

Abstract

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<i>Title</i>	Political Turning Points – Rhetorical Analyses of Japanese Inauguration Speeches
<i>Key words</i>	Rhetoric, rhetorical analysis, inauguration speeches, political speeches, orality, political communication, Japan, prime minister, discussion, debate, political culture, speech-writing, turning points, leadership

After centuries of feudalism, the establishment of the Japanese parliament (the Diet) in 1890 marked a major turning point in Japanese history. Before 1890, politics as a subject of discussion was confined, more or less, to peer groups in Japanese society. In addition, at certain periods, movements promoting the spread of ideas were strictly controlled or even prohibited.

Then came the new Diet, modelled on European lines, and thus adapting structures and parliamentary procedures which, in a sense, automatically sanctioned the Diet as the major public forum for debate and questions concerning Government policies and the running of the country. An inauguration speech by every new prime minister was therefore an integral part of the function of the Diet, thus creating a new rhetorical situation. This constitutes the point of departure for this study.

The aim is to carry out a thorough examination of a limited number of the prime ministers' inauguration speeches, covering various parts in the rhetorical process, including the textual and the contextual aspects. The inauguration speeches chosen for analysis were all made at times of significant change in the political history of Japan, i.e., the speech held in the new Japanese Diet in 1890, the speech held in 1946 after the general election following the Japanese surrender in World War II, and the speech held by the new prime minister after the defeat of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the general election of 1993.

Chapter 1 outlines the preliminaries for the study. Chapter 2 presents a short description of the Western classical rhetorical tradition, and Western rhetoric in Japan. Chapter 3 gives the context of the speeches, i.e., the political background and a presentation of the speakers. Chapter 4 analyses the text of the speeches according to their choice of argument (*inventio*), disposition (*dispositio*), and style (*elocutio*). Chapter 5 discusses the speech-writing process and attempts to discover who wrote the speeches. Chapter 6 examines the speaker-audience relationship. Chapter 7 presents the summary and conclusions.