

*Cultural History of Diplomacy: Re-assessing the Japanese at the Paris Peace Conference* – DR NAOKO SHIMAZU

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This paper attempts to re-examine the Japanese participation at the Paris Peace Conference by offering an alternative methodological dimension to the analysis which I offered in my earlier work on the racial equality negotiations published in 1998. What I attempt here is a cultural history of diplomacy, which adopts a methodological approach often employed in cultural anthropology, by some of its well-known proponents, such as Clifford Geertz. At the Paris Peace Conference, I argue that *realpolitik* diplomacy was conducted in parallel with what I would call ‘performative diplomacy’ where the projection of national power was effected through a symbolic demonstration of power. How did the Japanese understand the diplomatic language and its accompanying pageantry and ritual as it was practised in peace conference diplomacy? It will be shown that this symbolic power was exercised in a variety of ways by world leaders, some more effectively than others. Such an imagery of summit diplomacy conveyed through the international media had a significant impact on domestic perceptions of how respective individual national leaders performed on the world ‘stage’. Against this backdrop, how can we re-assess the Japanese performance as a diplomatic ‘actor’ in a multilateral theatre of diplomacy? To what extent did the Japanese recognise the implicit significance of symbolic, performative aspect of national power?