

Keynote Speech

Foreign diplomacy and sociality in France

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Thank you very much for your kind introduction. My name is Udagawa. I have coughing asthma; it is not contagious but I caught it in the last two weeks. I have been memory and it takes time to recover when you get older. I'm over 60, losing my hair, and my French is becoming poor. I do not have a good memory, but as a writer, I think that it is very important to have curiosity, which I thankfully have. Maybe we lose some of our memory as we get older, but if I lose my curiosity, I can no longer be a writer.

Professor Nishida, the director of this institute, asked me to talk about this. You can see the title of this symposium. I tried to say no because I was not sure whether I would fit in with this place, but he offered me free Petrus Chateau Margaux and other expensive wines, so I couldn't refuse. Actually, it is not true but at this kind of symposium, you might want to have some form of entertainment, so he asked me to talk about France and French food. I am still reluctant to talk about that but in the morning, I listened to the presentations and was moved. I fell asleep too, and in regards to the young people who are very active in the Asian region, I was very much impressed. I was also surprised because when I was younger,

when I was your age, I just wanted to play around in Paris. I could talk about entertainment or mention some funny stories for the next 5 hours, but I will talk about French diplomacy and sociality among the general public.

I will talk about French diplomacy and sociality. I haven't been to Hiroshima for the last 20 or 30 years; it was almost 50 years ago. The reason why is that in 1959, the film director Alain Resnais – he is a director of France and made a film called *A love affair in 24 hours* but the real title is *Hiroshima mon amour* and in French, they don't pronounce "H" so they pronounce *Iroshima*. *Mon amour* means "my love." I watched that film at the end of junior high school. The story of the film is a French woman visit Hiroshima to make a film and she met a Japanese man. Alain Resnais wanted to have a French-speaking man and that actor was Eiji Okada, because he is a French film director. He was a kind of intellectual man and he spoke French so he was chosen from the candidates. Eiji Okada playing the position of the man born in Hiroshima and he lost his family by atomic bomb. In the film, a French actress playing the position of the woman who was the mistress of

a German military officer, so she had two experiences of trauma. One day, the French woman and the Japanese man walk through the city and fall in love. This film was made in 1959 and at that time, Hiroshima was not as beautiful as it is now, and after watching that film in junior high school, I came to Hiroshima by myself. After that, I went to France and didn't go back to Hiroshima. I didn't know that Hiroshima was so important because I was in France, but when I was invited to speak by Professor Nishida, I remembered this film, *Hiroshima mon amour*. You can probably watch it on DVD and I encourage you to do so. In the film, only 10 years have passed since the atomic bomb, so you can see the real Hiroshima after the bombing. The film is about a love story with some degree of sadness. I'm now here in Hiroshima. I will talk about French diplomacy in the national government and the sociality of the public.

If we talk about government diplomacy and general sociality, metaphorically speaking, we could say that they are each a pair of wheels on a car. If general sociality is at the bottom and the foundation of diplomacy is the lower layer of the general public's sociality, then you will have a good government diplomacy, which is a kind of strategy of the national government, so the foundation of diplomacy in France is the excellent sociality of the general public. I thought I may want to have some paper to write on. There are many proper nouns in my presentation. There was a genius chef, Marie-Antonin Carême. He was born in 1784 and passed away in 1833. He lived through the French Revolution and the subsequent chaos. He was a genius chef. There was also a cunning

and experienced diplomat named Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord. Talleyrand found Carême and employed him; the Emperor of Russia and the Crown Prince of Britain also wanted to employ Carême, but he worked for Talleyrand in France.

Talleyrand was a cunning diplomat. After the French Revolution, there was war and France was defeated. Talleyrand was a close subordinate of Napoleon. Napoleon lost; then, because the monarchy was restored, Louis XVIII became king. Talleyrand was employed by Louis XVIII as well; he was good at scheming and also good at living – he pursued *joie de vivre* – the joyful life. He liked to eat gourmet food and was very dandy, so Talleyrand employed Carême. After a year, during the reign of Napoleon III, Europe was in conflict. Europe's leaders got together for a meeting. Of the Congress of Vienna, it was said that “the Congress dances, but does not progress.” I would like to watch this movie too because all the European leaders talked about their claims. Talleyrand was from the country that was defeated. One of the leaders asked him to be a Chair and what he would like to bring, and Talleyrand said, “I don't need any diplomats. I want to have a good chef and a good cooking pan,” so he brought Carême, good wine, and a cooking pot to attend the Congress of Vienna. Although France was a defeated country, it won the conference due to Talleyrand's strategy of bringing a good dish (due to Carême's competence; he was a genius cook).

When we talked about French diplomacy, this story was also mentioned before. There was no other cook like Carême. He was an unprecedented chef. Carême and Talleyrand

were alive after the French Revolution. At that time, the bourgeoisie started to gain power, so that was a change. In the past, there was a court dish. The bourgeoisie started the bourgeoisie dish. Carême appeared during this transition. Several decades later, Carême passed away. Another chef called Georges Auguste Escoffier appeared on the scene; he established modern French cooking. With Carême and Escoffier, French dishes, *cuisine française*, made great progress. There were tens of thousands of chefs at that time, but only one outstanding chef changed the course of *cuisine française*, and he was a Frenchman. Carême's banquet diplomacy is used in Elysée Palace. This is a presidential mansion, the Elysée Palace. Palais de l'Elysée is a major cornerstone of French diplomacy. As you can see, there is Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin; he was anti-revolutionary, a lawyer, and loved gourmet food. He went to the United States during the revolution and wrote several books that praise gourmet cooking. The actual title in French of one of his books involves "the physiology of taste." The title is *Physiology of taste including philosophy, raw materials, and cooking methods*. Brillat-Savarin won many wise awards and said that the dinner table is the ultimate state of politics; politics and diplomacy decide on dinner table of persons of power. The Elysée Palace putting that into practice.

The guests at Elysée Palace were treated well. What kind of dishes did they prepare at the palace? We should look at the level of intimacy with the guests and their social rank; the wine and dishes were determined according to these two factors. The ranking and hierarchy of the guests

determined the menu of the dishes at the banquet. This is true even now. The real meaning of banquet diplomacy is that the guests are differentiated, so that political implications can be implemented as part of the banquet. I think this is a very smart way to treat both national and foreign guests.

After the French Revolution, the bourgeoisie had power and authority. The bourgeoisie did not have any special dishes. What they did is that they added their tastes to court dishes. By doing so, they established bourgeoisie dishes. The 19th century was the best era for gourmet dinners or dishes because a chef named Carême and Escoffier appeared on the scene. The gourmet horizon expanded in Europe; gourmet dishes became a symbol of the authorities in power and could make people happy. Good food and politics became one thing at that time. This is not so apparent in the 21st century, but even now, political authorities are well connected with gourmet food in France. Generally speaking, the French president is not like a prime minister or president in Japan. The French president helps decide the menu; earlier, I mentioned the consideration behind the menu, differentiation and ordering, and the president makes the final decision on the menu at the banquet. The president even chooses one bottle of wine and makes political considerations. Currently, the dinner table at Elysée Palace is only 55 minutes.

Elysée Palace was the official presidential mansion at the end of the 19th century. At that time, *gourmand* indicated a heavy eater and *gourmet* meant a good eater. *Gourmand* was the symbol of power in that era. During dinner time, the *gourmand* invited farmers and the public; he opened the court to

them so that he could show his power, which is why gourmet culture culminated in the 19th century. Eating a lot was a symbol of power and *cuisine française* became simplified. Right now, the meal consists of *eau de vie* the main dish, salad, cheese, and dessert – only four or five dishes. As for the drink...

By the way, the 19th century was a big century. When you look at the food at Elysée Palace, in one course, there were 20 dishes and wine. Today, there are only two types of wine and one kind of champagne, but wine and champagne are made over many, many years, right? You cannot make them overnight; we know that and we talk about wine that was made over 10 or 20 years. When you have a banquet, no matter where you go, people are trying to serve wines from France, and of course Chile and Argentina have delicious wines but because of the long time spent to make this wine in France, the wine is valued. For example, consider Queen Elisabeth; she is a special figure. Bordeaux was occupied by the United Kingdom in the 12th or 13th century and Queen Elisabeth drank wines from there. Thus, you know what kinds of wines are served. That will give you some idea regarding to whom the dinners were served.

There are two types of champagne: vintage and non-vintage. For example, vintage was produced in 1990. For instance, Krug wine is the best kind. In other words, when you want to serve the best kind of wine, Krug wine is the type that you find and this is a family-made wine. They can only produce a couple of hundred bottles but anyway, the lifestyle has changed and the people don't spend many, many hours dining. Thus, during one course, you will only be served four or five dishes.

Sometimes people finish one course within 45 minutes, believe it or not. Even the French only spend 45 minutes dining, and at Elysée Palace, you may wonder how many minutes are spent. In the 19th century, they spent maybe 4 or 5 hours, but today, only 55 minutes. Why 55 minutes at Elysée Palace? I don't know how, but it's quite interesting. The French President de Charles André Joseph Pierre-Marie de Gaulle finds it difficult to sit still at the table. He has a limit of one hour, so 55 minutes was determined. Why? Because of him, the former President of France, de Gaulle; when he was in office, the time was set for the Elysée Palace. Thus, there is a combination of food and wine. It's the most difficult task of all, but when it comes to wine, it accumulates time, and already, the differentiation is there. Compared to a 10-year-old wine, a 30-year-old wine is considered better. The combination of food and wine, is an issue, as well as where to sit. Seating, like the household in Japan, that's what they say. They find it very difficult to set or arrange the seats. Some people are invited to the palace and some of them have the same rank. If you believe that you are superior and are seated at the end of the table, you will not be so happy. If you have more invited guests, it's quite a difficult task for the household to decide on the seats. If the sequence of ranking is wrong, the reception or banquet will go down the drain. This was a scary task in a way. For example, if you have several foreign ministers, you also need to consider placing people who are friends with each other together. Furthermore, if you invite a couple, you don't let a husband and wife sit next to each other; that's not good. You know why? Why do they have to sit together at such an occasion? I feel

that's not good. In Europe, France is a couple society, so if they are invited they come together, but there's no such thing as a group or a table of men, but if you take a look at the Japanese, some movies or programs, you will for certain find a group of men. Yet it's embarrassing to only have a group of men, and if the women or wives are invited for some reason, the men do not welcome that. This is a male-oriented society and they want to cling to each other. As I mentioned, in terms of seating the highest-ranking guests at the banquet, you usually invite high-ranking foreign diplomats, whether the State leaders are their friends or not (they may not be friends). There are a lot of relationships that you should consider. Then, under such circumstances, you must decide what to serve – the wine and champagne. Again, the wine and champagne determine whom you want to serve. As I said, a 30-year-old wine is known to be better than a 10-year-old wine, so the bottle of wine will determine the ranking or how you view the people that you are inviting. A lot of things are already embedded in the wines. Should you choose a Californian, Romanian, or Japanese wine? No, no, no, French wine must be selected. France is proud of its wine; it is their national asset.

Elysée Palace is like a theatrical stage. You know, people are there as a cast for this stage. It is a comprehensive artwork. The food – not only food, cutlery, service, wine, you name it, the menu as well, everything there, the whole thing is a piece to compose as comprehensive art, but the wine and food are the core of that art, the meals... That really appeals to all your senses (hearing, sight, taste, fragrance, sounds) and everything is there. What is so wonderful about this is that it will

be gone. It will be gone within a matter of 55 minutes, so that's the most wonderful part of all. Nothing is left over. French people talk about art or the art of *joie de vivre*, this is the one of the French people's most favorite words. It is like the art and science of life; it is very difficult to find an exact translation for this phrase. The art of life itself, the art of living, what does it mean? This is a sense of life, a sense that you want to enjoy life to the utmost, and Elysée Palace tell us something, but I'm sorry, I would like to talk about the life of ordinary people as well. I don't know where to go. We only have few more minutes and I'm only talking about Elysée Palace, but anyway, I don't know whether you will be invited to Elysée Palace in your life but if you are, please enjoy your time. And not even Elysée Palace, but if you go to restaurants in France, they will do everything possible to help you enjoy the moment, which I think is a different sense than we have here in Japan.

If you are invited to a theater party, you will be welcomed at the gate, at the door, and usually you go there as a couple. They value privacy and that's why your partner will be respected and welcomed at the same time, but that's not the case here in Japan. Japanese people, we are a homogenized society, but when you go to France, there is no such thing as homogeneous French people. There's no racial group called French people. You must fully understand that; otherwise you will never be able to understand the French lifestyle. If you go to Paris, I'm sure you will be able to find a different culture of people walking around in front of a café. If you are here in Japan, you'll basically see the same kind of people, but if you go to France, really, different people are

walking around and they think differently from each other; but in Japan, we stick together. We are a homogeneous group, so we don't need to communicate verbally because we already understand each other without talking. But in France, everybody is considered an individual, so if you want to talk with a foreigner, you express yourself; your personality, your characteristics, everything will be exposed. If you look at French movies for example, the Frenchman talks forever, right? They talk endlessly and it is not just a matter of movies; that's what they do. After they were born until they die, they continue to talk and they think that's their lifestyle. On the other hand, Japanese children are told to say "yes" and "yes." In France, they are told to say "no" rather than "yes." They express that they are different from others and why not. Then they want to persuade others to understand why not, so they never say sorry so easily.

Finally, let me talk about something to do with men and women. It is possible that French people fall in love all at once, not as frequently as Italians, but they try to catch women on the street. How is this different from Japanese culture? When a Japanese man wants to ask someone out on a date, he goes to a similar age group, right? But French men, they go to all different generations, 30s men asks 50s women. Isn't that something? When French men meet women, at a glance, they try to capture that person; you know the sense, the facial expression, the behavior, their ability to grasp who that person is, is so wonderful. Japanese men don't have that kind of a capacity. After 3 minutes of talking, French people immediately understand where this person is coming from. We talk about individual

characteristics. Of course, it is a composite of all the elements. Hierarchy, the behaviors, and facial expressions are coming from certain social groups, so individualistic French features are probably a bit different from those of Japanese people. I do hope that you will watch the French movies. Why do French people fall in love so easily? They are not just falling in love in a "one layer" sort of way. There are much deeper layers of getting to know each other. They think so hard about conceptual love affairs; they do not just have at-a-glance love affairs. Honoré de Balzac, a 19th-century writer, said that life is a theater. Life is a theater. I'm sure you know this, but French people, they live their lives as if they were on a stage. There is a strong desire to have love affairs, toward women, and they express that. They are the true actors, the players on the stage, and they feel that life itself is an art form, so they think they need to create art on the stage; that's life.

French people are not able to live alone even though individualism is so strong in their culture, but they are aggressive in the way they seek partners. I mean everybody is an individual; they are independent from each other and because of that, this desire to find a partner, another individual, is very, very strong. That aggressiveness cannot be found here in Japan.

There is a word "savage". There is another word, "civilian," which means someone who does the work of culture or civilization. A barbarian is different from a civilian or civil personnel. People who find it difficult to get to know strangers are included in the concept of the barbarian, so French people find Japanese people difficult to get acquainted with. Civilians, the civilian people, have a good sense

of sociability. Pascal, the philosopher, created the concept of philosophy as they say and he said, so this is not a literal translation. Every gentleman has a sociable competence; he will be more wonderful than the one who has excellent skills or the scholar who has good knowledge. Even if you have one excellent skill, you may not be liked by others compared to people who have no excellent skills. But if you are a gentleman who can make the right judgment, the correct judgment, and if you are sociable, then that is the most excellent competency we want to have. The concept of sociality was introduced during a major era; only 150 years have passed since the concept was created. It is not very sophisticated in Japan. But the French introduced sociality a long time ago, so they could develop it into a sophisticated notion.

They have a party every weekend and they invite many people. They enjoy themselves very much because when I watch French people during conversations at a party, they confirm the personalities of the people who they are talking to. They invite many people who have different occupations. At such a party, they spend time, about 3 hours or so. After talking for 3 hours, they will know who they are and what they are doing, what they are thinking. I believe I understand what they are thinking and how they talk and what kind of perspective they have. I understand that on the weekend. When I'm at a party, the host does not invite me to speak with him or her because I look like a difficult person to talk to. The host

usually looks at those people, the guests that he or she invited, and how sociable they are; they are watching for that. Take Japanese society, for example. The Japanese always think about in-group people such as those that go to the same school, same workplace, or something like that. Of course, there is in-grouping in France, but the Japanese in-group does not expand. It always has the same people, they are always the same, and they go to karaoke so they are always part of the in-group; it does not expand and just stays small. You will be invited by French people and you may have to talk. At that time, I would like you to positively be involved in the conversation. You cannot speak French fluently, as fluent as they do, but you can show them what kind of identity you have. You can just say a word to show that you have this kind of identity. If you can show that to the French people, you will be invited again. You cannot stay silent, and this can be said for men or women, the relationship between men and women. There is a proverb in France; a man does not say anything during dating, he might be thinking indecent. Sometimes I see a man who is talking a lot; that is sociality in conversation, so he is going to pursue the woman to date him by telling stories. But it is not easy, so if you have a date with a French man or woman, I will provide you with good suggestions and advice.

Thank you very much for your attention.



Couple on a public bench



Man, and woman at a social function



People enjoying wine and meal etc.

(Photo : Satoru UDAGAWA)