

- The conversation of the Japanese nobility into a new group of elites and efficient common workers.

## ARISTOCRACY IN JAPAN STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE

The aristocracy in Japan still appears very much alive today — twenty-one years after the nominal extinction of peers as a breed in the nation. About 1,700 people gathered on April 24 to celebrate the opening of the Kasumi Kaikan Hall (the prewar peers' club revived).

The club is located on the 34th floor of the brand new 36-story Kasumigaseki Building in the heart of Tokyo which happens to be the highest ferroconcrete structure in Asia.

Among the distinguished guests to see the birth of high society (some 120 meters above the ground) was the scholarly Prince Mikasa, younger brother of Emperor Hirohito.

Other guests included managers of the House of Mitsui and members of the diplomatic corps who, with cocktail glass in hand, strolled

about the 3,300 square-meter hall, stopping here and there to chat with old but spry princes, marquises, and other prewar noblemen.

The club has a membership of nearly 1,000 — all prewar peers, according to former viscount Takatoshi Kyogoku, music commentator and one time vice president of the international weight lifting federation and former Count Muneyori Terashima, a Princeton graduate, who served as secretary to the president of the Cabinet Information Bureau shortly after the end of the war.

In an interview with a Kyodo reporter, Kyogoku and Terashima revealed that as of May 24, the defunct Japanese peerage had twenty-one princes, thirty marquises, 100 counts, 400 viscounts, and 500 barons.

They also said that besides the 3,300 square-meter hall on the 34th floor, their club

owns the 10th and 11th floors for rent. Rentals for these two floor spaces will run into millions of yen a month — more than enough to cover the running expenses of the hall. The prewar peerage got the title to these three floors in exchange for the estate it sold to Mitsui Real Estate for construction of the Kasumigaseki Building.

The hall itself is modern and tidy but characterless. The monotonous atmosphere of the hall, however, is relieved by an old 7-foot Westminster clock in the drawing room and a dozen of Victorian chairs saved from the famed but defunct Rokumeikan Hall here, which was designed and built by the British architect, Josiah Conder (1853-1920).

The peerage in Japan was disestablished in 1947 simultaneously with the coming into force of the postwar Constitution. Some of these people who "dwelled above the clouds and had direct access to the Emperor," in the utter confusion created by Japan's surrender to the Allied powers, lost their heads, self-esteem and courage to face the

realities of life together with their titles and prerogatives.

But as the initial shock of improbability gradually wore off, they began descending from the "purple clouds" to mingle with "common people" — to find work suitable for their capacities and career. Since many of them were well educated, being graduates of the Peers School and the Tokyo Imperial University, Oxford, Harvard, Princeton, Sorbonne, etc., some sought academic jobs. Others went into business, winding up as figureheads of shaky firms in some cases.

At any rate, it took a long time before many of the old peers managed to set themselves firmly on their own economic feet, it is said. They were a people who had never bothered to work and who had taken pride in not working for money.

Now, a majority of old peers are out in the open, trying hard to establish bridgeheads in every field of human activity for the sake of their posterity. They are out in the political arena, in the Government service, in academic circles and the cultural and sports worlds as

well. But they were conspicuously absent from the business world.

For example, Naotsugu Nabeshima (viscount) is a member of the Sato Cabinet and director-general of the Science and Technology Agency. Just recently, Nabeshima had a hard time, bearing the brunt of the Opposition attack on the Swordfish case (possible contamination of seawater by this U.S. nuclear-powered submarine) in the port of Sasebo, Kyushu.

Former Marquis Kickinosuke Saigo, grand son of "Saigo, the Great" is member of the House of Councillors (Upper House).

Sadate Hisamatsu (Count) is a long-time governor of Ehime Prefecture, Shikoku.

Kinkazu Saionji, formerly prince and "blue-blooded black sheep", has long been in Communist China. He is there to serve as a bridge between his country and Communist China. A graduate of Oxford (class of 1930), he is a grandson of Genro Kinmochi Saionji, one of the forefathers of the Meiji Restoration.

Former Marquis Moritatsu Hosokawa, member of the

Cultural Property Protection Commission is one of the greatest authorities on fine arts and one of the richest in his class. Former Marquis Nagatake Asano is curator of the State Museum in Tokyo.

Well known both at home and abroad for bird studies is former Marquis Yoshimaro Yamashina, managing-director of the Yamashina Ornithological Research Institute here. Dr. Yukiyasu Kiyosu (count) and Dr. Nagamichi Kuroda (Marquis) are also members of the Japan Ornithological Society. Takaharu Mitsui (Baron) is a world figure in the philately field.

Yorichika Arima (Count) is a member of the Japan PEN Club and a good detective story writer. In the world of sports, former Prince Tsuneyoshi Takeda is a member of the International Olympic Committee.

The prewar peerage has also produced a number of Japan's best amateur golfers such as Naoyasu Nabeshima and Morisada Hosokawa, both former marquises. — *From Japan Newsletter, Kudo News Service, June, 1968.*