

Speech at Japan Matsuri
by H.E. Keiichi Hayashi,
Ambassador of Japan to the Court of St James's,
5 October 2013

Lady Borwick, Deputy Mayor of London, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Japan Matsuri 2013 in the magnificent setting of Trafalgar Square.

This year marks the fifth consecutive year for us to hold this annual festival. Since the first one in 2009, it has grown steadily in stature and has now become a fixture in our calendars to which we all look forward.

Like before, an enjoyable day awaits us with arts and crafts, martial arts and, of course, plenty of appetising Japanese food at the stalls. I hope you have come with an empty stomach.

The original purpose of Matsuri was to thank the gods for a good harvest and pray for another bumper crop to come. Over the last year, Japan has gained a fresh start with the advent of a new Government which has brought in a new, robust set of economic policies and thankfully lifted the profile of Japan on the world scene.

The Nikkei Index was around 9,000 yen at the time of last year's Matsuri; this year it hovers above 14,000 yen – a gain of more than 50%. What a bountiful harvest! The Japanese people now feel, for the first time in many years, a little more confident in the future. So we have particularly good reason this year to enjoy a Matsuri.

This year is also historically significant for the Japan-UK relations. In 1613, following a proposal by an English navigator William Adams, or *Anjin* in Japanese, the London-born commander John Saris sailed to Japan to establish the first British trading post in Hirado, Nagasaki. We may say that our immensely valuable, mutually-beneficial economic relationship with the UK has evolved since this historic voyage exactly four hundred years ago.

We have another reason to celebrate this year's festival: the year 2013 is also the 150th anniversary of the arrival in London of five young Japanese *samurai* from the Choshu region (now known as Yamaguchi) who came to study at UCL. They later played vital roles in the modernisation of Japan, in fields such as politics, diplomacy, railways, engineering and the mint, and came to be known as the Choshu Five. It was the very beginning of the extremely fruitful academic exchange which has provided the intellectual backbone of our ever-growing bilateral relationship.

As Nelson's column we see here was built in 1843, the Choshu Five must also have seen the statue of the national hero while studying in London and, having heard about his life and its impact on the country, must have renewed their determination to contribute to the making of a strong nation.

Lord Nelson said: "Duty is the great business of a sea officer; all private considerations must give way to it, no matter how painful it may be." Although the Choshu Five were not sea officers, like Lord Nelson they were driven by a powerful sense of duty towards their country and, through their utter devotion to their cause, helped make Japan the nation it is today.

Anjin, Saris, and Choshu Five; the cordial and deeply-rooted partnership we enjoy today can in a sense be traced back to those pioneers and their indomitable spirit. It is in recognition of their contribution that we are celebrating in period attire.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some of you might recall that last year I was on this stage with fresh memories of the great success of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games and expressed my earnest desire that Tokyo's bid for 2020 would be also successful.

Today, together with the 63,000-strong Japanese community in the UK, I am happy and proud that the IOC has chosen Tokyo as the host city for the Games in 2020. This will be a huge psychological – and, perhaps, economic – boost for Japan as a whole.

And we have good reason to celebrate Tokyo's selection here in London because Tokyo 2020 derives great inspiration and encouragement from London 2012. We are set to learn how a vibrant, bustling capital city was able to organise itself to host the Games with such enthusiasm and panache. That is why we launched our formal campaign here in this city early this year. We are determined to prove that the IOC's decision was right, by following the London way.

Beyond that, this favourable decision on Tokyo 2020 will help spur the recovery of the Tohoku region from the aftermath of the giant earthquake and tsunami of 2011. By succeeding in the reconstruction, we will be able to show how the resilience of the Japanese people has overcome immense difficulties, and to express our profound gratitude for the support and

solidarity demonstrated by our friends in the United Kingdom and around the world.

May I conclude by thanking all those people and organisations without whose dedication and efforts today's festival would not have been possible: Japan Matsuri Ltd, consisting of: Japan Association, JCCI, Japan Society and Nippon Club. I am also grateful to the Greater London Authority, Lady Borwick and the City of Westminster Council.

Thank you all present here for enabling this pulsating Matsuri to take place! Let us now enjoy the whole day as we conjure up Japan here in the heart of London.

Thank you!