Popularization of Democracy in Post-War Japan Online Exhibit (original)

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This exhibit showcases the Proclamation of Human Rights Slides (Jinken Sengen Gentō slides, 人権宣言 幻燈スライド) produced by the Constitution Popularization Society (Kenpō Fukyukai, 憲法普及会) to promote the spirit of democracy -- that sovereign power resides with the people, fundamental human rights, pacifism, and the establishment of the separation of three powers -- as embedded in the new Constitution of Japan which was enforced on May 3, 1947.

The Jinken Sengen Gentō slideshow illustrates how the spirit of the new Constitution was born as the result of the historical human struggles for the realization of justice, universal human rights, and peace. This slideshow aimed to educate people about the trials and tribulations of humankind as they strove for “the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression, and intolerance for all time from the earth”, as stated in the Preamble of the Constitution.

The slideshow originally consisted of one slide narration pamphlet and two boxes containing 32 slides to correspond with the narration text. However, only one box of 16 slides (slides 17 – 32) still exists today.

This exhibit provides the Japanese narration, an accompanying English translation, and the existing 16 slide images. The first 16 slides do not exist; therefore, only text images are shown for slides 1-16.

One box of slides, books, The Photo Album of the Celebration ceremony of the Constitution, and the Alfred Rodman Hussey papers were donated to the University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies by the will of Alfred Rodman Hussey in 1964. They are housed in the University of Michigan Library.

Curated by Keiko Yokota-Carter (Japanese Studies Librarian), Alice Register (MA Japanese Studies graduate student), Hana
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Japan surrendered to the Allies on August 15, 1945, by unconditionally accepting the Potsdam Declaration, which required the Japanese Government to eliminate militarism and to "remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people". The declaration also says that "freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established".

On September 2, 1945, The Instrument of Surrender was signed. On September 4, Emperor Hirohito appeared at the eighty-eighth joint meeting of the House of Peers and the House of Representatives of the Imperial Diet to deliver an Imperial rescript, which the Imperial Diet unanimously accepted. The Emperor wished and promised that "[i]t is our desire that our people will surmount the manifold hardships and trials attending the termination of war, make manifest that innate glory of Japan's national policy, win the confidence of the world, establish firstly a peaceful state and contribute to the progress of mankind, and our thoughts are constantly directed to the end." (New York Times, September 5, 1945) (Imperial Rescript original / in print)

The General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP) governed occupied Japan until the Treaty of Peace with Japan was signed in 1951. During the occupation period, they worked closely with the Japanese government to implement democratic reforms to reconstruct Japan under the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, which insisted "that a new order of peace, security, and justice" would be made "impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world". Therefore, the amendment of the Constitution of the Empire Japan (大日本帝国憲法, Dai Nihon Teikoku Kenpō, 1889) was absolutely essential to establishing the foundation for a democratic Japan.

The Constitution of Japan (日本国憲法, Nihonkoku Kenpō) was promulgated on November 3, 1946, and enacted on May 3, 1947. The new Constitution was “a complete revision of the Imperial Constitution” (Imperial rescript original, English) under which Imperial Japan pursued military expansion in Asia and the Pacific. The Constitution of Japan "seeks the basis of national reconstruction in the universal principle of mankind. It has been decided upon by the freely expressed will of the people. It explicitly stipulates that the people of Japan renounce war of their own accord; that they desire to see to the realization of a permanent peace founded on justice and order throughout the world, and that having constant regard to the fundamental human rights, they will conduct the national affairs on the fixed line of democracy." (Imperial rescript) It guarantees people — not the Emperor — sovereign power and demands an abolishment of feudalism. The Emperor was defined as "the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power". (Chapter I, THE EMPEROR, Article 1)

The Dissemination of "the Spirit of the Constitution"

"The spirit of the Constitution" is expressed in "the three principles of the Constitution". They are "sovereign power resides in people"
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Cover page of the Jinken Sengen (人権宣言) “Proclamation of Human Rights” narration pamphlet. Please click on the image to scroll through the entire pamphlet.

(Cover page text from R to L)

1. 日本幻燈解説書 (Nihon Gentō Kaisetsusho) – Japan Gentō Slideshow Instructional Handbook

2. 人権宣言 (Jinken Sengen) – Proclamation of Human Rights

3. 監修: 憲法普及会 (Kanshyu: Kenpō Fukyukai) – Editorial Supervision: Society for the
Popularization of the Constitution

4. 編集製作: 日本幻燈株式会社 (Henshyu Seisaku: Nihon Gentō Kabushikigaisha) – Editorial Production: Japan Gentō Incorporated

5. 画: 近藤日出造 (E: Kondo Hidezo) – Illustrator: Kondo Hidezo

The Jinken Sengen (人権宣言) Gentō slideshow originally consisted of one narration pamphlet (cover page seen above) and two boxes containing 32 slides to illustrate and correspond with the concepts in the narration text.

However, only one box (seen above) of 16 slides (slides 17 – 32) still exists today and is included in the Alfred Rodman Hussey papers collection held at the University of Michigan Library.
Captions: Jinken Sengen (Declaration of Human Rights)

字幕: 人権宣言
There is no accompanying image and only text is available for slide 1.
When Japan was suffering from defeat in war and was trying to make a fresh start as a country with a peaceful culture, a new constitution that clearly articulated a way forward for us was established.

敗戦のいたでを受けた日本が、これから平和な文化の國として新しく出直そうとするとき、私たちの行く先をはっきり示す新しい憲法が制定されました。
The new constitution, seeking perpetual peace, has as its basis these three ideas: to never engage in war again; governing democratically; and respecting the basic human rights of citizens.

新憲法は、永久の平和をねがい、今後は絶対に戦争をしないこと、民主主義の政治を行うこと、また、国民の基本的人権を尊重すること、とゆう三つの考えがもととなっております。
Let's first examine the concept of fundamental human rights. The fundamental human rights included in the new constitution are the result of the freedoms acquired by humans over many years. They are things that have endured the test of time and are the outcome of many years of trial and error. What, then, are the efforts and trials that we humans have endured in the acquisition of our freedoms?

This is particularly basic human rights.

New Constitution, the result of the freedoms acquired by humans over many years. They are things that have endured the test of time and are the outcome of many years of trial and error. What, then, are the efforts and trials that we humans have endured in the acquisition of our freedoms?
In the primeval days of humanity, powerful or strange phenomena were revered as gods. Since the gods had absolute power, people did not behave selfishly toward each other, and their lives were truly free.

ずうっと大昔 原始未開の時代には、何でも力の強いものや、不思議なものを神としてあがめていました。神は絶対の権力があるので互同志の間では勝手にふるまうものなどなくて、その生活はまことに自由なものでありました。
After a long span of time passed, the pyramids in Egypt were built about 5,000 years before the present day. The pyramids were constructed with the purpose of serving as tombs for the kings. At that time in Egypt, the kings held great power, and the people of their territory had to obey their every command no matter what. Below the commoner class, there were slaves. Despite the acknowledged excellence of the pyramids, the kings and their vassals built them by treating commoners and slaves like cattle and horses. It was they who had to endure the King's harsh command and who had to bear the brunt of the labor demands.

それからずっと年をへだてて今から五千年ほど前エジプトにピラミッドが造られました。それは王様のお墓ですがその頃のエジプトは、王様が大へんな力をもっていて、人民はどんなことでもだまって王様の命令をきかねばならなかったのです。その人民たちの下には奴隷とゆうものがありました。こんなすばらしいピラミッドも王様やその家夹たちが人民や奴隷を牛馬のようにこきつけて造らせたものです。
There is no accompanying image and only text is available for slide 7.

Below the governing and reigning monarch of a country were his feudal lords. The country was divided into domains, and the feudal lords were responsible for governing over the territories assigned to them. Within each feudal lords’ domain, servants were employed and the peasants labored on his behalf to cultivate the soil. This system, which came to be known as feudalism, was established in Europe about 600 years before the present day. Under the boastful, overbearing attitude of their feudal lord, the peasants had to endure extremely harsh labor demands and could only eke out a meager existence.

國を治める王様の下に領主たちがいて、それぞれ領地を分けてもらい、領主は家父をかかえ百姓たちに領地を耕させる。そんな制度が封建制度といって、今から六百年くらい前までのヨーロッパにはそうした制度が行われていました。領主や家父がいぼっているのに引かえて百姓たちは働けるだけ働かされながらひどい貧乏な生活しかできませんでした。
In the feudal era, the feudal lords held power, and the kings did not exert absolute authority. However, the power of the feudal lords eventually weakened because they frequently fought among each other and the bourgeoisie class gained strength. Therefore, in the end, royal authority was restored once again.

封建制度の時代は領主が勢力を占め王の威令は行われませんでした。ところが領主たちがしばしば争い合ったことや、又次第にブルジョア階級が頭をもたげてきたことが原因となって、やがて領主の勢力はおとろえになりました。そしてついに再び王権が回復するようになりました。

There is no accompanying image and only text is available for slide 8.
Popularization of Democracy in Post-War Japan

Slide 30
Slide 31
Slide 32
Sources

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So, the kings began to wield their power. Ordinary people could not expect to be treated with due human dignity and respect. No one knows how many people were killed like pests or subject to punishment for crimes of which they were falsely accused.

そうなると 王様は権力をふるいはじめます。国民は人間らしい扱いなど受けられるよう筈ありません。どんなに多くの人民が虫のように殺されたり 無実の罪に苦しめられたか知れません
The kings lived extremely luxuriously and in addition to this, they sought to expand their reach of power by constantly waging foreign wars. This expended extremely large sums of money. Where did that money come from? The public were taxed heavily to finance these wars and therefore suffered greatly.

王様は大へんぜいたくな暮らしをしてその上まだ自分の勢力を伸ばすために外国と戦争ばかりしていました。そのため大そう金がかかりました。その金はどこから出したのでしょうか？みんな人民から税金として取りたてたのですから人民はずいぶん苦しい思いをしたわけです。
The eighteenth-century kings of France particularly took this life of luxury to the extreme. All of the culture and pleasures of this world were for the kings and nobility only. Of course, the expenses for all of this were distilled entirely from the blood, sweat, and tears of the people. Can we allow anything so unreasonable and absurd to be permitted in this world? The people got to a point where they could not bear it any longer.

なかでも十八世紀のフランスの王様はとりわけおごりをきわめたものでありました。この世の文化も快楽もすべて王様と貴族だけのものでありました。もちろんその費用はことごとく人民の汗と血汐の結晶でありました。こんな不合理が太陽のもとに許されてもよいでしょうか？？？？？人民たちはもうまんしきれなくなりました。
Therefore, in order to protect their interests, the people created their own political organization, namely what they called a "National Assembly" (Assemblée nationale). King Louis the 16th of France was surprised by this and tried to suppress it with his armed forces, but that had the effect of pouring oil on a fire. An angry populace destroyed the Bastille Prison, and like fanning the flames of a fire, this incident triggered the beginning of a revolution. This was the Revolution of July 1789.

そこで 人民は自分たちの利益をまもるためにじぶんたちの政治組織即ち「國民議會」を作りました。これに驚いたルイ十六世は軍隊の力で國民議會をだん圧しようとしたが、それはかえって火に油をそ、く結果となりついに怒った市民たちはバスチユの監獄を破壊して 革命の火の手をあげました。一七八九年七月のことです。
The revolution succeeded, and the National Assembly proclaimed a declaration of human rights, the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" [Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen] which clearly articulated the basic rights of the people. This declaration served as the basis for the French Constitution which was enacted two years afterwards.

革命は成功して國民議會は「人權宣言」を發布し、人民の基本的人権を明らかにしました。それから二年後これをもとにしてフランス憲法が制定されました。
This glorious French Revolution was achieved thanks to the efforts of scholarly and artistic geniuses who appeared one after the other beginning around the 15th century. What kinds of people were they? In Italy, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, and others left splendid works of art such as paintings, sculptures, and architectural forms. They taught people that the true, insuppressible nature of humans was the most beautiful and precious thing there is.

このかがやかしいフランス革命をなしとげた力は 十五世紀のころから次々とあらわれた学問や藝術 の天才たちのおかげであります。それはどんな人々だったでしょうか？イタリーにはレオナルド・ダ・ヴィンチ、ラファエル、ミケランジェロなどが出た、絵画・彫刻・建築などの立派な作品をのこしました。その人々は人間の何ものからもおさえられないほんとうの姿がどんなに美しく尊いものであるかを人民に教えました.
In Germany, Martin Luther rebelled against the arbitrary, restrictive teachings of the autocratic Christian Roman Catholic Church and cleared the way for a new kind of religious faith that allowed the freedom to think and believe.

ドイツのマルチン・ルーテルは、キリスト教の教えがまるで専制君主のようなローマ教會の勝手なきまりでしばられているのに反抗して、自由に考え自由に信じる新しい信仰の道をきりひらきました。
With the advent of the 17th century, distinguished scholars such as Galileo and Newton appeared. Until that point in time, because of the Roman Catholic Pope, thinking deeply or critically about any aspect of the logic and reason of the day was considered defiance of God’s will. But, in spite of this, Newton and Galileo produced valuable knowledge gained through their research and discoveries in the fields of physics and astronomy. Thanks to this, civilization progressed rapidly.

十七世紀になると、ガリレオとかニュートンなどのえらい学者が出ました。それまではキリスト教のローマ法王のために ものごとのほんとうのすじみちを深く考えてみることは、神の心にさからうこととされていましたが、ニュー トンやガリレオは、それをおしきって物理学や天文学の上に大きな発見や、すぐれた研究をのこしまし た。そのおかげで文明が急にすすみました。
Thanks to the efforts of people like these, people learned that all humans are precious and are not to be discriminated against by anyone. Nations came to realize that the well-being and safety of their people should not be encroached upon. In this way, as a consequence of the French Revolution, these ideals finally came to be put into practice.

こうゆう人々の力で、人間はだれかれの区別なく尊いものである。国家は人民の幸福と安全をおかしてはならないとゆうことがわかってきたのです。そう
して フランス革命によって 人々はやっとその理想を実現することができたのです。
This idea of basic human rights having been transmitted to them, the suppressed and tormented people in the English colonies in America promulgated the famous “Declaration of Independence” in 1776, just one step ahead of the French Revolution. Following this, small countries such as Greece and Belgium who were controlled by more powerful countries also began to proclaim their independence one after the other. And so, various small countries throughout the world began to institute free and bright democratic governments. In the midst of this general world-wide trend, what, then, was Japan doing?
このような基本的人権の考えは、イギリス本国の圧迫に苦しめられていたアメリカの殖民地の人々にも伝えられ、一七七六年フランス革命より一足先に有名な独立宣言を発し、それから後も強国からおさえられていたギリシャ・ベルギーなどの小さい国が次々と独立しました。そうして世界の国々にこうした自由なあかるい民主主義の政治が行われるようになりました。こうした世界の大勢の中で、日本はいったい何をしていたのでしょうか？
After Shogun Iemitsu Tokugawa proclaimed an official policy of seclusion, Japan remained completely unaware of foreign affairs and maintained a long, 300-year period of slumber. To the samurai class, who had the "right to kill with impunity" anyone in the peasant or merchant classes, such a thing as basic human rights was unthinkable. When Japan suddenly awakened from their long slumber after hearing the cannon blasts from the Black Ships that appeared at Uraga in 1853, they could only wonder in amazement at the progress of the other countries of the world.
外国の様子も知らず三百年の長い間ねむりつづけてきました。武士は百姓に対しは『斬ってごめん』で彼等に人権などということはとんでもないことであった。一八五三年浦賀に来た黒船の砲声に突然長い眠りをさまされた時日本は諸外国の進歩ぶりにただおどろきの目をみはるばかりでありました。
A sudden blast of wind from the outside world blew into Japan when it went from a closed country to an open country. For the first time, the common people found that the shogun, daimyo, or samurai's ability to do as they pleased and trample them underfoot was intolerable, and they overthrew the Tokugawa government and destroyed the feudal system. That was the Meiji Restoration.
いることがたまらなくなり、徳川幕府を倒して封建制度を打ち破りました。それが明治維新であります。
During this period, people were learning about all sorts of things from foreign countries and, thinking that Japanese culture had fallen behind, they wanted to quickly catch up. Because of that, moreover, there were strong, repeated requests for a parliament to be established and a constitution to be decided upon. In this way, in the 22nd year of Meiji, the Meiji Constitution was finally enacted. Now, people's property and assets were protected from being arbitrarily taken away by those who ran the government. People were also not to be jailed without due cause and violating the freedom and rights of citizens was determined to be impermissible.
その頃の人々は何でも外国に見ならって 早く日本のおくれた文明をとりもどしたいと思いました。そのためには早く議会を開いてほしい 宪法も定めてもらいたいとゆう強い申出でが しかも度々ありました。こうして明治二十二年ついに明治憲法は制定せられたのです。それには政治をとる人が国民の財産を勝手にとりあげてはならない。わけもなく牢屋入れはいけないとゆうようなこと、即ち国民の自由や権利をおかしてはいけないとゆうことが定めてあります。
However, this constitution differed from the constitutions of other countries in a few ways. That is to say, this constitution was created by those who were already in positions of power or who were already established within the government. Therefore, the commitment to fundamental human rights was lukewarm at best.

しかしこの憲法は外国の憲法とは少しちがっていました。とゆうのはこれを作った人たちが人民ではないくて政府の人やそのころの実権をにぎっていた少数
の人たちであったために 人民の基本的人権をまもる点についてなぬるいところがあったのです。
The rationale behind the Meiji Constitution was not that freedoms and rights were received from Heaven by humans and granted at birth, but instead were rights extended within the purview of the law, and the law determined how much freedom and rights could be curtailed. In this way, the overtures within the Constitution towards establishing human rights were lukewarm. One reason this was so is that the citizenry did not yet clearly understand how precious basic human rights are.
く、法律の範囲でみとめられたもので、法律でならこの自由や権利をどんなにおさえてもよいとゆうふうに考えられてしまいます。それは憲法の定め方がかなまねるかったとゆうこともありますが、一つには国民に基本的人権がどんなに尊いものであるかとゆうことがまだはっきりわかっていなかったからであります
Before long, the deficiencies in the Meiji Constitution inflicted a great calamity upon the public. After the Manchurian Incident, military personnel increasingly took control of the government and misused it, and human rights were rapidly suppressed under the law.

これの欠かんはやがて国民の上に大きな禍をまねきました。満州事変以来軍人が政治をとるようになると、それを悪用して法律でどしどし人権をおさえてしまいました。
In order to accomplish their personal aspirations, military personnel completely disregarded the rights of the people. They made it so that citizens were not allowed to freely express their thoughts or opinions and arrested those who stood in opposition to government policies one after the other. They ended up starting the Pacific War. Because of this, Japanese citizens had to experience the miserable hardships of defeat in war. The citizens knew that they didn’t want this to happen again, so they conducted a comprehensive reflection on the previous way of thinking. It is these circumstances that ushered in the establishment of a new constitution.
軍人たちはおのれの野望をなしとげるため、国民の
人権を徹底的に無視しました。国民の考えや意見は
自由にいわせないようにし、また政府の政策に反対
するものはどしどしたい捕するといった工合に仮
に太平洋戦争を初めてしまいました。そのため国民
は敗戦とゆうみじめな苦しみをなめさせられること
になったのです。国民はふたたびこうしたことを繰
り返してはならないと考え、今までの考え方に根拠
的な反省が加えられました。そうして新しい憲法制
定のはこびとなったのです。
Under the new constitution, it clearly established that no one can violate our basic human rights; and, of course, this extends to our descendants as long as they are Japanese citizens.

新憲法には私たちは勿論、私たちの子孫至るまで日本国民であるかぎり誰もこの基本的人権はおかされないことがないとはっきり定められました。
Should a law that suppresses human rights be made, it will be judged in the Supreme Courts and be invalidated.

もしこれをおさえるような法律が出来ても最高裁判所で裁判して、その法律を無効にすることが出来るのです。
However, these basic human rights must be exercised for the benefit of a wide variety of people. Expressing one's own opinion is one component of fundamental human rights, but one should not express opinions that do not benefit people by writing books or in other ways. Freedom does not mean that you do not think of the burden you are placing upon others and doing whatever you wish.

しかし、この基本的人権は大ぜいの人々のためになるように使わなければなりません。
自分の意見を発表することは基本的人権の一つでありますが、人々のためにならいないような意見を本に書いたりしたらなりません。自由とは人の迷惑を考えず何をしても自分さえよければよいとゆうことではありません。
The basic human rights stipulated within this constitution are as follows:

- The infliction of torture and cruel punishments are absolutely forbidden.
- Every person shall have the freedom to choose his or her own occupation.
- No one will have their assets unfairly seized.
- Men and women have equal rights.
この憲法に定められた基本的人権とゆうのは
拷問されたり むごたちらしい刑罰を受けることは
ない。
誰でも好きな学問をすることが出来る。
自分の財産は不当にとられることはない。
男女はすべて同権である。
とゆうようなことであります。
In order to acquire these basic human rights, European countries have fought literally blood-drenched battles continuing for several hundreds of years. When that is considered, the efforts of Japanese citizens are not even comparable.

ヨーロッパの国々ではこの基本の人権を得るために何百年にもわたって文字通り血みどろなたたかいをつづけてきました。それと思うと日本国民の努力はまるでくらべものにならないくらいです。
We Japanese have just now undergone the most painful of hardships, that of being defeated in war. Our houses were burned down, and many of our fellow countrymen have died. As a result, we have been granted something precious. This time for certain, no matter what happens, we the citizens of Japan with all our might must protect it and defend it against violation.

いま私たちは敗戦とゆう最も苦しい目にあいました。私たちの家は焼かれ、たくさんの同胞が死んでいきました。その結果として、授けられた尊いもの
であります。こんどこそ、どんなことがあっても私たち日本国民の力で絶対におかされないようにまもっていかなければなりません。
Commander Alfred Rodman Hussey belonged to the Government Section of the Supreme Commander for the Allied powers (SCAP) under the occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1948. He closely worked with Mr. Hitoshi Ashida, the President of the Constitution Popularization Society, to promote the spirit of peace democratic Constitution. Upon returning to the United States, he brought back the files of SCAP Government Section and donated them to the University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies. The documents are preserved and held at the Special Collections Library at the University of Michigan Library.

Related Sources

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Potsdam Declaration


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