Thr Japanese People Essay, Research Paper

The number of foreigners learning Japanese continuously increases each year. This therefore leads me to believe that these people must have an interest in Japan. However, it does make one wonder what images they have of Japan. Do these people really have a good and right image of Japan? I am acquainted with a few of these people and they claim their love of Japan is due to its fascinated with their own culture and heritage? The Japanese are amongst the easiest people to get along with, even if one does not understand them completely. Understanding the Japanese is one of the most difficult obstacles to overcome, however this should not deter anyone from trying to comprehend Japan and her people. The purpose of my essay then is to increase my readers understanding of Japan and its people, especially give their rather complex characteristics.

Being part of a group is very important to the Japanese. As a starting point for my analysis of the Japanese I would like to discuss the balance between the individual and group within the Japanese culture. The human race is made up of individuals, but each is born and lives, for most part of his or her life within a group or community.

Various societies differ greatly especially with respect to the emphasis placed on being an individual or being part of a community. This difference is obvious when comparing the Japanese to the Western culture as the Japanese would sacrifice the individual for the good of the group. This ideology extends beyond the group of the people?s sacrifice for the common benefit of the country as this is seen as something to be proud of.

As compared to the Westerners, the Japanese prefer to exist as a group. While Westerners put on a show of independence and individuality, most Japanese will be quit content to conform to their community in dress, conduct, lifestyle and even thoughts. This is all part of maintaining ?face?- originally a Chinese term but is of most importance to the community.

The Japanese are constantly being reminded of how unique their culture, beliefs, customs and lifestyles are. The constant reminder is perpetuated by the government through references in government publication and hammered home by publication of literature devoted exclusively to the subject.

Take for example Japanese that are banded together, this group is ranked according to its social position and disparity of age. Japanese have placed a high priority on rank even during the initial period. The notion of a ranking has strongly affected Japanese social life. Also we know that the honorific expressions are of the great importance to the Japanese language.

The head of the household, regardless of age, occupies the highest se at; his retired father then retreats to a lower seat. Nowadays, age becomes a deciding factor only amongst individuals of similar status. In Japan, status also precedes gender. It is commonly known that Japanese women are nearly always ranked as inferiors. This is not because their gender is considered inferior, but because women seldom hold higher social status.

Generally speaking, the Japanese that are born to a certain class behave in a certain way. Hence, in front of another these people are very aware of what the other party is thinking of them. Whilst Westerners are bold in their opinions and do not hesitate in expressing them, the Japanese tend to voice any opinions only after due consideration of another?s feelings. It is said that the Japanese are very diplomatic but this also means that they do not give direct answers, a characteristic based on a long trading of avoiding unnecessary friction.

The fact that the Japanese behave in this way especially when in contact with another can be partly explained by their homogeneity and long periods of isolation from the rest of the world.

Japanese respects the harmony of nature. This is apparent in the architecture and style of their gardens. Another characteristic of the Japanese is to give back the some quantity as they receive. While I was in Japan, a friend explained this concept to me. He claims that despite the fact that most Japanese do not like to do this, they conform as it is a tradition handed down from generation to generation.

From now on, I would like to talk about the general images of Japanese.

The image portrayed by Japanese to the outer world is one of people of hard working. However having lived there I have my doubts.

One of situations that I observed is as follows:

Young salesmen are given pep talks first thing in the morning. They leave their headquarters in high spirits. Half an hour later they can be observed in the ?Kissaten? (literally meaning tea-drinking shop) in front of their headquarters.

Another situation would be 4 co-workers in an office putting their heads together to push a plan through. They will visit the ?Kissaten?, to discuss their plan of action. All this is done on company time. They even play golf during office hours. All these situations only goes to prove that the Japanese work longer hours (partly to collect overtime) but not any harder than anyone else.

Most of us recognize the strong Japanese spirit of unity. Due to this spirit of unity Japan is now one of the major economic powers in this world.

They are amongst the most intelligent people in this world. Japanese scholars have gained great recognition from their peers abroad.

For a some time now, the Japanese have put great emphasis on education. All Japanese students are concerned about their university entrance examinations. This attitude saw to the emergence of the ?Kyoiku mama? or education mother who deprives her children of a normal childhood while pushing them up the education ladder. All this is due to the ?Shiken jigoku? which literally means the examination hell. There are many universities in Japan. However those who graduate from Tokyo University are considered the dream of society. They progress into the government service and eventually become bureau chiefs.; Should they choose the business line, they are the ones that hold all the top positions.

In present day Japan it is necessary to be a university graduate if you wish to amount to anything. This is said to be the root of some of Japan?s problems. Within the government and private sectors, there is a definite distinction between a high school and university graduate. Even though practically every Japanese will agree that the exam system is cruel and ought to be abolished, they also realize that nothing will ever be done to change this form of selection. Japanese have learned by rote, advancing simply by repeating what they are told. Take for example Sony, the company respects each person?s creativity and imagination. However most Japanese companies are unable to change their approach yet. These companies need to recognize individual talents in order to prosper as a company and henceforth benefit the nation as a whole. The Japanese education system ought to chance to accommodate students? abilities and interests. It is thought that this will enhance students? interests in learning. As it were, Japanese normally have been educated regimentally. From time to time, Westerners have claimed that the Japanese fall short when it comes to originality. I believe the Japanese have lost their originality, because of their regimental education system.

It is well known that Japanese are kind people. People over the world envy their kindness and have tried to learn from it. This inherent kindness amongst the Japanese is said to make a person happy. Ones first impression when seeing a Japanese smile is charming. Suspicion is only aroused when the same smiles through situations of pain, shame and disappointment. I also think Japanese?s kindness is immoderate. For example, if you go to department store in Japan, you can see easily woman staffs who always only make a bow like a mannequin all day long. It must be hard labor, but the most customers are more concern about buying goods than bows of woman staffs. Unconsciously, the department store is dissipating their labor.

We should familiarize ourselves with the words ?Honne? and ?Tatemae? in order to understand the Japanese. These 2 words are generally used in pairs. Honne is what one thinks while Tatemae is how one behaves. These are translated in English as principles and practice. ?Thank you for inviting me for tea, please come to my house next time.? and ?We have just bought a new house, so if you are in the vicinity, please drop in.? are nothing more than expression of friendship. But if you believe these words and wait for an invitation, there are many cases when you will be kept waiting forever. The differences between principle and true intention, between formality and reality and between words and actions is quit common in Japan.

It is true that it is difficult to understand the Japanese people?s true characteristics through these discussions in this essay. This is because we grew up in a society where our senses of values are different from the Japanese. It is hoped that one is able to understand that actions taken by the Japanese people are not abnormal but very much a part of the Japanese culture. The fact that the Japanese do not think or act the same way as Westerners does not mean that they are better or worse than the Westerners. Only that it is different.

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