

Short Essay 1

The lives of Japanese people living in villages during the Meiji period, was overall better when compared to the Tokugawa era, with villagers having the ability to receive schooling and generate income for their families through factory labor or military service. However, the social and wealth disparities between those in villages and cities and a general lack of care for people in Japanese villages by the government prevented the Meiji period from being seen as anything more than a moderate step up from the Tokugawa period.

One major issue during the Meiji period was the wealth disparity between rural areas and urban areas. While the people in Japanese villages were not starving en masse, the disparity in wealth between people who lived in rural areas and those who lived in urban areas was apparent as money flowed out of villages and into cities. This problem was only emphasized with the schooling system that required tuition to attend, which would only serve as a negative for village households as they would lose helping hands on the farm and have to pay a sum of money that they could not afford to pay. As well, schooling initially was seen only as a luxurious idealism and a method to “increase the tax burden of the peasants, give them ideas above their station, and siphon off the most talented of them to the towns.” (Hane, *Morals and More*). The issue of a loss of helping hands also applied to the conscriptions for the Japanese military. The conscriptions caused young men at the perfect age to assist with labor on the farm to be taken away and enlisted into the military, affecting farming families. The conscription can also be seen as similar to the *corvée* used during the Tokugawa era, as young men were forced to have to leave their villages to do something they did not want to do, akin to forced labor. Many rumors also circulated about the conscriptions, such as the “Ketsuzei” or blood tax claiming that the people being conscripted blood was being extracted for westerners, and while these claims were not true, it did not help the mental well being of the villagers.

However, some positives made the Meiji period, overall, better for villagers when compared to the Tokugawa period. One of which was the presence of an education system, and by having one for villagers at all was a step up for villagers compared to the Bakufu’s mindset of “a good peasant is one who does not know the price of grain” (Hane, *Modernization of Peasants*). Moreover, schooling became more accessible to the villagers when the tuition was lowered in the late 1890s and removed in 1900. Once the tuition was dropped, the ability for youths in the village to be educated was positive, as someone who can read and write is better

than someone who can not. The dissolution of the samurai class also allowed villagers to leave the village to find more work. Because of this, fathers or sons could move to the city to make money for their families. The father could also send their daughters off to factories to have them bring in money for the families, albeit the working conditions and environment of the factories were horrendous. A side effect of being the breadwinner for the family also allowed the young woman that worked in the family to have more leverage. Finally, while seen as a negative for many years, the conscription system later became a sign that the people were “Japanese” and gave them a chance to find wealth and social influence through rising in rank in the military as most soldiers would leave their villages vowing to return as a private superior class.

Short Essay 2

In late 1976, there was a lot of discussion and turmoil over former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's arrest, with most of the disruption being caused by the Lockheed scandal. And with the rise in the discussion came many different articles covering different aspects of the Tanaka and the Lockheed scandal, with some showing the side they prefer more than others. In this paper, I will be analyzing four articles, all having varying levels of bias and their ability to convey reliable information to the reader.

The first article I will discuss is "Japan's Tanaka Denies Lockheed Charges, May Seek Reelection" from the Wall Street Journal. Out of the four articles, this one is the most objective and unbiased out of the lot. While not the longest, this article presents its information clearly and concisely without leaning to either side, mainly because the author only shows the information as if it was a definition. For example, when talking about Tanaka's article, "The Road I Should Take," the author states, "Mr. Tanaka denied taking bribes from Lockheed Aircraft Corp" and "Mr. Tanaka said that he felt completely fit mentally and physically..." simply giving statements of what was said, and not adding any outside input or opinion. These plain and simple statements lead me to be more inclined to believe what the author has to say at face value.

The next article is from the New York Times called "Tanaka indicted on bribe charge in lockheed case." This article, I thought, mainly was unbiased; it strays away from loaded words that explicitly attempt to vilify one side or the other while also providing information for both sides

of the argument. The article gives the opinion of the three major political parties in Japan during this time, with the LDP, being that they criticized Tanaka's successor Miki, the Socialist party, with their take being that the scandal is an example of "structural corruption," and the Communist party's objection to giving Tanaka bail. However, I did feel that the phrasing around Tanaka's introduction in some sections felt strange and pushed a little against the side of the LDP. For example, in the "Marubeni Men Indicted" section, the phrase "Mr. Tanaka, whose formal education ended in vocational school, led the dominant Liberal Democratic Party and thus Japan's Government from July 1972, until Dec. 9 1974..." I thought it was strange as the education level of Tanaka didn't add any substance to what the author was trying to convey in the article, and simply felt like it was only there to push Tanaka down to a lower pedestal in the mind of the reader. In comparison to the first article, which did something similar when the author said, "Mr. Tanaka, who was prime minister from July 1972 to December 1974, is among the 18 persons arrested in connection with the Lockheed payoffs in Japan," where the information added doesn't feel completely unrelated to the point following the addition.

The third article I am covering focuses on Prime Minister Takeo Hiki after Tanaka's resignation. The article is called "Factions in Japan's Ruling Party Combine to Seek Miki's Ouster" written by Andrew Hovart. The article discusses Prime Minister Hiki and his subordinate Yasuhiro Nakasone, as Conservative parties attempt to oust Hiki by going after Nakasone. Hovart does a good job of presenting why the opposition dislikes him because they think he doesn't have the strength to keep the party together and think doing what they saw as a "major political blunder." Hovart also explained why the LDP tolerates Miki, due to his popularity with the voters, despite his not-so-great popularity in the party. However, I don't think I could trust this article at face value because his source is a secondary source confirming Nakasone's link to the Lockheed scandal through his name appearing in the Lockheed testimony. While Asahi may be a credible news source in Japan, Nakasone's aid claims there is no truth and even the author himself expressed his doubt when he ends by saying "guilty or not."

The final article is called "Mr. Tanaka and Lockheed." The Washington Post focuses on Tanaka, the Lockheed Scandal, and the US association to the events. In stark contrast to the other articles discussed, "Mr. Tanaka and Lockheed" goes the complete opposite direction compared to any of the others, wearing its opinions on its chest. The article is very much leaning to the side of Tanaka and those that were arrested over the Lockheed scandal, and this can be seen as early as

the opening paragraph where the author downplays Tanaka's situation and states, "But it is hard to think of any other democracy that has treated a man of equal rank with such dramatic severity. Even Agnew was never locked up." The author makes it clear that they do not believe that Tanaka has done anything wrong and show that they think Tanaka has great power, as he states Miki and the prosecution would either have to devour Tanaka or be devoured himself. As well as writing in a manner that is defensive of Tanaka, the author also bashes the involvement of the US, explaining that it is also the US's duty to prevent a repetition of Lockheem, and states that Jimmy Carter didn't yet have a good grip on the situation to be making proposals. Overall, the article is a more helpful source for getting a better understanding of a specific side's point of view but should not be taken as a sole source of information.

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Short Essay 3

Covid-19 has been a significant point of discussion over the last two years, so the topic for the articles I chose revolved around Covid-19's effect in Japan, with lockdown mandates, masks, and the Tokyo 2020, or I guess now 2021, Olympic games.

The first article that I found interesting was "How Hostess Bars and Cherry Blossoms Helped Undermine Japan's Coronavirus Response" by Simon Denyer from the Washington Post. In the article, Denyer discusses the Japanese Government's restrictions and lockdown measures in response to the Covid-19. The article primarily focuses on the lack of communication between nightclubs and Covid-19 health investigators and the "cherry blossom crowds" that attended nightclubs, causing a surge in Covid-19 cases. Throughout, the author takes a more critical stance towards the Japanese Government and its handling of restrictions on nightlife establishments like hostess bars and nightclubs, making it clear from the title that the nightclubs are causing a problem. In the article, Denyer also pushes for heavier restrictions on the nightlife establishments when he says, "But the measures remain incomplete: Nightclubs have been asked to close, but bars and restaurants are allowed to stay open until 8 p.m". However, the author still provides facts to support his stance with statements from relevant people like Hitoshi Oshitani, head of one of Japan's infection control teams, and Hiroshi Nishiura, a colleague of Oshitani. With Nishiura stating that 30% of infections were coming from nightlife districts during a press conference.

When thinking about issues related to Covid-19, I also wanted to find articles discussing the effects of Covid-19 on the 2020 Olympic Games and Japanese people's perspectives on the games continuing as a whole. The first article I read about the subject was "Anatomy of Japan's Joyless Olympics" by Simon Denyer from the Washington Post. This article was written a little over a year after Denyer's Hostess Bars and Cherry Blossom article during the period leading up to the 2020 Olympic Games. The article is once again critical of the Japanese Government's decisions when handling the coronavirus pandemic, with the main issue being the Government's slow pace in authorizing and distributing vaccines, even with a high death toll of 14,000 compared to other East Asian countries. Denyer makes his point more believable by showing the frustrations of Japanese Politicians, like Taro Kono, with their inability to change the system, even with Taro Kono stating, "Even though we are in a state of crisis, we're still using the same rules to approve vaccines that we do under normal times." I found it strange that the author never compared Japan's death toll with the US despite being a Washington Post article. Still, I found it

surprising that Japan's death rate was significantly higher than other East Asian countries, as I had initially thought that their death rate was much lower than that. However, throughout the article, I did feel that Denyer used a lot of loaded language to emphasize his disdain when making his points. For example, when describing the Olympics at the beginning of the article and in the title, he uses the word "joyless," stating that the 2020 Olympics is "destined to go down as the most joyless of modern times," emphasizing the negative emotions he feels towards the handling of this year's games.

The other article I read on the topic of Covid-19 and the Olympics was "How Japan is Faring with Covid as Olympics Near: [Foreign Desk]" by Lauren Leatherby from The New York Times. The article goes over Japan's infection rate compared to other wealthy countries, vaccination rates, and the Japanese public's opinions on still hosting the Olympics, even amid a pandemic. Out of the articles that I read, this one was the most objective. The article gives statements about the state of affairs in Japan without injecting loaded language or opinion that would make the article have an agenda or favor a specific view. Even when discussing Japanese people's opinions on the Olympics, Leatherby just states statistics from a poll. Giving just factual statements leads me to believe what the author has to say about Japan's state of affairs.

The last article I read was "Is the Secret to Japan's Virus Success Right in Front of its Face?" by Motoko Rich and Hayashi Noriko from The New York Times. I found this article interesting, as it was heavily trying to encourage the reader to wear a mask by showing Motoko's journey to accepting masks and comparing the United States and Japan in its usage of facial coverings. However, what immediately stuck out to me when reading was the story near the beginning of the article talking about Motoko's grandfather trying to offer her a mask but turning down their offer because "they seemed unsightly and uncomfortable." This story stood out to me as a moment where the authors were attempting to gain the reader's trust by telling a story that makes the authors feel more relatable to a potential reader that is against masks, coming across as if they were screaming, "Hey, I hate masks just like you, but look at me now!". In addition, the authors also included Motoko's struggles of understanding when to wear a mask, her dealing with foggy glasses, and dealing with the feeling of her breath on her face, further trying to gain the reader's trust so the authors can spread the message to wear a mask. However, even though the authors are trying to push an agenda, they back that agenda with facts like when comparing the United States and Japan's infection rates stating "Japan has reported more than 17,000

infections and just over 900 deaths, while the United States, with a population roughly two and a half times as large, is approaching 1.9 million cases and 110,000 deaths”. These facts make it much easier to trust the author’s article and believe the message they convey.

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