

Original sound of Japan emperor's war-end speech released

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — The four-and-a-half-minute speech that has reverberated throughout Japan's modern history since it was delivered by Emperor Hirohito at the end of World War II has come back to life in digital form.

Hirohito's "jewel voice" — muffled and nearly inaudible due to poor sound quality — was broadcast on August 15, 1945, announcing Japan's surrender.

The Imperial Household Agency released the digital version of the original sound ahead of the 70th anniversary of the speech and the war's end. In it, the emperor's voice appears clearer, slightly higher, and more intense, but, Japanese today would still have trouble understanding the arcane language used by Hirohito.

"The language was extremely difficult," said Tomie Kondo, 92, who listened to the 1945 broadcast in a monitoring room at public broadcaster NHK, where she worked as a newscaster. "It's well written if you read it, but I'm afraid not many people understood what he said."

"Poor reception and sound quality of the radio made it even worse," she said. "I heard some people even thought they were supposed to fight even more. I think the speech would be incomprehensible to young people today."

Every Japanese knows a part of the speech where Hirohito refers to his resolve for peace by "enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable," a phrase repeatedly used in news and dramas about the war.



When people heard that part 70 years ago, they understood the situation, Kondo says. But the rest is little known, largely because the text Hirohito read was deliberately written in arcane language to make him sound authoritative and convincing as he sought people's understanding about Japan's surrender.

Amid growing concern among many Japanese over nationalist Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's push to expand Japan's military role, the current Emperor Akihito is increasingly seen as liberal and pacifist, and the effort by his father, Hirohito, to end the war has captured national attention.

Speaking in unique intonation that drops at the end of sentences, Hirohito opens his 1945 address with Japan's

decision to accept the condition of surrender. He also expresses "the deepest sense of regret" to Asian countries that cooperated with Japan to gain "emancipation" from western colonization.

Japan itself colonized the Korean Peninsula and occupied parts of China, often brutally, before and during World War II.

Hirohito also laments devastation caused by "a new and most cruel bomb" dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and asks everyone to stay calm while helping to reconstruct the country.

Its significance is that Hirohito, who at the time was considered a living deity, made the address, said Takahisa Furu-kawa, a historian at Nihon University in Tokyo.

SPEECH RE-RELEASED. Tomie Kondo, 92, listens during an interview with The Associated Press in Tokyo. The four-and-a-half-minute speech that has reverberated throughout Japan's modern history since it was delivered by Emperor Hirohito at the end of World War II has come back to life in digital form. Hirohito's "jewel voice" — muffled and nearly inaudible due to poor sound quality — was broadcast on August 15, 1945, announcing Japan's surrender. Kondo listened to the 1945 broadcast in a monitoring room at NHK public broadcaster, where she worked as a newscaster. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara)

"What's most important is the emperor reached out to the people to tell them that they had to surrender and end the war," he said. "The speech is a reminder of what it took to end the wrong war."

On the eve of the announcement, Hirohito met with top government officials to approve Japan's surrender inside a bunker dug at the palace compound.

Amid fear of violent protest by army officials refusing to end the war, the recording of Hirohito's announcement was made secretly. NHK technicians were quietly called in for the recording. At almost midnight, Hirohito appeared in his formal military uniform, and read the statement into the microphone, twice.

A group of young army officers stormed into the palace in a failed attempt to steal the records and block the surrender speech, but palace officials desperately protected the records, which were safely delivered to NHK for radio transmission the next day.

The drama of the last two days of the war leading to Hirohito's radio address was made into a film, *Japan's Longest Day*, in 1967, and its remake hit Japanese theaters last week, on August 8.

Sushi showdown: Women challenge one of Japan's male bastions

By Yuri Kageyama
AP Business Writer

TOKYO — Some jobs in Japan, a nation known for its poor record on gender equality, have been off limits to women for ages. The sushi counter, for one.

Sushi is emblematic of Japan's profound cultural influence globally. It has crossed borders, acquiring non-Japanese ingredients such as avocado in the process. That, however, is the limit of the cultural interchange.

Deeply rooted stereotypes such as the so-called "Edo-style" macho demeanor of sushi chefs and the belief that women's warmer body temperature leads to inferior taste have kept sushi preparation an almost exclusively male domain in Japan.

But some women are out to challenge tradition. They're learning the art of sushi at a time when the government is emphasizing a greater role for women to offset Japan's shrinking workforce.

"I think women are better at communicating with customers, and they're kind and gentle," said Yuki Chidui, 28, sushi chef and manager at the all-women Nadeshico sushi restaurant in Tokyo.

Unlike the usual *itamae*, as sushi chefs are called, with their closely cropped hair and crisp cocky language, Chidui is soft-spoken and almost child-like, wearing a white summer kimono splashed with pink blossoms.

She has purposely avoided trying to look the part. Her store's motto is "fresh and *kawaii*," or "cute." Flyers depict her as a doe-eyed manga character. Chidui's assistant, who switched from working as a tour-bus guide two months ago, wears manga buttons on her outfit.

Chidui had been in a rut and felt confined working at a department store when she decided to gamble on starting her own business. It hasn't been easy.

She has endured insults and blatant questioning of her abilities since opening Nadeshico five years ago. She said people have ridiculed her restaurant when they



walk in. Sometimes male customers taunt her and ask: "Can you really do it?"

There are no official statistics on the number of female sushi chefs in Japan, but they are rare, according to the All Japan Sushi Association, which groups 5,000 sushi restaurant owners nationwide and estimates Japan has 35,000 sushi chefs in total.

Forbidding women in certain spots dates back centuries in Japan, where culture viewed menstruation as tainted, a primordial fear western feminists have also historically had to debunk.

The sumo ring is another place billed as too sacred for women. These days women routinely take part in amateur sumo, but the number of female professional sumo wrestlers still remains at zero.

In recent years, the Japanese government has made encouraging women in the workforce its mission, seeing that an already stagnant economy would only get worse unless women are freed from their status as homemaker and child-bearer to contribute more to production and growth.

The government wants women to fill 30 percent of leadership positions by 2020, an ambitious goal given that women now make up only eight percent of such positions in companies hiring 100 people or more.

Even within that effort, there is no crackdown on specific industries barring women, said Takaaki Kakinuma, an official at the government's Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office.

"The initiative is about getting women in leadership positions," he said.

TAKING ON TRADITION. Yuki Chidui, sushi chef and manager at Nadeshico sushi restaurant, shows off sushi she made at her all-women restaurant in Tokyo. Deeply rooted stereotypes such as the so-called "Edo-style" macho demeanor of sushi chefs and the belief that the warmer body temperature of women leads to inferior taste have kept sushi preparation an almost exclusively male domain in Japan. But some women are out to challenge tradition. They are learning the art of sushi at a time when the government is emphasizing a greater role for women to offset Japan's shrinking workforce. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara)

Becoming a sushi chef is an arduous process, requiring several years to learn how to ball up a decent *nigiri* sushi, and at least a decade to properly run a restaurant. Chefs-in-training usually aren't permitted to hold a knife for the first year, getting allocated to deliveries and dish-washing.

Masayuki Tsukada, 34, who started training to become a sushi chef at age 18, shrugs off how there are so few female colleagues.

"It's just prejudice," he said, stressing

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