

Materials Disappeared under the High Economic Growth: Daily Life of the Japanese People Recorded in Sazae-san

Suzumura, Yusuke

(出版者 / Publisher)

法政大学大学院 国際日本学インスティテュート専攻委員会

(雑誌名 / Journal or Publication Title)

国際日本学論叢 / 国際日本学論叢

(巻 / Volume)

11

(開始ページ / Start Page)

六六(27)

(終了ページ / End Page)

五六(37)

(発行年 / Year)

2014-03-18

(URL)

<https://doi.org/10.15002/00009677>

平成25年度 国際日本学論叢第11号 2014年3月18日発行 抜刷

Articles

Materials Disappeared under the High Economic Growth: Daily Life of the Japanese People Recorded in *Sazae-san*

Yusuke Suzumura

Hosei University Research Center for International Japanese Studies

Materials Disappeared under the High Economic Growth: Daily Life of the Japanese People Recorded in *Sazae-san*

Yusuke Suzumura

Hosei University Research Center for International Japanese Studies

1. Introduction

Sazae-san, a number one among newspaper comic strips in Japan, is not only topical: its essential quality lies in the description of the big family's daily lighthearted life. Statistics tell us that this comic is one of most popular *manga* in Japan: it ran 27 years in 3 newspapers with 6477 episodes, sold more than 70 million copies, was dramatised 4 times and made into films 3 times, and was broadcast as a TV animation series for 45 years beginning in 1969. Because of such popularity, *Sazae-san* became a subject for studying the history of manners and customs of the Showa Era^{(1), (2), (3), (4)}, was recognised as political or social satire⁽⁵⁾, and was used as a source for the understanding of mutual communication in ordinary people's daily life⁽⁶⁾, even if it has to be admitted that some such research suffered from the use of rather dilettante-like methods. Not a few works analyse episodes of *Sazae-san*, and all research focuses on words and actions of *Sazae-san*, a heroin of this national comic and her family.

This presentation investigates the process of the disappearance of Japanese traditional manners or customs or materials recorded in a four-frame comic strip *Sazae-san* (1946-1974) written by Machiko Hasegawa

Materials Disappeared under the High Economic Growth: Daily Life of the Japanese People Recorded in *Sazae-san* (1920-1992). This comic was originally serialised in the *Fukunichi Shimbun*, a local newspaper in Fukuoka prefecture and later moved to the *Asahi Shimbun*, one of the leading national newspapers in Japan. For a long term serialisation, traditional daily necessities, old customs or many occupations, which appeared in *Sazae-san*, got away in the real life in Japan. In this meaning *Sazae-san* was not only a gag strip or a satirical comic but also a kind of a historical book which recorded the last of these materials. We will check scenes of *Sazae-san* describing these disappeared elements in daily life of Japanese ordinary people and examine social or folk backgrounds of such changes.

2. Object of the Research

Object of this research was the reprint series of *Sazae-san* published by the Asahi Shimbun from 1994-1995. There are four different editions of *Sazae-san*.

- (1) The original newspaper comic series run in the Asahi Shimbun (1946-1974, hereafter “the original version”).
- (2) The 68 volumes of the independent book series published by Shimaisha from 1947 to 1976 (hereafter “the original edition”).
- (3) The 45 volumes of the reprint series published from the Asahi Shimbun from 1994 to 1995 (hereafter “the reprint series”).
- (4) The 34 volume edition published separately by the Asahi Shimbun from 1997-1998, included in *Hasegawa Machiko Complete Works* (hereafter “the complete works edition”).

The original version is complete and contains the original stories of *Sazae-*

san. At the same time, it is not easy to read the complete series, because they were run daily in the Asahi Shimbun. That is to say if we want to read all episodes of the original series we have to check about 27 years of reduced edition of the newspaper. The original edition is one of the best sellers among Japanese comics with more than 70 million copies. But now all of them are out of print and difficult to obtain, since Shimaisha, the publisher of this edition was dissolved in 1993. The reprint series which sold more than 15 million copies, and the complete works edition are still available.

3. Changes of People's Behavioral Pattern

From December 1954 to November 1973, Japan experienced rapid economic growth, which was referred to as the “Japanese post-war economic miracle”. This miracle growth made Japan the second largest economy on Earth and improved the livelihood and economic conditions of Japanese people. In one hand it brought Japanese people new lifestyle and in the other hand wiped or weakened traditional or ancient customs and manners both spiritually and tangibly. For example, Establishment of social security systems enabled people to defect from extended family system and popularisation of the electric appliances changed people's behavioral pattern.

The place of appearance of foreigners is one of such an interesting point of *Sazae-san*: foreigners appear only inside Japan except in rare cases, because travelling required permits before 1964. In 1964, the total number of Japanese travelling overseas was about 130,000 people. After two years 200,000 Japanese visited overseas countries and overseas travel had its first boom in 1966⁽⁷⁾. It was in 1971 that around a million people enjoyed overseas

Materials Disappeared under the High Economic Growth: Daily Life of the Japanese People Recorded in *Sazae-san*

travel, and the total number of departures of Japanese nationals exceeded that of foreign visitors to Japan⁽⁸⁾. Even if travelling to foreign countries was a dream destination for Japanese for a long time, it was beyond reach for most. For example, the total expense of “European Jet Travel”, a first group tour to Europe after overseas travel was liberalized was 715,000 yen, and “The First Hawaiian Diamond Course Travel Group” was 364,000 yen, though the average starting pay of college graduates was 20,000 yen^{(9), (10)}. Therefore it was not extraordinary in the time that the cartoons did not contain references to Japanese people in foreign countries but to foreigners in Japan. In fact the total number of episodes including foreigners or references to foreign countries was 88. It constituted around 1.44% of all episodes in the reprint series (6095 episodes) and the only exception of “Japanese people in foreign countries” in this comic was an episode of one of Masuo’s friends who was injured in an African country (38: 105). This episode was created in 1969, five years after deregulation of overseas travel, hence Masuo’s friend was able to visit an African country.

4. Traditional Activities and Its Bearer

The Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964 made significant changes to Japan and Japanese. As is well known, the Tokyo Olympic Games, were not only the first Olympic Games held in Japan but also the first worldwide sports games held in Japan. To hold such an international event, the efforts of both the public and private sectors toward the internationalisation was conducted after the selection as host country of the Olympic Games in 1964⁽¹¹⁾. An episode of a man who struck *daiko*, Japanese drum, reflects a consciousness or mentality of ordinary Japanese people toward foreigners in the time. That

is to say, he strikes *daiko* while stripped to the waist and a police officer orders him to slip into a *kimono*. Subsequently he wears a suit instead of a *kimono*, because he thinks wearing *kimono*, a Japanese traditional costume, may not be appropriate for foreigners (29: 21). This judgement has interesting implications, since foreigners in *Sazae-san* often are interested in Japanese traditional fashions, performing arts or customs. A young lady who is good at dancing Classical Japanese dance (21: 43), a young man who is a good player of *hanetsuki*, a sort of Japanese style badminton (23: 170) or Mike and Douglass who are trainees of *kagura*, ancient Shinto music and dancing (41: 64). These episodes imply that when foreigners are involved in traditional Japanese activities, Japanese display a negative attitude towards their own tradition. In contrast people from foreign countries have a neutral or positive attitude, of course these episodes are somewhat exaggerated to give readers a laugh.

5. US Army and Civilian Personnel, or Disappeared People

We have to note changes in the kind of foreigners referred to: in the early volumes there were soldiers or civilian personnel of US army, but over time their figures disappeared. The last appearance of an officer of US army was Volume 5 (5: 86), and after that only private citizens or celebrities appeared in these comics. The reason of this change is obvious, because the status of Japan changed during these years. As is well known Japan was occupied by the Allied Forces until 1952, thus there were many soldiers or civilian personnel of US army all across the country. After independence, however, the role of soldiers or civilian personnel changed from being rulers of Japan to a kind of guardian or partner under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.

Materials Disappeared under the High Economic Growth: Daily Life of the Japanese People Recorded in *Sazae-san*

Corresponding to this change, soldiers and civilian personnel disappeared in episodes of *Sazae-san*. Instead, visitors to Japan or residents in Japan obtained the position of central characters of foreigners in this comic.

6. Images of Foreigners

The image of foreigners is too good to miss. American or European people appeared in 73 episodes, though Asian, Arab and African people appeared in 11 episodes in *Sazae-san*. Looking at these 11 episodes in greater detail, most of them were related to topical subjects of the moment, for example Indian Prime Minister Nehru and his visit to Tokyo (19: 25), the assassination of Nasser (41: 69), the discourse between Richard Nixon and Nguyen Van Thieu (43: 107), or Arab people and the Oil Shock (45: 40). In *Sazae-san*, no people from Asian, Arab and African countries live in Tokyo. It was not the result of disdain or neglect for these people but reflecting the situation at that time. Since countries in these areas of the Third World were still less-developed, it might be too hard for them to live in Tokyo or other cities in Japan, a newly-developed country. Accordingly there are no scenes of these people as neighbours of the *Sazae-san* family.

7. Changes of People's Fashions

Next fascinating point is changes of people's costumes from the 1950s to the 1970s, e.g. a hat, a stick or wooden clogs. Fashion is always influenced by and expresses a typical trend of preferences of a certain time period. And at the same time fashion represents.

In the begging of the Showa Era, wearing a hat whenever leaving home

was one of most basic manners for men. Utilization rate of a hat was approximately 100 % for men in the time, especially for salary man, wage and salary earners and a term originating in the Taisho Era and growing popular in the early Showa Era. Characters in *Sazae-san* is no exception to this rule, all salary man covered their head with a hat (9: 91). In 1948, however, a hairstyle called ducktail or regent style came into vogue for young men, a hatless style gradually became popular, since they were worried to be dishevelled the condition of their hairstyle by a hat. It was 19th October 1957 when the first salary man who did not wear a hat appeared in *Sazae-san* and in 26th August 1958 Masuo comes into work with bear head (20: 140).

A stick was a kind of essential materials for a gentleman or a middle-class man from the Meiji Era and it is ordinary fashion to take a stick when one strolls or takes a walk. For example Masuo takes a stick with a picnic on 27th August 1954 (13: 9). After the middle of the 1950s, a custom of taking a stick dropped away bit by bit, and using a stick meant that a user was the blind or the limping. On 21st June 1962, when Namihei, Sazae's father, wore sunglasses and took a stick, a girl took Namihei by the hand because she mistakenly perceived Namihei as the blind. This scene implies that taking a stick was unfamiliar behaviour for young generation in the 1960s. Or in one episode, a hearty gentleman swinging a stick suddenly acts like the weak aged walking with it to ride a priority car to the young and old (18: 91). It is a typical example of an abuse of a stick to pretend as the aged.

Third example is wooden clogs. For a long time, the foreign cartoon described Japanese with wooden clogs to satirise and in this meaning wooden clogs were a certain symbol of Japan and Japanese. But in the early 1960s the pride of wooden clogs passed a peak and shoes, sandal or leather boots became popular among people. The cause of such a rapid declination

Materials Disappeared under the High Economic Growth: Daily Life of the Japanese People Recorded in *Sazae-san*

of wooden clogs is the progress of pavement and decreasing of muddy trucks, prevalence of economical shoes, and fading of a custom to wear *kimono* in ordinary life. In *Sazae-san*, children's last chance of wearing wooden clogs is recorded. It was 7th August 1957 when Katsuo, young brother of Sazae, wear wooden clogs (20: 118) and Wakame, young sister of Sazae, wore wooden clogs until 30th October 1959 (22: 77).

8. Conclusion

We laugh because we realise the funny aspects of a situation. This implies that the humour of some episodes was easy to understand for a meaningful percentage of the readers of *Sazae-san*⁽¹²⁾. Consequently expressions of daily life may mirror recognitions or perspectives of ordinary Japanese people's ordinary life. By such episodes of *Sazae-san*, readers were perceived mainly as a good reason for a laugh, the funniness of the situation presented in these episodes. By this characteristic *Sazae-san* is able to be a manga which records manners and customs of the post-war Japanese society. And at the same time, it is also able to inscroll the last scene of a model of life which was created in the modern age and gradually disappeared according to the changes of lifestyle. Changes of the description a postman, for example, is one of good evidence of *Sazae-san* as a record of the lost elements of the Japanese society. In the middle 1950s, a postman goes his rounds by walk and this scene was described in two times (21st April and 3rd September 1950; 4: 82 and 5: 62). But once Japanese society enters high economic growth, the postman started to use bicycle to deliver many postal matters as quick as possible (e.g. 26th March 1959 and 25th December 1962; 22: 44 and 25: 128). Further a motor scooter was introduced to a mail delivery and *Sazae-san*

includes such a scene (1st October 1968 and 21st November 1970; **37**: 73 and **41**: 106). Sure *Sazae-san* may be just a manga and Machiko Hasegawa did not intend to record Japanese manners and customs in the day. But as a result not a little important scenes are recorded like a log or diary of an ordinary people. In this meaning it is not impossible for us to use *Sazae-san* as a source of examining ordinary customs or manners from the late 1940s to the early 1970s.

Notes

- (1) Tokyo Sazaesan Gakkai (1992).
- (2) Tokyo Sazaesan Gakkai (1993).
- (3) Setagaya Sazaesan Gakkai (1993 a).
- (4) Setagaya Sazaesan Gakkai (1993 b).
- (5) Shimizu (1997).
- (6) Torigoe (2008).
- (7) Naikaku Sōridaijin Kambō Shingishitsu (1967: 85).
- (8) Kokudo Kōsōshō (2008).
- (9) Shirahata (1996: 233).
- (10) Akiyama (1995 90).
- (11) Satō (2004: 43).
- (12) Shimizu (1997: 221-243).

Acknowledgement

I express my deepest gratitude to Professor Emeritus Kurt Werner Radtke to his advices and comments.

This paper is a part of results of Award for Young Individual Scholars' Research on Society and Culture: "Interdisciplinary Research on "Japan-consciousness" of 2011/2012 supported by Suntory Foundation (Japan).

Works Cited

- Akiyama, Kazuho (1995). *Sengo Nihonjin Kaigairyokō Monogatari*. Tokyo: Jitsugyōnonihonsha.
- Kokudo Kōtsūshō (ed.) (2008). *Kanko Hakusho*. Tokyo: Ōkurashō Insatsukyoku,
http://www.mlit.go.jp/hakusyo/syoListDetailAction.do?syocd=npcc200801&dtail_flg=M&first_page=2&t22_id=&searchFlg=off&ass_flag=true&seldspnm=&syoclsd=all&doclsd=all&keyw1=&keyw2=&keyw3=&keyw4=&operator1=AND&operator2=

Materials Disappeared under the High Economic Growth: Daily Life of the Japanese People Recorded in *Sazae-san*

AND&operator3=AND&SYOname=&gengo_from=Y&nendo_from=&gengo_to=Y&nendo_to=&dispcount=10&cur_page=1&highlight_search_flag=off&newkeyw= (accessed on 21st June 2012).

Naikaku Sōridaijin Kambō Shingishitsu (eds.) (1967). *Kanko Hakusho*. Tokyo: Ōkurashō Insatsukyoku.

Satō, Azusa (2004). *Nihon Tsūyaku Sangyō Kenkyū*. Tokyo: Waseda University, Doctoral Thesis.

Setagaya Sazaesan Gakkai (ed.) (1993 a). *Sazaesan no Himitsu*. Datahouse.

Setagaya Sazaesan Gakkai (ed.) (1993b). *Sazaesan no Higeiki*. Datahouse.

Shimizu, Isao (1997). *Sazae-san no Shōtai*. Heibonsha. Shirahata, Yōichirō (1996). *Ryokōno Susume*, Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha.

Tokyo Sazaesan Gakkai (ed.) (1992). *Isonoke no Nazo*. Asukashinsha.

Tokyo Sazaesan Gakkai (ed.) (1993). *Zoku Isonoke no Nazo*. Asukashinsha.

Torigoe, Hiroyuki (2008). “*Sazae-san*” *teki Komyunikēshon no Hōsoku*. Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai.

Abstract

From December 1954 to November 1973, Japan experienced rapid economic growth, which was referred to as the “Japanese post-war economic miracle”. This miracle growth made Japan the second largest economy on Earth and improved the livelihood and economic conditions of Japanese people. In one hand it brought Japanese people new lifestyle in one hand and in the other hand wiped or weakened traditional or ancient customs and manners both spiritually and tangibly. For example, Establishment of social security systems enabled people to defect from extended family system and popularisation of the electric appliances changed people’s behavioral pattern.

This presentation investigates the process of the disappearance of Japanese traditional manners or customs or materials recorded in a four-frame comic strip *Sazae-san* (1946-1974) written by Machiko Hasegawa (1920-1992). This comic was originally serialised in the *Fukunichi Shimbun*, a local newspaper in Fukuoka prefecture and later moved to the *Asahi Shimbun*, one of the leading national newspapers in Japan. For a long term serialisation, traditional daily necessities, old customs or many occupations, which appeared in *Sazae-san*, got away in the real life in Japan. In this meaning *Sazae-san* was not only a gag strip or a satirical comic but also a kind of a historical book which recorded the last of these materials. We will check scenes of *Sazae-san* describing these disappeared elements in daily life of Japanese ordinary people and examine social or folk backgrounds of such changes.

Keywords: *Saze-san*, high economic growth, disappeared materials, daily life, ordinary people