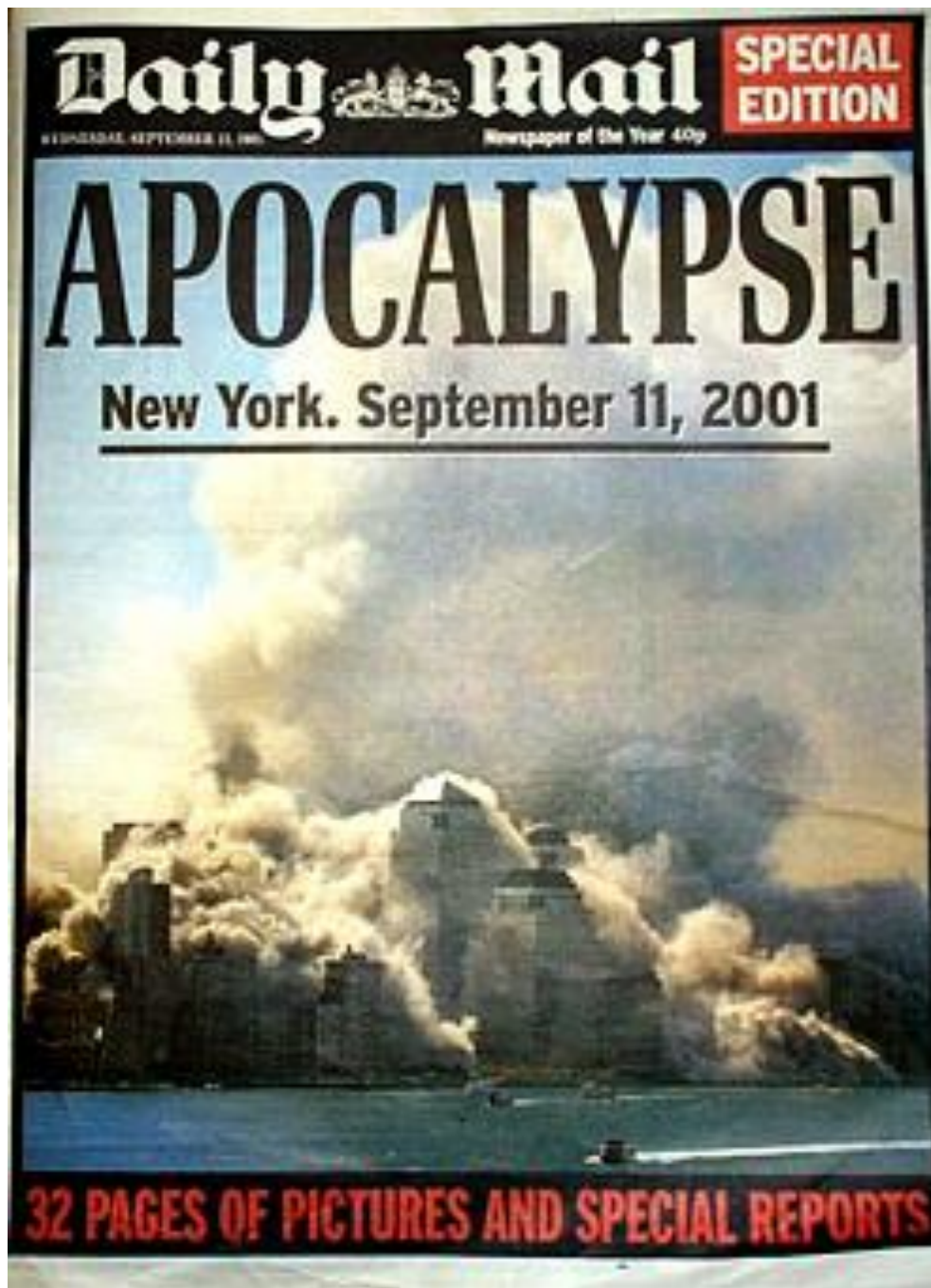
**UK: Strict discipline  $\leftrightarrow$  Academic elite**

**Japan: Strict discipline  $\leftrightarrow$  Future factory workers ...?**

# Moving to journalism



**Kyodo News: one of Japan's two major news agencies (1985-6)**



**Tokyo stringer  
for the *Daily  
Mail*, 1986-90  
イギリスの「デー  
リーメール」新聞  
の「東京臨時特  
配員」**



**My one achievement at the Mail**  
**唯一な貢献？**

**Changing the spelling of  
'Tokio' to 'Tokyo'.**

**TOKIO は TOKYO になりました。**

# **Kyodo/Mail assignments**

- **The Aquino Revolution in the Philippines (Feb 1986)**
- **G7 Tokyo Summit (May 1986)**
- **The funeral of Emperor Hirohito (Jan1989)**  
**... told off by Prince Philip.**

# 1986: Visiting San'ya

山谷



# ... it changed my life.

- I believed that Japan was peaceful, *but San'ya was violent.*
- I believed that Japanese people were mainly middle class, *but there seemed to be class warfare on the streets of San'ya.*
- I believed that police defended citizens from yakuza, *but in San'ya, police defended yakuza from citizens.*



**Riot police 機動隊**

# 1990-1996

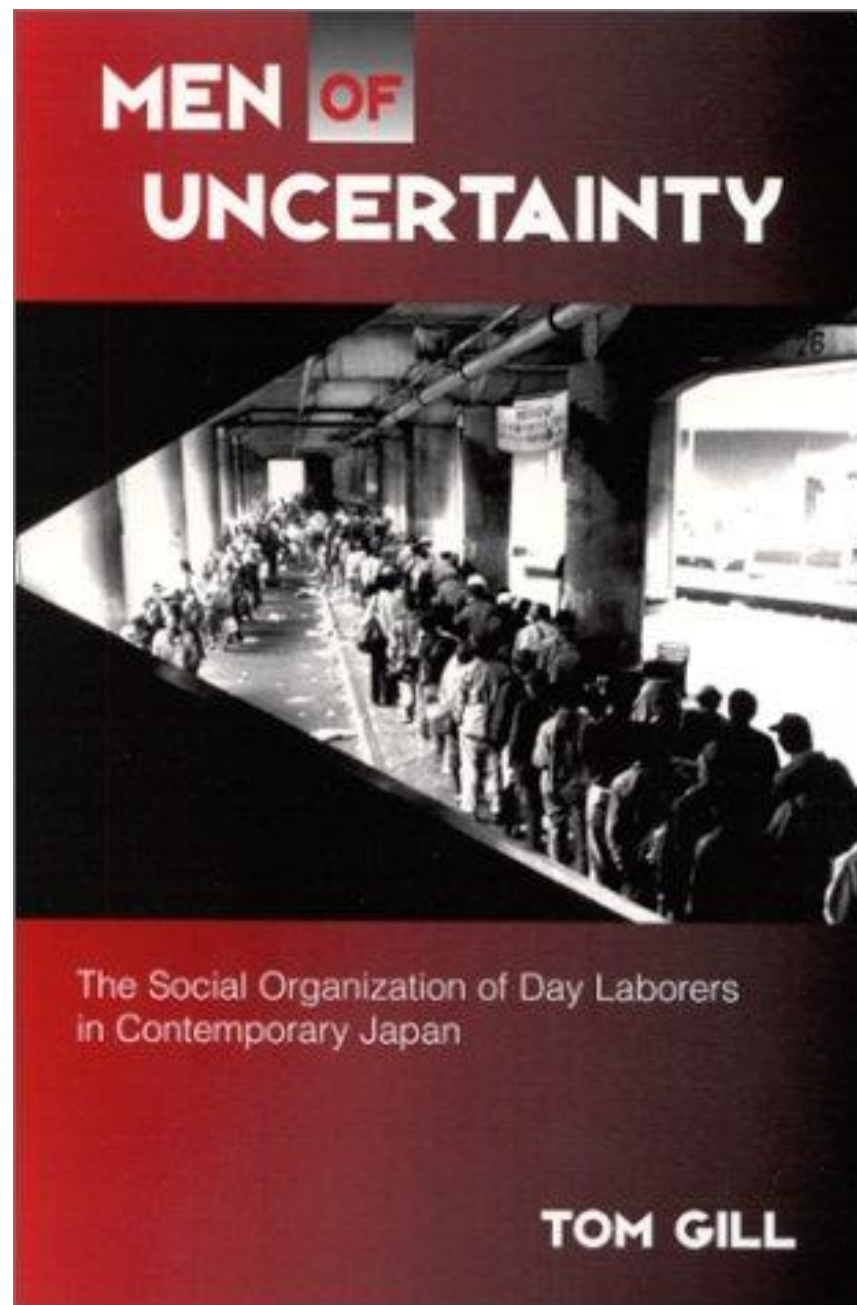
- **Masters → doctorate in social anthropology at the London School of Economics (LSE).**
- **Doctoral dissertation about “social organization of day laborers in contemporary Japan.” 「現代日本における日雇い労働者の社会組織」**



横浜寿町

**Kotobuki, in Yokohama: my  
main fieldsite, 1993-1995**

**Finally... a book.**  
***Men of***  
***Uncertainty***  
**(State University**  
**of New York**  
**Press, 2001)**  
**「未確定な男たち」**  
**(NY州立大学出版**  
**会、2001年)**





# Japanese academia

- **Research fellow 助手, Kyoto Bunkyo University 京都文教大学, 1997-1999**
- **Associate professor 期限付き助教授(3.5 year contract), University of Tokyo 東大, 1999-2003**
- **Associate professor (tenured プロパー), Meiji Gakuin University, 2003-2006.**
- **Full professor 教授, Meiji Gakuin University, April 1, 2006.**

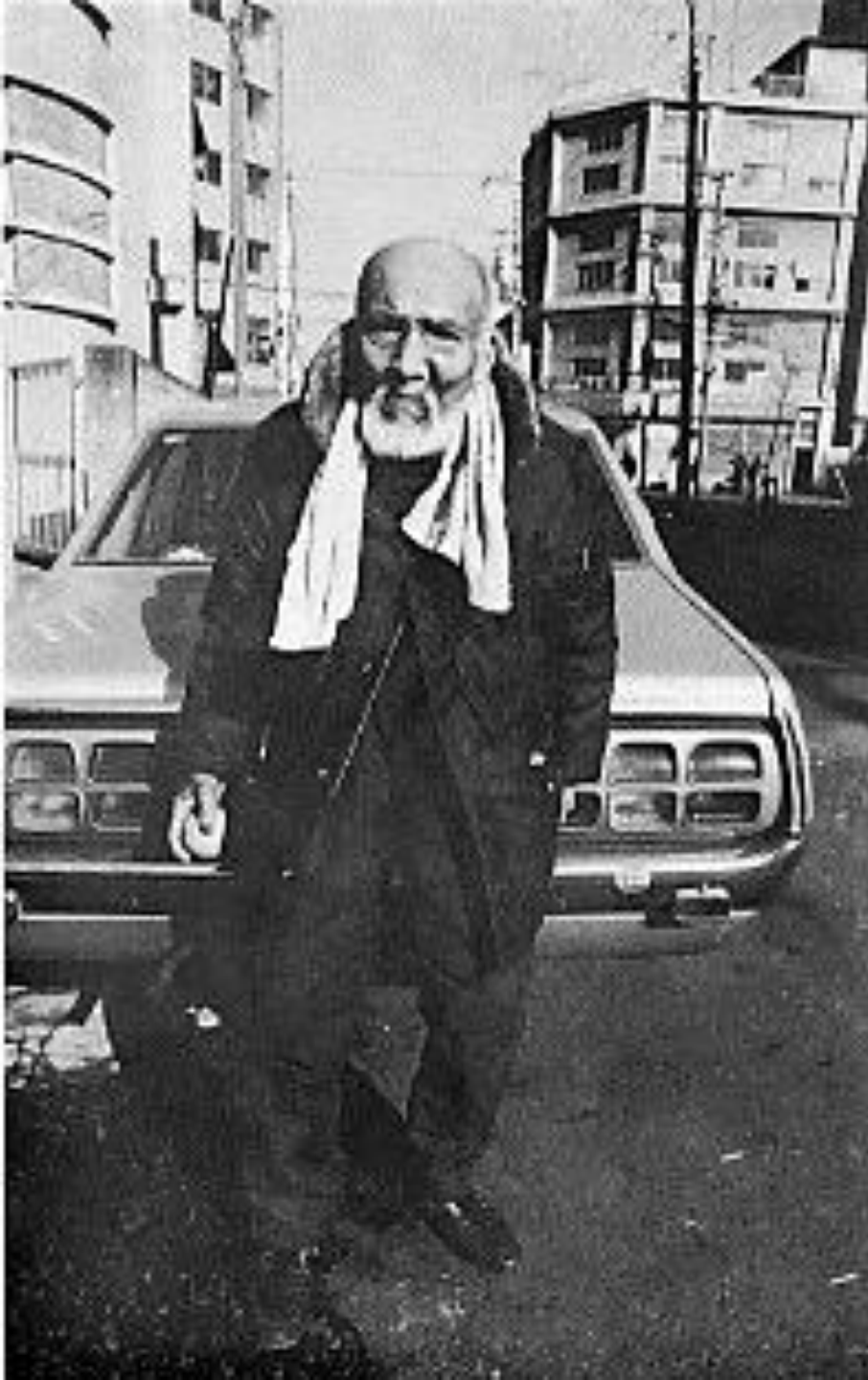
A 'doya'  
「どや」



**Shame culture?**

**恥じの文化？**





**Pride in  
adversity?**

**Isolation?**





**Community?**

# Kamagasaki, Osaka in the 1920s

## 20年代の釜ヶ崎



**The same spot today**





# The Labour-Welfare Centre, Kotobuki

労働福祉センター



# Homelessness





**... so there you have it.**

**まっ、そういうことか。**

One last thing...

**I myself am not homeless...**

**... take a look at my house.**

A photograph of a house in January 2006. The house is a single-story, light-colored building with a dark roof and several windows. It is surrounded by a chain-link fence. In the foreground, there is a large area of tall, dry grass and some green plants. A large white text box is overlaid on the image, containing the text "My house, January 2006".

**My house, January 2006**

# February 2006



# March 2006





**April 2006.**



# Lafcadio Hearn...

... writing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century,  
said the Japanese would start  
building a house in the morning  
and finish it the same afternoon.

*They've barely slowed down since  
then.*

**Coming up  
next time:**

***Meiji Gakuin  
proudly presents  
prominent human  
rights activist  
ARUDOU DEBITO***

***Topic: What is  
'racism'?***

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**The End**

**完**