

History 129 A

Kojro Kato

Professor. Teo Ruiz

TA. BOLENDER, EMILY

Second Assignment Paper

Now, we are facing a catastrophe that we have never ever experienced before. For me, due to the coronavirus, I had to go back to Japan. In this country, we also have an economic crisis and lack of medical resources including doctors. The news regarding the virus is endlessly reported. Schools are postponed to start their new semesters. People are restricted to go outside, therefore, my hometown does not look like the town I remember from my childhood. It is silent in my neighborhood, and the only thing I hear is the news reporting of the negative incidents related to the virus. In this situation in Japan, the impact of the coronavirus is affecting not only on a small scale, but also negatively affecting Japanese society and the world on a large scale, and the virus would lead people from all over the world to have stigmatization towards a certain type of people. In this paper, first, I would like to present how my life in Japan has been like and the impact of the virus on my life on an individual scale. Second, I will discuss what is happening to Japanese school education and how Japanese schools have been coping with problems associated with the virus, moreover, how my parents' working conditions have been as educators will be explained. Third, I will write about a stigmatization people have been creating towards Asian people now, and how it could

be an analogy of Jewish people who lived in Spain during the pandemic of "Black Death".

Even though I was remote from my family in the United States, I felt even more lonely and separated from the family although I am back in Japan now. At the end of March, I came back to Japan, however, the Japanese government requested all returners from foreign countries to have no contact with anyone, including family members, for two weeks. Thus, some people stay at hotels or motels for that long. For me, I stayed in a room from the closest apartment to my house, and my family put home-made foods right in front of the door every day, therefore, we did not have contact with each other, which made me feel even more lonely because I knew that there was my family nearby, but could not meet. Moreover, we, as returners from foreign countries, were not allowed to even go on a walk around the neighborhood during the two weeks. In this situation where I was separated from my family and the momored neighborhood, my life was nothing more than just a cycle of repeated actions of breathing, eating, and sleeping.

During the two weeks, I started the spring quarter via a new experience of remote learning. However, remote learning (Zoom) could only prevent me from getting the virus, but the discussion sections of my class ruined my daily cycle because the sections start from 1 am in the morning in the Japanese time zone. Since my daily cycle could not adapt to the normal Japanese time cycle, therefore, even though I live with my family now, there are time-differences of lives in between my family and me. Thus, I

only can spend time with my family during our dinner, which makes me feel more lonely and remote from my parents than I was when I was in America.

On a small scale, the impact of the coronavirus has increased workloads for some people, educators like my parents. My parents own a kindergarten, and they have been busy every day since I was a kid. However, they are so busy that they cannot stay at home all day long recently because of the virus. Firstly, the kindergarten has English classes, therefore, my parents have been working on the preparation of Zoom lectures for the classes. Secondly, My parents have to file an income tax return, however, tax accountants whom they hire and other teachers in the school have to stay at home under the request of the government, thus, my parents have to do them all by themselves without any advice from professional tax accountants. Thirdly, all educational institutions in Japan have to postpone the start of their new semesters, therefore, the kindergarten could not start the new semester, thus, they might have to have no summer break in this year for catching up the materials for kids.

On a large scale, the impact of the virus created a controversial opinion on Japanese education. The opinion is "Why does not Japan have an educational system similar to the western countries', which have the new semester that starts from September?" Japanese schools usually start a new semester in March every year, thus, this unprecedented opinion has become problematic. Many students and scholars requested the change of the start for a new semester to September to the government. Even for me as an international student who usually studies abroad, the change would give me positive effects, for example, it could give me more opportunities for getting a

job in Japan since we, Japanese international students in the U.S, have missed many opportunities simply because our school schedules are overlapping with the job hunting season in Japan. However, the government kept requesting all educational institutions to postpone the planned start date of new semesters, at first, from May 6th, but now from June 1st, and they do not accept the new system that starts from September obstinately. They report that the cost that will be accompanied by the change is enormous. Because of this problem in Japanese education, people are disappointed at the governmental incompetence and inaction.

On a worldwide scale, now, people are about to create stigmatization towards Asian people as a source of the coronavirus. As President Trump has been accusing China of being sluggish for their prevention activity against the virus in Wahan, many people also accuse the Chinese government even though the detailed information about Chinese prevention activity in Wahan has not come out yet. The problem of this stigmatization is that some people are being violent against Chinese people or whoever looks East Asian. Therefore, the news often reports that Chinese Americans, who are 3rd generation in America, or other East Asian Americans are attacked on the street or subjected to racism simply because they look Chinese. It is very unreasonable, and whoever gets attacked is completely innocent. When I see this process of stigmatization, it reminds me of the stigmatization towards Jewish people in Spanish Kingdom during the pandemic of 'Black Death' in the 15th century. At the time, Christians were a dominant religious group in the Spanish Kingdom, and Jewish people were a minority group. In the pandemic of the pestilence, Black Death, in Spain

Kingdom, people spent stressful times in avoiding the plague like we do today. In the situation, as the article by Professor Ruiz says, "the Black Death unleashed long-simmering anti-Jewish sentiments in many parts of Spain." (Ruiz, pg 47). In addition to that, a part of his article presents that "the plague was not about one getting sick and most probably dying. It was also about providing new openings for violence and social upheaval". (pg 47) Christians people tried to escape from the discomfort and distress due to the plague by having antagonism or even attacking against Jewish people. This situation is very similar to what is happening to the relationship between East Asians and the other racial groups today. Consequently, people today are targeting Asians by stigmatizing them as a source of the virus. In our history, we already have experienced this type of pandemic (Black Death), and we also had similar stigmatization towards certain groups of people (Jewish people).

Consequently, in Japan, the impact of the coronavirus is affecting society on a small scale, which indicates that some people increase their workloads of their jobs due to the virus, and many students and schools are struggling with the transition from lecture to remote learning, Zoom. Because of the learning via Zoom, on one hand, many people do not have to physically attend lectures, and the time of lecture is so flexible that we could attend class whenever we want, thus, those students' daily cycles have changed positively. On the other hand, for students like me, learning via zoom could change our daily cycle negatively. In addition, the impact of coronavirus is also affecting society in Japan on a large scale. The argument of the new start date of the new semester in Japanese schools has revealed incompetence and slowness of the

government. In addition, the governmental activity for distributing masks and \$1000 aid funds to all residents in Japan has been so slow that many people cannot afford to cover the expense for tomorrow. This slow governmental activity has been ruining nations' faith towards the government. Thirdly, as a future hold of the virus, people could have more antagonism and stigmatization towards Asians on a worldwide scale. Lastly, this pandemic completely changed my school life at UCLA, and it could possibly change how I will be treated by others as an East Asian when I will go back to normal school life at UCLA. Today, I think that people should learn from the history of the stigmatization towards a certain group of people during the previous pandemic in Spanish Kingdom, and we have to overcome this catastrophe as a whole; there is no room for the unreasonable stigmatization on the earth.

Work cited

Ruiz, Teofilo F. *Spains Centuries of Crisis: 1300-1474*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. pg 47

Introductory notes

I am an international student from Japan. My major is Sociology, and I am a junior.