



# In Memoriam: OGATA Sadako – a giant of humanity and international cooperation whom the world loved and respected

Mrs. OGATA Sadako has passed away. Although she lived to a ripe old age, her passing is truly regrettable. She was one of the world's great leaders, without the slightest need to qualify it with words like "as a woman" or "as a Japanese".

**KITAOKA Shinichi, President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)**

## As a student of Professor OKA Yoshitake

Mrs. Ogata completed a doctoral thesis at the University of California, Berkeley, but around that time, she was also mentored by Professor OKA Yoshitake (1902–1990), a specialist in Japanese political and diplomatic history at the Faculty of Law, the University of Tokyo.

Professor Oka was also the mentor of my mentor (MITANI Taichiro, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo), so I am one of the students of Professor Oka. Professor Oka's students, who are active in a variety of fields, had a tradition of visiting his grave and dining together on the anniversary of his death. I also had the privilege of being a member of that circle, and Mr. and Mrs. Ogata were frequently there as well. Mrs. Ogata's husband, the late OGATA Shijuro (1927–2014), was likewise one of the students of Professor Oka.

Mrs. Ogata's doctoral thesis was later published as "Defiance in Manchuria: the Making of Japanese Foreign Policy, 1931–1932" (Greenwood Press, 1964; Japanese edition by Hara Shobo, 1966), and is a wonderful work that makes use of important historical documents, including the unpublished diary of KATAKURA Tadashi (1898–1991), who was one of the few most important officers in the Manchurian Incident.

Mrs. Ogata's great-grandfather was the politician INUKAI Tsuyoshi (1855–1932); and YOSHIZAWA Kenkichi (1874–1965), who served as Foreign Minister in the Inukai Cabinet, was Inukai's son-in-law and Mrs. Ogata's grandfather. Inukai formed his cabinet in December 1931 after the Manchurian Incident and used his deep personal ties with China to seek a solution, and he did not give the recognition to the founding of Manchukuo (the State of Manchuria) (March 1932). This was one of the reasons for Inukai's assassination by young naval officers in the May 15 Incident, after which Japan recognized Manchukuo (September 1932), withdrew from the League of Nations (March 1933), and went down the path of isolation from the international community. If just a few more people had been courageous, even if they had not lived up to Inukai's standard, then perhaps we would not have gone down that path of isolation and war. I am certain Mrs. Ogata thought this more than anyone.



KITAOKA Shinichi, President,  
Japan International Cooperation  
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## **She extended UNHCR's hands to "internally displaced persons"**

The undeniable high point of Mrs. Ogata's work was her time as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1991–2000. The 1990s saw frequent occurrences of regional conflicts, creating large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) all over the world, especially in the Middle East, the Balkan Peninsula, and Africa. The UNHCR, which had originally dealt with refugees, started doing activities also for IDPs (who are often in a more serious plight than refugees). Mrs. Ogata deserves a great deal of credit for this policy alteration of the UNHCR. Aside from this, Mrs. Ogata made a name for herself all over the world as she led the organization with a bold yet realistic approach, unconcerned about precedents.

Some people regard Mrs. Ogata's activities as antimilitarism, but as far as I know, Mrs. Ogata was never averse to the existence of militaries themselves. Without military backup, the work of the UNHCR would be impossible. What Mrs. Ogata criticized was the rigidity of militaries, lacking in flexibility. It is with this in mind that I want to comment on the fact that she praised Rupert Smith's "The Utility of Force."

### **The illusory plan to make her Japan's prime minister**

As I recall, it was in early 2001 that support for the MORI Yoshiro Cabinet had gone down to about 10% and it had become obvious that politics was at an impasse. Things were headed toward



**OGATA Sadako** (Sept. 16, 1927 – Oct. 22, 2019)

After graduating from the course of English Literature, Department of Literature, University of the Sacred Heart, she earned a master's degree in International Relations from Georgetown University and Ph.D. from UC Berkeley's Department of Political Science. In 1976–1979, she served as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations and as professor at Sophia University, among other positions, after which she served as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 1991–2000. In 2001, she became Special Representative of the Prime Minister of Japan on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, and in 2003–2012, she served as President of JICA. Her written works include "Defiance in Manchuria—The Making of Japanese Foreign Policy 1931–1932" (1964) (reprinted as "Manshu Jihen" (The Manchurian Affair), "Normalization with China" (Japanese translation: "Sengo Nicchu, Beichu Kankei" [Normalization with China: A Comparative Study of US and Japanese Processes]), and many more.

the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) being cornered into a general election that they would lose substantially, while it was extremely dubious whether the opposition parties had any capacity to run an administration. It was a situation that could very well lead to the collapse of Japanese politics.

It was then that one of my good friends, *X*, a government official, suggested the establishment of an Ogata Cabinet. Mrs. Ogata was to be carried to the fore and win a seat in the general election. The plan was that if the idea of the Ogata Cabinet were pitched to the LDP and the opposition parties, the majority of the people in the capsizing LDP would accept Ogata as the head of the Cabinet, while the opposition parties would participate with a fair number of Diet members out of their desire to be part of the administration. I would like you to recall how the LDP lost in the 1993 House of Representatives election and agreed to form a coalition with the Social Democratic Party of Japan [SDPJ] and the New Party Sakigake to get back into power, which led to the nomination of MURAYAMA Tomiichi, the Chairman of the SDPJ, to the premiership, and the birth of the Murayama Cabinet in June 1994.

We had a series of meetings formulating this policy, involving myself and *X* as well as several government officials, financial institutions, media outlets, and so on. Except for me, everyone was in their 40s. *X* stood at the core of all this and told us that he would definitely get Mrs. Ogata onboard, and he was even looking for a temporary office for Mrs. Ogata's election campaign.

However, when Prime Minister Mori announced his resignation in April 2001 and KOIZUMI Junichiro unexpectedly won an overwhelming victory, riding on a wave of popularity under the slogan "smash the party" in the LDP's presidential election to decide on Mori's successor, this resulted in the creation of a very popular cabinet. This meant that our political maneuver to form the Ogata Cabinet failed to materialize.

I asked Mrs. Ogata about this many years later and she simply said, "Something like that did happen, didn't it?" I don't know how committed she was to *X*'s invite, but if it had not been for the Koizumi boom that followed from the LDP's presidential election, it is possible that it would have become a reality. How would things have turned out with the Ogata Cabinet? I think Japanese politics would have become more dynamic.

Aside from this, Mrs. Ogata was offered the position of foreign minister on two occasions, but she declined both times. From what I understand, the main reason was that she did not like to join the question and answer sessions in the Diet.

It is true that the sharp argumentation of Mrs. Ogata that always got to the heart of the matter would not have suited the Diet. But that is also the reason I hoped her words would breathe new life into how deliberations were done there.

### **"How about OGATA Sadako as UN's Secretary-General?"**

I was appointed the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations in 2004. The first to take this post was Mrs. Ogata (initially, the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations). Another instance of me being the distant successor to Mrs. Ogata.

At the time, the biggest task of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations was Security Council reform.

Back then, the High-level Panel (HLP) had been created for the purpose of UN reform at the proposal of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Mrs. Ogata was one of its members. The HLP held seminars across the world, carrying out much discussion while listening to the opinions of various countries. They were concerned with UN reform in general, but we collected information about whether that included Security Council reform or proposals to increase the number of permanent members, and expressed our views to the HLP. The HLP had more than ten members, but one of the members that I was in charge of was Mrs. Ogata, so I frequently met with her and asked her about many things, not just about Security Council reform.

In the beginning, the HLP was leaning not toward increasing the number of permanent members but toward creating semi-permanent members (for example, with a duration of four years with the possibility of reelection). In response to this, the Japanese government and others rallied to make a proposal in the summer of 2004 that included both model A of increasing the number of permanent members and model B of creating semi-permanent members. This was followed by a contest that pitted model A against model B, and while model A had the more supporters by far, neither was realized in the end. Back then, if only model B had been proposed, as was the case initially, then perhaps model B would have become a reality.

In 2005, we were much exercised over the fact that we could not get US approval for Security Council reform. A certain high official in the US government told me that, “Security Council reform is not possible. Why don’t you settle for a Secretary-General? How about OGATA Sadako?” Mrs. Ogata was 77 years old at the time. The Secretary-General usually serves two terms of 10 years, so it was a bit of a stretch. However, it shows just how youthful and dynamic Mrs. Ogata was perceived to be, and how highly the United States estimated her.

### **“Human security” taking root in JICA**

During her time at JICA, Mrs. Ogata shifted JICA’s activities into human security as well as refugee support and peacebuilding, with a focus on Africa. She also emphasized the importance of undertaking programs that are ‘field’ based and working together with people in difficult conditions.

The merging of JICA with the Overseas Economic Cooperation Operations of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) in 2008 was a great success. JBIC salaries were higher so the merger would bring pretty steep reductions for the members of JBIC, but almost everyone concerned participated in the merger nonetheless, which was probably because they were hopeful about the future under the Ogata JICA. The merger celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2018 and almost everyone agreed that it was good thing they merged. Mrs. Ogata’s legacy is still alive and well. Also, when it comes to human security, JICA renewed human security efforts, as shown in a leaflet titled “Revisiting Human Security in Today’s Global Context” (October 2019), and declared that it is at the heart of JICA activities.

Even so, the environment surrounding the Ogata JICA was difficult. The budget kept shrinking over a decade. Even Mrs. Ogata could not stop the pressure to make budget cuts that was coming from the Japanese budget process. Moreover, there was a “budget screening” during the time of the Democratic Party of Japan government. Various projects and facilities had to shut down, and there were concerns from one of the lawmakers that Mrs. Ogata’s salary was too high.

The idea here was to eliminate waste. Seen from a perspective of immediate needs, official development assistance (ODA) could be termed a waste. If ODA is wasteful, diplomacy, the Diet, and elections are also full of wastes. Even so, what is necessary is necessary.

Japan is one of the world's richest countries. We have an obligation to give a hand when there are people in real trouble. If we do no more than the bare minimum, we will receive no acknowledgement from the international community. We are appreciated because we do more than that. It is unrealistic and narrow-minded to think that the world can function without altruism.

In September 2015, when the newspapers reported that I was going to be appointed as President of JICA, I immediately received a phone call from Mrs. Ogata who was very happy for my sake. I asked her to be a special advisor to JICA and sometimes asked her opinion. Every time I did, she lamented that Japan's contributions to the international community was too small and international cooperation was not enough. She always used to say, "We should not be stingy," and "Why has Japan become such a mean country?" I had an annual meeting with past presidents and vice presidents of JICA and JBIC, which was something I looked forward to, and she always spoke about such things there too. Yet she was absent in July 2019. Just as I was wondering how she was doing, I heard of her passing.

It is immensely regrettable that we have lost a great leader in post-war Japanese international cooperation. I believe it is our duty to carry on Mrs. Ogata's wishes in whatever way possible.

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#### **President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)**

Born in 1948 in Nara Prefecture. Obtained B.A. (1971) and Ph.D. (1976) from the University of Tokyo. President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) since October 2015. Emeritus Professor of the University of Tokyo. Previous posts include a professorship at the Graduate School for Law and Politics, the University of Tokyo, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations (2004–2006), and President of the International University of Japan (2012–2015). In 2011, he received the Shiju-hosho (Medal with Purple Ribbon). His publications include "Kiyosawa Kiyoshi," "Political Dynamics of the United Nations," "Open-door Policy and Japan" and "A History of Japanese Politics: Diplomacy and Power (enlarged edition)."

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