

The Fiftieth Anniversary of The Grand Lodge of Japan  
(1957-2007)

**Pauline Vera Chakmakjian**  
spyglass8@aol.com

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Miss Pauline Chakmakjian received her BA in English Language & Literature (Whittier) in 1996 along with a fine art merit scholarship in drawing and painting during her undergraduate studies, her DipLaw (London) in 1997, and her MA in Modern French Studies (London) in 2001. She transferred her Doctoral studies from University College London, Faculty of Laws to the University of Wales, Lampeter, Department of History to be under the supervision of Professor Andrew Prescott. She lectures on freemasonry in relation to eighteenth-century British and European *salon* culture, but her current research and publications deal more with contemporary Japanese Freemasonry in relation to Japanese ritual, religion, and society. She is so fond of both the original use of The Freemasons' Hall for *salon*-style events like lectures and concerts as well as Japanese history and culture having lived in Kyoto, the ancient capital for some time, that she founded a cultural *salon*, The Japan Room, which meets occasionally in Lodge Room No. 11 (named after Japan) of the Freemasons' Hall in London.

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH INTO FREEMASONRY AND FRATERNALISM

University of Sheffield, United Kingdom  
34, Gell Street  
Sheffield S3 7QY

Phone: +44-(0)114- 222 98 91  
Fax: +44-(0)114- 222 98 94  
Email: [crf@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:crf@sheffield.ac.uk)  
URL: [www.freemasonry.dept.shef.ac.uk](http://www.freemasonry.dept.shef.ac.uk)

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**By Pauline Vera Chakmakjian**

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The Grand Lodge of Japan (1957-2007)**

Japan is a country about which relatively little is known as regards masonic participation, and this paper provides an overview of the activities of The Grand Lodge of Japan, which was formed in 1957. The paper not only emphasises and expands on key points from an earlier paper by the same author, 'Seeking Enlightenment: Initiation and Ritual of Oriental Candidates', delivered at the 2005 Canonbury Conference (printed in *The Canonbury Papers: Volume 4*. London, 2007), but also brings to light the more recent involvement of Freemasonry with one of the chief aims and objectives of the fraternity – charity. *Zaidan Hojin Tokyo Masonic Association*, the charitable foundation of freemasonry in Japan, and its kind and helpful Board of Trustees have disclosed to the author several details surrounding the charitable agenda of freemasons in Japan. This, together with a consideration of the issues involved in increasing the membership and influence of Freemasonry in Japanese society, aims at making this an anniversary paper worthy of representing the maturity which the Grand Lodge of Japan has attained over the past fifty years of its existence.

**A Brief History of Freemasonry in Japan**

Speculative Freemasonry first came to Japan through the Dutch and the British.

The first Japanese nationals to become Freemasons were initiated in the Netherlands in 1864. Tsuda Shinichiro and Nishi Shusuki, who later took the names Tsuda Mamitsu and Nishi Amane, were two researchers from the Imperial School of Culture who came to the University of Leiden, to be instructed in political science, constitutional law, and economics. Their tutor was Professor Simon Vissering, who was

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also a freemason, a member of La Vertu Lodge No 7 of Leiden. He encouraged Tsuda and Nishi to become freemasons, and they were initiated in La Vertu lodge late in 1864.

At the same period the first meetings of Masonic lodges in Japan, for which there is evidence, were taking place in Yokohama. Sphinx Lodge No 263 (IC) was a travelling military lodge, associated with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers and warranted by the Grand Lodge of Ireland. The battalion was stationed in Yokohama in 1864 and Sphinx lodge held its first meeting on 27 January, 1865, and further meetings until March 1866. From 1865 onwards, permission was given for other British lodges to be formed in cities such as Yokohama, Kobe and Osaka under the state of extra-territoriality, which meant that they were exempt from the jurisdiction of local law.

The first lodge founded under the English Constitution was Yokohama Lodge No 1092, which held its first meeting on 26 June 1866. Others, under both the English and Scottish constitutions, gradually followed, and in 1868, with the help of Sir Harry Parkes, the Japanese government granted a lot for the building of a Masonic Hall, which withstood the earthquake of 1870 but was completely destroyed by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. A new temple, on the Bluff in Yokohama, was dedicated on 12 February 1927. This was built with funds sent from the United Grand Lodge of England, on condition that the property should be owned and controlled by lodges working under the English Constitution.

When extra-territoriality was abolished in 1899, according to the law Freemasonry was technically illegal. However, a gentleman's agreement was established by which Freemasonry would not be interfered with by the Japanese authorities on condition that Japanese citizens would not be recruited as members. In the few instances where initiations of Japanese nationals did occur during the existence of this agreement, the initiations in question took place in a country outside Japan where the nationals were posted as part of Japan's external relations with foreign countries. For example, early in 1903, Viscount Tadasu Hayashi, Japanese Ambassador to the Court of St. James, was initiated in Empire Lodge No. 2018 during a meeting of freemasons in Piccadilly in London. Within a year he was serving as the Worshipful Master of the lodge.

For some time the then Viscount Hayashi was thought to have been the first Japanese national to become a freemason in England. However, while it is correct to state that he was the first *prominent* Japanese in England initiated into the Craft because of his diplomatic appointment, he was not the very first. The first Japanese national to have been initiated in England was a Philip Takeitchi Hayashi of the 'Imperial Japanese Navy' whose initiation took place on 6 February 1886 in the Percy Lodge No.1427 in Newcastle upon Tyne.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1930s Freemasonry in Japan faced the rise of anti-masonry. It had not been uncommon prior to that time, but it increased during that decade as Japan became allied with Nazi Germany. When war escalated to the events surrounding Pearl Harbour, the relationship between Freemasonry and the Japanese government deteriorated completely. Lodges went into recess and items were seized from the lodges by the Japanese authorities for analysis. The Japanese, like the Germans, took a keen interest in masonic activities because they viewed the organization as conspiratorial and suspicious. Indeed, some freemasons were arrested for spying, interrogated about freemasonry, imprisoned, tortured and tried.<sup>2</sup>

After the Japanese surrender in 1945, General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964), Supreme Commander of the Allied Armed Forces - incidentally also a most influential freemason - assumed control over the governance of Japan. Freemasonry in Japan was revived and among many things that he did, MacArthur encouraged Freemasonry among the Japanese.

### **MacArthur's Freemasonry and The Stabilisation and Reconstruction of Japan**

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<sup>1</sup> J. M. Hamill: 'Attachment A' (1996) of Y. Washizu: "Anti-Masonry in Japan – Past and Present", in *AQC* vol. 107 (1994)

<sup>2</sup> For a full account see Washizu, *op. cit.*

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General MacArthur's entry into Freemasonry was a chicken-and-egg situation. While the practice has had different prerequisites throughout the various jurisdictions of speculative Freemasonry, a procedure known as "making a mason at sight" has occurred on occasion since the earliest years of Freemasonry. This special dispensation was executed only in very exceptional circumstances during which a Grand Master, or occasionally a less prominent member within the masonic hierarchy, would grant automatic masonic membership to an outstanding man so that he could be elected and go through the three Craft degrees on the same day. Perhaps the best-known British example is that of Lord Brougham, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Lord Chancellor, well-known as a lawyer, reformer and politician, and a noted orator, wit, and eccentric, who was granted this special masonic dispensation, albeit before he became famous. During a youthful tour of the Outer Hebrides in 1799, Henry Brougham decided on a whim to attend a masonic lodge at Stornoway on the island of Harris and was effectively made a mason at sight by the Master of Fortrose Lodge No. 135. MacArthur's entry into Freemasonry was more formal but in much the same manner. He was made a mason at sight in the Philippines on 17 January 1936, and became a member of Manila Lodge No. 1. He also entered the Scottish Rite and eventually received the thirty-third-degree.<sup>3</sup>

The reason for inventing this special dispensation seems twofold: first, initiating prominent men in society would enhance the reputation of Freemasonry; second, men in such high positions of authority would not have the time to indulge in masonic ritual to climb the ladder of degrees despite the fact that they are genuinely interested in the ethics and endeavours of the organization. In such rare instances like MacArthur's, it can also be perceived as awarding an honour because those higher up in the masonic hierarchy observed that a man like him already possessed those qualities of mind found in the moral lessons within the degrees that the fraternity is trying to

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<sup>3</sup> On 17 January 1936, General Douglas MacArthur was made a mason at sight in Manila by the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines, MW Samuel Hawthorne. MacArthur joined Manila Lodge No.1 and subsequently entered the Scottish Rite. On 19 October 1937, he was coroneted Honorary 33rd Degree at the American Embassy in Tokyo.

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instil in its candidates. MacArthur's actions throughout his entire career consistently displayed a pattern of behaviour closely related to masonic goals, ideals, and even faults:

- his notion of destiny (to shape the lives of peoples in the Orient)
- his belief in a special knowledge or consciousness (Oriental psychology)
- his anti-Communist stance (preference for bourgeois sensibilities)
- his advance of the self (obsession with rank/publicity/fame/his competition)
- Overriding of ego over duty (his illegal actions and rebellious behaviour)

It is not so much that Freemasonry influences people and institutions in and of itself, but that these extraordinary chicken-and-egg cases demonstrate that the qualities Freemasonry and free-masons value can exist independently and before initiation. Meaning, a man with the psychological attributes of MacArthur essentially pre-empts the chief masonic goal, which is the pursuit of greatness/perfection of the self in tandem with a strong sense of self and spirituality. The Great Architect of the Universe is not a composite or a pagan god, but a term applicable to the way in which each freemason interprets God. It is a symbolic representation of the ideal one aspires to of oneself following the example of the Supreme Being of one's personal faith: *i.e.*, it is a state of perfection that the freemason is attempting to emulate and come as near to as possible.<sup>4</sup> For the more modest man yet unaware of this release of his own potential for

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<sup>4</sup> P. Chakmakjian: "Seeking Enlightenment: Initiation and Ritual of Oriental Candidates", in *The Canonbury Papers*, vol. 4 (2007), pp. 129.

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greatness, the masonic goal is unknown to him and therefore, must be reached in slow steps through the degrees.

It is the convergence of those masonic ideals innate in such a man as MacArthur with the goals of Freemasonry as an organization that actually results in the influence upon third parties on large and important scales. Sometimes this influence is bad as in MacArthur's arguably poor command in the Philippines as a result of his inflated ego. However, at other times it can be perceived as a source of tremendous good, as in the case of MacArthur wishing to instil Western beliefs to help build Japan up again from its humiliated state after the surrender, partly through concepts nurtured by Freemasonry.

General Marshall said that MacArthur had a court rather than a staff. Connaughton comments on MacArthur's team in the Philippines stating that the relationship in the inner command sanctum was decidedly masonic by nature if not by actuality, and how those who happened to also be masons like Secretary for War, George H. Dern and High Commissioner, Paul V. McNutt were on very friendly terms with MacArthur.<sup>5</sup> Highlighting such facts appears to imply that membership to freemasonry was what prompted MacArthur to work well with some and not so well with others. However, Connaughton failed to emphasise that President Truman was also a freemason, but that he and MacArthur had violent clashes (though there was reconciliation between them in the end) despite membership of the fraternity. Thus, the masonic influence during the Philippine conflict was not found so much in the sycophancy within MacArthur's staff but more in MacArthur's obsessions and behaviour while in command.

Perhaps it was while fulfilling his Neo-Platonic goals within Freemasonry of making himself akin to God that MacArthur lost all sense of balance. It is well documented in many biographies that MacArthur had a vast general knowledge in addition to his military speciality, a brilliant memory, a capacity for anecdotal and passionate speech, an intense ambition to make his mark, and a flair for the

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<sup>5</sup> R. Connaughton: *MacArthur and Defeat in the Philippines*, (2001), pp. 68 & 85.

dramatic. While all of these are remarkable traits, they can at the same time be dangerous if the ego is enlarged to an unhealthy level, as was the case with MacArthur. Connaughton correctly points out, “It was MacArthur’s undoubted eloquence, the ability on occasions to talk nonsense with confidence, which served not only to delude others but also himself.”<sup>6</sup> Such traits can be interpreted as the effect of masonic Neo-Platonic notions carried to malignant extremes, most especially the obsession MacArthur had with creating a legend out of himself when he would write reports praising himself for purposes of aggrandisement as well as covering up errors of judgment. The case of Japan, however, was entirely different from that of the Philippines.

Occupation Forces are always responsible for post-war reconstruction through both establishing a viable social infrastructure and winning the hearts and minds of the indigenous population. Part of MacArthur’s plans for post-war Japan’s stabilization and reconstruction was to reconfigure the spirituality of the Japanese. The first step towards this goal was the nullification of the indigenous belief in the divinity of the Emperor as a break away from traditional Japanese religious concepts. Subsequently, other such manoeuvres along the spiritual line quickly followed.

### **The Grand Lodge of Japan**

As previously mentioned, the Japanese were forbidden to become freemasons (a few exceptions being Japanese nationals who were initiated abroad while in the Netherlands and England), although freemasons mainly from Europe and America had been allowed to have lodges in Japan since 1864, the only exception being 1941-1945 when lodges were banned by Japanese authorities and had gone into recess. With the Japanese surrender, some lodges slowly re-opened and MacArthur rescinded the barrier placed by the Japanese government to allow Japanese nationals to become freemasons.

When MacArthur encouraged Freemasonry among the Japanese, he arguably did so in order to aid the spread of Western

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 90

ideas and ideals through the fraternity. Freemasonry possesses overlapping nuances with concepts such as democracy and the ethical teachings of Christianity, concepts MacArthur wished the Japanese people to internalize. Whether or not MacArthur was aware he was copying the English eighteenth-century model of using elites in Japanese society to achieve this objective, he successfully convinced such persons to become freemasons. For instance, after Emperor Hirohito's uncle, Prince Higashikuni, was made Premier of Japan by the Occupation authorities, he was encouraged to become a freemason.<sup>7</sup>

After the war had ended the already existing masonic lodges gradually resumed their activities, and from 1950 onwards a number of new lodges were founded by the Grand Lodge of the Philippines, some of which began to admit Japanese nationals. Then, in March 1957, a Grand Lodge of Japan was constituted under whose auspices most masonic activities in Japan are now conducted. Growth, however, has been slow.

### **Five Problems Preventing Masonic Growth in Japan and Proposed Solutions**

#### *Imperial Patronage: An Opportunity Lost.*

In the history of England, Freemasonry was one of the most successful of the eighteenth-century clubs and societies that mushroomed during the pre-Enlightenment and the Enlightenment periods. This was primarily because its founders successfully marketed it using the patronage and leadership of nobles and royals.<sup>8</sup> Hamill explains, "Desaguliers has been credited with introducing the aristocracy and men of intellect into the craft, and the presence of a nobleman as grand master brought freemasonry to the notice of the public."<sup>9</sup> The tradition continues today with HRH The Duke of Kent as Grand Master in order to enhance the reputation of the Craft.

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<sup>7</sup> T. W. Fripp: *Japan - History of Freemasonry* (1961), pp.57

<sup>8</sup> P. Clark: *British Clubs and Societies* (2000), pp. 327

<sup>9</sup> J. Hamill: *The Craft*, (1986), pp.42

When Prince Higashikuni and a few other Japanese were made freemasons in 1950, Emperor Hirohito became interested. Michael A. Rivisto, Master of Tokyo Masonic Lodge, who was largely responsible for purchasing the *Suikosha* (Imperial Japanese Naval Officers' Club) to establish a masonic headquarters in Tokyo (now the site of the Grand Lodge of Japan/Tokyo Masonic Building), was subsequently invited to the Imperial Palace to explain Freemasonry to the Emperor.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, Rivisto was concurrently charged by the U.S. military and the Japanese authorities with black marketing and illegal currency transactions. This resulted in the withdrawal of his invitation to the Palace, his deportation, and charges being preferred against him for unmasonic conduct, which eventually led to his expulsion from the Craft.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, while the patronage of a member of the Imperial Family or the Imperial Household Agency<sup>12</sup> would be most beneficial and greatly desired as a catalyst of exalted support for the Craft in Japan, the likelihood of this occurring is highly improbable due to this past scandal. Nevertheless, there may be avenues for the Grand Lodge of Japan to pursue as outlined in the next and fourth section of this paper following a description of the other issues in this section.

*Language Barrier: Slows or Prevents Japanese Participation.*

According to the latest figures, of the approximately 2,300 freemasons in Japan at present, the majority of the membership is composed of Anglo-Americans or Europeans while only around 500 are actually Japanese. Naturally, this is due to the fact that historically, masonic lodges in Japan were established to serve as replica salons for Westerners and later found predominantly on or near American air bases. The original lodges were subordinate to the Grand Lodges of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and later American-controlled Grand Lodges, hence the lodge language was English. Although ritual books

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<sup>10</sup> J. L. Johnston: *Japan's Freemasonry* (1990), pp.40

<sup>11</sup> C. Haffner: *The Craft in The East* (revised edn. 1988), pp. 304-306

<sup>12</sup> Historically to present-day Japan, the Imperial Household Agency (Kunaichō), a body closely linked with the Imperial Family, is comprised mainly of courtiers from powerful families.

were translated into Japanese after the formation of the Grand Lodge of Japan, a systematic amalgamation of the use of the two languages never occurred to shatter the problem of the language barrier. From the perspective of an outside observer, it is questionable whether this is a deliberate scheme in order to control the quality or calibre of the incoming Japanese members, somewhat akin to the strict requirements of other Grand Lodges such as that of Sweden where the restriction is that of religion. One noteworthy observation is that many of the Japanese members are educated, prominent social figures including presidents of the Tokyo Lion's Club and Rotary Club as well as a number of successful businessmen. The mixture of social classes amongst the Japanese members is not as readily seen as in other countries.

Of the now eighteen masonic lodges under the Grand Lodge of Japan, only four are Japanese speaking – Torri Masonic Lodge No. 6 located in Nagoya, Tokyo Yuai Lodge No. 11 ('Lodge of Brotherly Love'), which is based at the headquarters of the Grand Lodge of Japan located in Tokyo, Hokkaido Lodge No. 17 in Chitose, and Wakkanai Centennial Lodge No. 21 in Sapporo.<sup>13</sup> This does not exclude other lodges, such as Kyoto Masonic Lodge No. 5 as being Japanese-speaking, but Yuai, for example, attracts a large number of ethnically Japanese members due to its emphasis on the use of the Japanese language. While it is generally understood that English is the universal language, this does not obviously mean that all citizens of a foreign country will have been taught or self-educated to speak and use the English language in preference over their native Japanese in all social contexts, particularly those as obscure as masonic membership.

It would be more sensible for the Grand Lodge of Japan to consider altering the primary lodge language from English to Japanese, or at the very least, to transform the lodges into bilingual entities. First, any candidate for initiation probably experiences some degree of anxiety during the ritual at having to recall answers to catechistic ceremony. But, for the Japanese candidate who must learn

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<sup>13</sup> T. Wangelin: "Freemasonry and Modern Japanese History", in *Tokyo Masonic Lodge No. 2*, paper 2 (2007), pp. 4

and recall such things in a language that is not his native tongue, this stress is unfairly compounded. Second, Freemasonry would be open to a larger number of good Japanese men since fluent English is more commonly known only to Japanese who are either highly educated or engaged in commerce. Finally, the conversion of the primary lodge language from English to Japanese would not cause great inconvenience to non-Japanese freemasons as most foreigners living and working in Japan speak and understand Japanese with intermediate if not fluent ability. The switch of the primary language from English to Japanese would only signify that potential Japanese candidates would be invited to perform the rituals in their native language rather than overtaking English entirely, thereby transforming the lodges into bilingual entities.

*Unfavourable Impression of Freemasonry:*

Based on personal interviews, the opinions of many freemasons and non-masons in Japan indicate that the current impression of Freemasonry by Japanese society at large - provided members of the public have even heard of the fraternity - is that it is an organization somewhat akin to a religious cult. Even today, there are perceptions within the Japanese public that the fraternity has some relationship with the Jewish people, which is largely likely to be a remnant of the 1930s anti-masonic propaganda, spread by the Japanese authorities at that time, that freemasons are involved with a Jewish conspiracy to dominate world affairs.

Far from being secretive (as Japanese social circles tend to be), the Grand Lodge of Japan is remarkably open in nature. For example, not only does its website provide information on Freemasonry in general and Freemasonry in Japan in great detail, but also annual events take place on its premises, which are open to the general public. The Japanese are very sensitive to the changes of the seasons, and spring is a particularly festive time when the blossoming of the cherry trees gives rise to a series of celebrations and picnics throughout the country. The Grand Lodge of Japan is blessed with a small yet charming garden behind its premises for hosting an annual *hana mi* (cherry blossom picnic) at the end of March around the time of their Annual Communications meeting. This event is open to non-

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masons by leave of the events coordinator of Tokyo Masonic Lodge No. 2.

Another event is the Grand Lodge of Japan's annual Children's Festival, usually held during the third week of May. This is a festival open to the general public, but specifically organised for children from various orphanages, child and maternal associations. The event is American in nature with some masons dressed as clowns to amuse the children mixed with other various American and Japanese entertainments. From 1976 to 1987 the number of children attending grew from 200 to 800.<sup>14</sup>

Having attended the thirtieth Masonic Children's Festival on 22 May 2005 myself, it is remarkable how the public indulges in the generosity and enthusiasm with which the freemasons host the event, but visitors seem to leave without an understanding or enhanced impression of the mission and charitable agenda of freemasonry despite the deep appreciation for amusements provided on the day. It would be helpful if an informative English-Japanese pamphlet about Freemasonry in Japan - such as the one in English that the United Grand Lodge of England distributes at its premises in Great Queen Street (London) - could be produced and made available in public places such as libraries, universities and at events such as the Children's Festivals to communicate and indeed, influence a more favourable impression of Freemasonry.

Moreover, even though the public at large is unaware of the internal conflicts within freemasonry in Japan, there have been a few incidents recently that affect morale amongst freemasons. Internal conflicts include 1) certain members of Tokyo Yuai Lodge No. 11 involved in misbehaviour for which a Past Master (also Past Grand Master), Mr. Iwohama, was expelled from the Craft after a masonic trial, 2) a member of the *yakuza* (Japanese mafia) posing as a Zen priest involved in being Master of Kyoto Masonic Lodge No. 5, and 3) insider comments as to the authenticity of the accounting for funds of the charitable arm of Freemasonry, *Zaidan Hojin*. One very seldom gains access to such information as regards freemasonry, but I am most grateful to Yoshio Washizu, a Past Grand Master of the Grand

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp. 4

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Lodge of Japan and Professor Koichi Terasawa of Square & Compass Lodge (Kunitachi) Lodge No. 3 for informing me of this sensitive material.

*Incompatibility with Initiation Requirements*

To enter the Craft, a candidate must believe in a Supreme Being (The Great Architect of the Universe - TGAOTU) and swear to this belief upon the Volume of Sacred Law (VSL) of his individual faith.

Due to the nature of belief systems indigenous to and adopted by the Japanese as well as the customs associated with them, the question of incompatibility with the fundamental initiation requirements for membership to Freemasonry arises. This issue with ritual is the most serious problem to not only recruitment of prospective Japanese candidates, but also whether initiations of such candidates are regular in accordance with masonic procedure.

The details surrounding this fourth problem were discussed at some length in my article, “Seeking Enlightenment: Initiation & Ritual of ‘Oriental’ Candidates ” in *The Canonbury Papers, Volume 4*, but it is worth reiterating the novel attempt by a freemason named Ronald Rosskopf to indigenise the Western ritual as an aid for the Japanese to understand an esoterica having a Judeo-Christian base since not all Japanese candidates are Christian (only 1% of the total population of Japan itself is Christian). The purpose of my current research at the University of Wales, Lampeter is to analyse and refine attempts to indigenise masonic ritual so that it will be more easily comprehensible for the Japanese. The objective of the invention of such a ritual may allow it to serve as an additional Side Rite such as The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, York Rite, etc. and/or act as an educational tool within Japanese Lodges of Instruction to help “translate” craft ritual based on Western theology and mysticism into Japanese culture and Eastern spirituality.

*Lack of Research-Orientated Freemasons & Non-Masons*

One of the strongest assets of the United Grand Lodge of England is the Library & Museum housed within its premises containing both

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well-preserved older documents concerning Freemasonry in the whole of the United Kingdom as well as contemporary works on the subject. From such sources of information arise publications, and it is through publications that knowledge penetrates society at large so that ideally a proper understanding of Freemasonry is spread.

The strategy of the United Grand Lodge of England to open its doors to the wider public using tactics such as guided tours, allowing access to the library's rich resources, and welcoming both masons and non-masons to participate in research into Freemasonry has led to a useful amount of academic production and intellectual exchange amongst the public and scholars alike in recent years. This openness occurred largely as a result of increased suspicion of the activities of Freemasonry due to its perceived exaggerated privacy. Based on comments from visitors having experienced a tour of the Freemasons' Hall in London during which information about Freemasonry was readily made available as well as feedback from public lectures given, the myths have begun to dispel with more and more people now viewing the fraternity as a rather sociable and generous organisation. Even for those still sceptical towards Freemasonry, the notion that its aims and objectives are somehow genuinely conspiratorial, dangerous, or sinister have by and large disappeared.

Naturally, the freemasons of England are better able to achieve these feats due to 1) having been in existence far longer than the Grand Lodge of Japan and thus possessing and generating literature on Freemasonry,

2) having a very much larger pool of membership from which interested members can participate in masonic research, and

3) having larger amounts of resources channelled towards the maintenance of the cultural treasures in the Library & Museum.

With the exception of a handful of freemasons falling under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Japan, the majority of members are not particularly interested in research into Freemasonry. Moreover, only one Japanese freemason is a member of this, Quatuor Coronati Lodge – Yoshio Washizu, a Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Japan, whose excellent paper on anti-masonry in Japan was presented over a decade ago.

It is also because Freemasonry in England has existed for such a long period that individual freemasons, certain groups of

freemasons such as Quatuor Coronati Lodge, and individual non-masons can develop a curiosity for both its history and historiography. By contrast, the history of the Grand Lodge of Japan spans only fifty years and, based on this youth, it is difficult to produce innovative research on its history and activities, since its history is still being formed at present. Moreover, research into the history of Freemasonry in Japan prior to the formation of the Grand Lodge has already reached its limit since many records have been lost due to the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 as well as from interference by the authorities during World War II.

The most unfortunate occurrence with respect to masonic research in East Asia has been the termination of the *Chater-Cosmo Transactions*, volumes of publications containing a number of high-quality papers. The little over a dozen volumes of this publication that were printed provides the reader with well-researched histories and wide-ranging topics related to Freemasonry in China, Taiwan, Japan, and the several countries within South-East Asia. The publication used to be edited and printed in Hong Kong under the District Grand Lodge of Hong Kong and The Far East; it apparently ceased due to a combination of a lack of articles being contributed as well as financial constraints. It would be ideal if somehow this publication commenced once more so that Freemasonry in East Asia could possess an accurate and constant record of developments and exchanges of ideas peculiar to the Orient in much the same way *AQC* attempts to function in the West. Nevertheless, it is certain that new and exciting developments will occur with the Grand Lodge of Japan in the coming decades, two of which (one speculative and one realistic) can be described in the following sections.

### **The Possibilities For Patronage**

While several clubs and societies in eighteenth-century London faded away with time, Freemasonry survived largely for two reasons. First, the Grand Lodge had an extensive circuit of subordinate lodges throughout London and the Provinces. Second, it retained the support of the nobility and royalty without which it would have been perceived as just another ordinary and relatively unglamo-

rous voluntary association of commoners. The third Grand Master, Dr. John Theophilus Desaguliers a French-born scientist and cleric from a Huguenot family was heavily involved in enlightenment activities in London. Among other things, Desaguliers gave public lectures on science in a variety of different venues including the Royal Society. At a time when attendance at scientific lectures in enlightenment circles was considered fashionable entertainment for gentlemen, this enabled him to come into contact with nobility, gentry, and intellectuals and persuade such individuals to become increasingly involved with Freemasonry.

From the Dukes of Montagu and Wharton in the early eighteenth century to the present, the Grand Master of Freemasonry for England and Wales has been either noble or royal. Since 1737 with Frederick Lewis, The Prince of Wales, twenty-three Princes of the British Royal Family have been freemasons and eight had become grand masters.<sup>15</sup> There are no bars to a member of the British royalty or nobility becoming a freemason, and cooperation between such a person and the institution of Freemasonry rests solely on the willingness of such an esteemed candidate to be initiated into the fraternity. The only break in participation between Craft and Crown must occur when a Prince of Wales becomes the monarch and is therefore obligated to renounce the role of Grand Master as was the case with Edward VII and also when the Duke of York later became King George VI.

Many suggest a special relationship between Great Britain and Japan for several reasons: both are island-nations, both countries respect and retain a royal/imperial family, and both societies are generally known and renowned for their politeness, reserve, patience, love of nature, and sensitivity to the feelings of others. Amongst freemasons, many might also query why the imperial family does not support Freemasonry in Japan just as the British royal family has supported Freemasonry under its domain. Moreover, failing the imperial line itself, why one or more nobles in Japanese society do not act as

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<sup>15</sup> R.A. Wells: *The Rise and Development of Organized Freemasonry* Vol. 17 (1986), pp. 121

patrons for an organisation that generates much good for society through its ideology and charitable works?

The first reason is obvious based on the aforementioned history between the palace and the illegal actions of Master Rivissto. It is clear that the slightest indelicacy in dealing with the palace and the former Emperor's invitation will tarnish the reputation of Freemasonry for quite some time in the eyes of the Imperial Household Agency. Despite the invitation from the palace being withdrawn more than fifty years ago, this amount of time will seem relatively short to an institution that has been in existence for a millennium and a half. Second, while both these so-called island-nations honour a royal/imperial family, the system within which the Imperial Household and *former* nobility of Japan operate is far more restrictive than its Western counterpart in that the actions of members of the imperial family are closely guarded and effectively controlled by the Imperial Household Agency.

Shinto is the indigenous belief system of the Japanese. Similar to Greek mythology, the structure of Shinto is a pantheon of gods (*kami*), which have characteristics not uncommon with Druidism in that the *kami* are believed to reside as spirits that dwell in natural surroundings such as trees, rocks, water, etc. The Supreme Being in Shinto, if one regards the primary *kami* as such, would be the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, the only chief deity among the world's most prominent contemporary belief systems to be female. According to the *Kojiki*, a mythological chronicle of Japan, the emperors of Japan were descendants of Amaterasu, which is the reason why the imperial family was considered divine until Emperor Hirohito renounced this claim at the end of World War II. The Shinto rituals the emperor still performs, not mentioned in the constitution or the laws, are a continuation of the rites that Japanese emperors have been performing for at least a millennium and a half.<sup>16</sup>

The imperial family cannot be openly associated with any religious organisation and cannot extend patronage to any religious group except palace Shinto, which is defined as the private religion

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<sup>16</sup> B. Shillony: "The Japanese Imperial Institution: Crisis and Continuity", *Japanese Monarchy: Past and Present* (2006), pp.1

of that family. However, informal ties with various religious entities do exist and the Imperial Household Agency could be approached if candid explanations as to the nature of Freemasonry were to be made clear. The three most important points to convey would be that Freemasonry itself is not a religion, that it is sponsored by royalty in various countries, and that it engages in praiseworthy social and cultural activities.<sup>17</sup> It may also be worth emphasizing the close relationship between royalty and Freemasonry in England since both the heir to the Chrysanthemum Throne, Crown Prince Naruhito, and his wife, Princess Masako were educated at Oxford. The next question becomes who should approach the Imperial Household Agency so that this strategy has the best chance for acceptance? The ideal masonic representative in such a delicate matter would be an in-between who is familiar with both sides and who enjoys a high prestige, which re-introduces the discussion of the Higashikuni family, once one of the former “collateral families” of Japan.

Originally, the king or emperor of all monarchies throughout the world would keep a large number of concubines to ensure progeny, including the all-important male heir. Occasionally, the system could result in too many sons being produced, which would create the dual dangers of placing a burden on court resources and the creation of succession feuds. According to Shillony:

“In Japan during the Heian Period (one thousand years ago) when harems were big and the number of imperial sons was large, the emperors from time ‘pruned’ their progeny, by giving some of their sons or grandsons estates and surnames and establishing them as independent commoner (*shinka*) families....In the Kamakura period (about six hundred years ago) a system was developed, by which an emperor’s son, who was not destined to succeed him, was sometimes established as the head of a collateral princely family (*miyake*). From then on, he and his heirs, the heads of that family, would carry the title of imperial prince (*shinnō*) and would have the right to ascend

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<sup>17</sup> B. Shillony: Private Correspondence with author, (June 2007). Professor Ben-Ami Shillony is Louis Freiberg Chair in East Asian Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

the throne in case the main line failed to produce an heir....After the Meiji Restoration (1868) occurred, between 1870 and 1906, ten members of the Fushimi family, the only collateral family which had not dwindled by that time, were established as imperial princes heading new collateral families, one of which was the Higashikuni family....By Article 14 of the 1947 constitution, the Japanese aristocracy, composed of the old nobility and the new peerage was dissolved, and this dissolution of the aristocracy led to the abolition of collateral families....Had the collateral families existed, one of their heads might succeed the throne. The collateral family closest to the emperor before 1945 was Higashikuni. In 1915 the first Higashikuni Prince, Naruhiko, married Emperor Meiji's daughter Toshiko. Thirty years later, when Japan surrendered, he served as prime minister. In 1943, Naruhiko's son, Morihiko, married Hirohito's eldest daughter Shigeko. They had three sons and two daughters, and all their sons have had sons of their own. Had the Higashikuni family retained its collateral status, Morihiko's eldest grandson could marry one of the imperial princesses and become emperor. But once the collateral system was abolished it is difficult to restore it.”<sup>18</sup>

It was this first Higashikuni Prince, Naruhiko, who was the most senior Japanese to become a freemason. The Higashikuni family is no longer under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Household Agency due to the abolishment of the collateral system, but naturally it still has close family relations with the imperial family. While Prince Higashikuni's family may be the ideal route to communicating Freemasonry to the imperial family, there may even be complications through so seemingly perfect a match.

The Grand Lodge of Japan has very few records pertaining to the membership of Prince Higashikuni apart from proof of a sequence of initiation, passing, raising, suspension, and reinstallation. He was initiated in Tokyo Masonic Lodge No. 125, hence the invitation to Rivisto, then the Master of that lodge after Emperor Hirohito became curious. According to PGM Washizu, “He [Higashikuni] was

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<sup>18</sup> B. Shillony: “The Japanese Imperial Institution: Crisis and Continuity”, p. 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, & 11

not active in Freemasonry and was suspended from membership due to non-payment of annual dues on December 4, 1961. On September 24, 1994 he was restored by the then Grand Master.”<sup>19</sup> It is questionable whether this restoration was consistent with valid masonic procedure.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Higashikuni was reinstalled and it is perhaps now best to envisage a way forward with the objective of acquiring imperial patronage via the family’s closeness to and connections with the Chrysanthemum Throne.

Shillony suggests the most likely way forward would be for the Grand Lodge of Japan and/or Tokyo Masonic Lodge (now No.2) to approach the Higashikuni family with the idea of a commemoration ceremony for Prince Higashikuni since 2007 marks the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the prince, who was born in 1887.<sup>21</sup> The reasons he suggests this is due to the strong liking the Japanese have for such anniversaries. For example, historians are not certain precisely when Lady Murasaki Shikibu wrote *Genji Monogatari* (“The Tale of Genji” – a Japanese literary masterpiece about Heian period court life and culture), but it was around this time one thousand years ago, hence the 2008 Genji Millennium celebrations. Similar large-scale plans

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<sup>19</sup> Y. Washizu: Private Correspondence with author (January 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., PGM Washizu also stated “The above-mentioned Grand Master of Japan had no right to restore him [Higashikuni]. Higashikuni owed the lodge two years’ membership fees. The Grand Master ignored this point. And his reasoning was that as the Grand Master can make a mason at sight, he can restore a suspended member. Wrong. He cannot make a mason at sight without a lodge having favourably on that candidate’s application. (In 1852 the then Grand Master of California conferred three degrees on several candidates at a meeting, one of whom had been rejected by a lodge. Thus the Grand Master was censured. And the Grand Lodge adopted a resolution that the Grand Master had no power to make masons at sight except in a regular lodge by unanimous consent). Likewise the Grand Master of Japan mentioned above had no business restoring Higashikuni without him paying his outstanding dues and lodge members agreeing to his restoration.”

<sup>21</sup> B. Shillony: Private Correspondence with author, (June 2007).

for a 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary have been in preparation for a decade for upcoming celebrations in 2010 for Nara, the capital of Japan from 710AD after which Kyoto and later Tokyo became the capitals of Japan. With its two thousand temples and shrines as well as its historical sensitivities, Kyoto alone boasts approximately five hundred annual religious and cultural festivals. Therefore, Shillony's idea is a sensible one.

Since 2007 has already passed, it is too late to implement Shillony's suggestion, but this does not rule out the possibility of a future anniversary date such as the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Prince Higashikuni for the Grand Lodge of Japan to plan and aim for in 2012. If the Higashikuni family reacts favourably to the idea and such a celebration were to take place, some members of the imperial family may, with the consent of the Imperial Household Agency, attend it and the renewed connections with freemasonry may start once more.<sup>22</sup> Failing this approach, there may still be room to manoeuvre through highlighting to the imperial family the wide-ranging benefit to society the charitable arm of Freemasonry provides for the disadvantaged in Japan.

## **Zaidan Hojin Tokyo Masonic Association (TMA)**

### **1. Objectives**

*Zaidan Hojin* is the Japanese expression for the concept of a charitable foundation, and in this case, a separate, charitable arm of Freemasonry in Japan. The original body was founded as *Shukyo Hojin* Tokyo Masonic Lodge Association in 1950 under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. According to the TMA Office Manager, there are now no records found for this original association and there appears to have been no meaningful activities during the period of its existence from 1950-1955.<sup>23</sup> On 23 December, 1955, this original association was approved to operate as Zaidan Hojin

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> H. Takenaka: Correspondence with the author, (Letter dated 10 April, 2007).

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Tokyo Masonic Association (TMA) now under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Since 1981, The Grand Lodge of Japan itself has been within the premises of the Tokyo Masonic Building. The body is now under the supervision of the War Victims' Relief Bureau at the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. TMA, a corporate body formed for charitable purposes is solely responsible for the charitable endeavours in the spirit of Freemasonry in Japan, as the Grand Lodge administration is not involved with charity. A board of trustees governs TMA, and all masons living in Japan are eligible to become officers of this board.

It was only between 1966-1975 that the Grand Lodge of Japan itself was involved in charitable activities, for which there is no other data compiled apart from a document that is an itemized listing of charitable causes and the expenditure on each for only the years 1966, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, and 1975. The causes range from being medical in nature (particularly related to the eye and ophthalmology) to assistance for widows, orphans, and handicapped children to donations to schools, scholarships, and fire victims.<sup>24</sup>

Chapter 2, Article 3 of the "Act of Endowment" for TMA states, "The object of this association shall be to promote, encourage and practice the true teachings of charity and benevolence, to assist the feeble, guide the blind, raise the downtrodden, shelter the orphan, support the Government, respect the principles and revere the ordinances of religion, inculcate morality, protect chastity, promote learning, love man, fear God and implore His mercy and hope for happiness."<sup>25</sup>

## *2. Activities*

Between 1955 and 1981 before TMA was housed in the Tokyo Masonic Building, a number of sponsored or supported projects were established to coincide with the object declared in The Act of Endowment. Though they are too numerous to describe here,

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<sup>24</sup> Document (A), TMA Office, Charitable activities of the Grand Lodge of Japan 1966-1975

<sup>25</sup> Act of Endowment for Zaidan Hojin Tokyo Masonic Kyokai: Chapter 2, Article 3, pp. 1

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they included donations to hospitals, orphanages, disaster-relief causes for both Japanese and overseas natural disasters, libraries, and the Japanese Red Cross.<sup>26</sup> Occasionally, certain activities would be reported in the press. From 1956-1958, *The Japan Times* reported the donations to the Hokkaido Cold Weather Damage Relief Fund (1956), the Children's Milk Fund (1957), and the Flood Victims' Winter Fund (1958).<sup>27</sup> With the exception of 1961, during which the Ears for the Deaf Fund was reported, *The Japan Times* reported the annual donations to the Crippled Children's Fund from 1960-1976 and from 1976-1981 it reported donations to the Wheelchair Fund.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, between 1957 and 1965, the *Asahi Evening News* reported annual donations to the Christmas Cheer Fund in addition to a couple of other donations to flood relief and fire funds.<sup>29</sup> Two noteworthy developments established in 1976 receiving donations from TMA are 1) the Annual Children's Festival described previously and 2) the Kunitachi City Sports Meet.

The Kunitachi Masonic Association Lodges No. 3, 4, and 8, and freemasons from the nearby Yokota Air Base have actively participated in an annual municipal sports meet for the handicapped. The purpose of the sports meet is to promote communication and friendship between handicapped persons in facilities or homes in Kunitachi and other citizens.<sup>30</sup> Other regular annual donations by TMA are made to The Toy Library, the Christian Children's Fund, and the Sri Lanka Eye Donation Society. The Toy Library, a programme dedicated to helping retarded and handicapped children generally between two and ten years of age is operated by volunteer groups, predominantly women's groups. Volunteer workers teach each child how to play with a particular toy, and if the child shows interest in the toy, they lend the toy to the child with the only obligation being that the parent and child return with the toy in about a month for another

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<sup>26</sup> TMA: "Donations, since organization of Tokyo Masonic Association", pp.1-7

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. pp. 1 & 2

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. pp. 2-7

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-3

<sup>30</sup> TMA: *Information Booklet*, pp. 15

session.<sup>31</sup> Since 1986, TMA has been also worked closely with the Christian Children's Fund not only to support one hundred children worldwide but also to participate in donating to several special projects such as slum clearance as well as water and agricultural development.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, TMA is supportive of the Sri Lanka Eye Donation Society by sponsoring two eye collection centres with a target of 450 pairs of eyes per year.<sup>33</sup>

Since being housed in the Tokyo Masonic Building, the charitable activities of TMA have increased in terms of the depth and variety of donations to causes between 1982 and the present in addition to the above mentioned annual programmes. TMA has expanded its support of handicapped persons to more aged people through more scholarships, summer camps, the Japan Guide Dog Association, and arts and sporting events. Within hospitals, TMA aids the work of "CliniClowns". Originally started in Holland, CliniClowns are professional clowns who cheer up sick children; they must undergo intensive training for between one to two years in order to be contracted with big hospitals. TMA also is supportive of programmes to help the handicapped open and operate small community shops and restaurants at local communities in Japan as well as women's shelters to protect those who have suffered from domestic violence in addition to women from the Philippines, Thailand, etc. who had been coerced into prostitution. Of all these good works, perhaps the most praiseworthy are TMA's donations for organ transplants. In Japan, organ transplants are not available for children between 0-15 years of age; it is necessary for them to travel overseas in order to receive transplants. Therefore, TMA makes donations for such children to travel to America and other countries in order to receive the transplants.<sup>34</sup> Since

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. pp. 10

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. pp. 12

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. pp. 14

<sup>34</sup> H. Takenaka: Office Manager, TMA. Information on the charitable and financial aspects of TMA was obtained through personal interview and documents presented at the interview on 11 October 2007. While material in addition to the details presented in this paper was provided during the interview, the author cannot disclose certain in-

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2004, the Board of Trustees has published semi-annual newsletters to provide information on the activities of the TMA. These newsletters mainly report on the charity donations (including specifics of any organ transplants), changes in the administration of TMA, and any other relevant news related to the Association.

The most up-to-date (2007) activities to which TMA makes donations are:

Homes of the handicapped children (people), such as those suffering from visual

problems, etc., child protection homes and youth support centres.

Organizations that support and promote self-independence of the handicapped including

small community workshops, work training centres, day-care centres, etc.

Independent living centres of the disabled

Masonic fund to donate welfare vehicles

Masonic fund to donate automotive wheelchairs

Support of medical treatment fee for children suffering from difficult diseases

Support of charitable activities of masonic groups

Support of charitable activities for refugees and the feeble

Charitable projects overseas

Support of various NPOs and volunteer activities to promote the welfare of the

handicapped.

Support of sports events for the disabled

Support of the college scholarship fund for handicapped students and children in

protection homes

Support of disaster relief victims<sup>35</sup>

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formation that is deemed confidential by the Board of Trustees. The Board has approved all information presented in this paper for publication.

<sup>35</sup> TMA: "Basic Principles of the Charitable Plan for the Fiscal Year of 2007 (Proposal)", pp. 1-2

### 3. The Future of TMA

In recent times, the annual amount of donations TMA provides each year is approximately ¥120,000,000 (\$1.2 million, or roughly £600,000) consistently ranking the Association around one-hundredth place from amongst the 26,000 charitable foundations in the whole of Japan.<sup>36</sup> TMA possesses an internal property business that generates revenue in order to accomplish this admirable performance. Due to very recent reforms of Japan's public interest corporation system, TMA has had to plan some changes to maintain its status as a charitable foundation.

An official council of professional experts was formed in November 2003 to discuss reform of the public interest corporation system; the Chairman of TMA commented that the Trustees should pay attention to the status of the reforms, as this will affect future operations.<sup>37</sup> On 19 November 2004, the experts' final report on the reform concluded that:

A new system called a "Non-Profit Corporation System" will be created, absorbing the

Public Interest Corporation System under Civil Code No. 34;  
The operations of the corporations, however, are taxable in principle, but if the activities

of the corporations are judged as for the public interest in nature by a special committee

of civil professionals...special tax benefits will be given.  
Corporations of a public interest nature should disclose activities, financial information,

and officers' allowance through the Internet.<sup>38</sup>

One of the major social worries of Japan is its ageing population. The purpose of the new system outlined above is 1) to

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<sup>36</sup> H. Takenaka: Office Manager, TMA. Personal interview, 11 October 2007

<sup>37</sup> TMA Board of Trustees: *Masonic Foundation of Japan Newsletter*, vol. 1 (September 2004), pp. 3

<sup>38</sup> TMA Board of Trustees: *Masonic Foundation of Japan Newsletter*, vol. 2 (February 2005), pp. 3. On the third point, TMA does have a website complying with this at [www.tma-japan.org](http://www.tma-japan.org)

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increasingly have the private sector be involved in public benefit activities to share the responsibility of alleviating the consequences of this social issue, 2) to stimulate greater participation in the concept of charity in Japanese society, which historically has not been the case, and 3) to provide those in the private sector with special tax advantages as an incentive to be involved with charitable endeavours on a greater scale. On 10 March 2006, the Cabinet submitted a bill of the new system to the Diet (Japanese Parliament), and on 26 May 2006, the bill was finally passed with the expectation that it be effective in 2008 under new tax treatments.<sup>39</sup>

TMA conforms to most of the requirements put forward in the new law except that, like all such organizations, it will now be required to donate more than 50% of its revenue towards charitable activities, and it must shift under this new regulation within five years of 2008.<sup>40</sup> The board appreciates this as evidenced in their *Newsletter*, “To apply for the recognition as a public benefit foundation under the coming new law, we think it is very important that we observe the official guidelines strictly, making sure that the final figure of our charity activities will exceed more than 50% of the total expenditure of the Foundation.”<sup>41</sup> Even more recently this willingness has been emphasized in the most recent newsletter with the declaration: “Within five years, we are planning to revise our Act of Endowment in line with the new laws and apply for the status of public benefit foundation with the public benefit recognition committee.”<sup>42</sup>

It is interesting to note the apparent influence of the British charity system on Japanese society in that the outline of the PBC Reform Laws states, “...the Charitable Status Recognition Committee, which might be a Japanese version of the Charity Com-

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<sup>39</sup> TMA Board of Trustees: *Masonic Foundation of Japan Newsletter*, vol. 5 (July 2006), Attachment A

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> TMA Board of Trustees: *Masonic Foundation of Japan Newsletter*, vol. 6 (January 2007), pp. 6

<sup>42</sup> TMA Board of Trustees: *Masonic Foundation of Japan Newsletter*, vol. 7 (July 2007), pp. 4

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mission for England & Wales in [the] UK...”<sup>43</sup> Thus, just as Freemasonry was brought to Japan from the United Kingdom, so too shall its charitable aims and objectives be spread more throughout Japan. Congratulations to the Grand Lodge of Japan on its fiftieth anniversary in 2007.

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<sup>43</sup> M. Miyakawa: *The Outline of Three PBC Reform Related Laws* (English Trans. Summary), pp. 1. Mr. Miyakawa is Executive Vice President of The Japan Association of Charitable Organizations.

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