# Axial and Non-Axial Civilizations—the Japanese Experience in a Comparative Perspective—The Construction of Generalized Particularistic Trust


| 著者 | EISENSTADT S. N. |
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# Axial and Non-Axial Civilizations
# — the Japanese Experience in a Comparative Perspective —
# The Construction of Generalized Particularistic Trust

S.N. EISENSTADT

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

## I

The starting point of our discussion is the fact, so very often emphasized, that Japan was the first non-Western society to become fully modernized and industrialized. This fact constitutes from a comparative point of view a very interesting and challenging paradox or series of paradoxes.

One of these central paradoxes is that while in Japan there has developed the first and at least till recently the only fully successful non-Western modernization, this modernization has been that of a non-Axial civilization — a civilization which would not be seen, in Weber's term, as a Great Religion or World Religion.

Weber's analysis of the civilizational roots of capitalism was part of his comparative sociology of religion. This comparative analysis was based on the premise that in all the Great Religions which he studied there existed the structural and cultural potentialities for the development of capitalism — but that it was only in the West that these potentialities bore fruit. In other Great Religions or Civilizations — in what later on would be called Axial civilizations — these potentialities were obviated by the specific hegemonic combination of structural and cultural components that developed within them — very central among them being the confrontations between orthodoxies and heterodoxies or sectarianism. Truly enough Weber dealt only with the emergence of the original, first capitalism — not with its expansion, and yet even in this framework the paradox of Japan, a non-Axial civilization that has become the first fully modernized non-Western society, stands out.

But the crux of this paradox lies not only in the fact that Japan was the *first* non-Axial civilization to modernize. It was the *only* such civilization. All the other Great Non-Axial Civilizations — which in contrast to Japan were also pre-Axial civilizations — not only did not become modern or industrial ones. They were, in different ways, swamped over as it were, incorporated into different Axial civilizations losing their distinctive civilizational distinctiveness — even if often maintaining some components of their identity. Japan not only was not incorporated into the different Axial civilizations which impinged on it — the

Sino-Confucian and the Buddhist ones — but has been able to develop a very distinct continuous pattern of institutional and cultural dynamics .

Among the distinct characteristics of this pattern, two are of special interest from the point of view of our analysis. The first is the very high tempo of institutional change, in many ways reminiscent of those that developed in Western Europe — namely the transition from a tribal monarchy pretending to be an Empire; to feudalism and then to a relatively centralized absolutism; up to the revolutionary breakthrough to modernity, with rather distinct modes of structuration and cultural definition of these changes — namely from the continual reformulation of such activities in contextual settings or templates defined in some combination of primordial, social and natural terms. Such similarities could be identified also with respect to the direct background to modernization in the Tokugawa period — namely the development of structural pluralism, of a multiplicity of centers, of economic power, the breakdown of narrow segregated ecological frameworks, the opening up of family structure, especially indeed in the rural sector, which generated many new resources, and more than incipient, very wide, cross-domain marketization. All these were in many ways very similar to those which industrialization in Europe was attributed to, as were also the high levels of literacy and urbanization, and extensive economic integration have been the most important.

But here we encounter the second major feature of the distinctive pattern of cultural and institutional dynamics that developed in Japan, which constitutes another central comparative paradox — namely that despite these structural similarities, between Western Europe and Japan, throughout their respective histories — ecnomic, political, or cultural — and dynamics, including the modes that have developed in Japan, have been patterns of institutional formations markedly different from the Western one. They pertain to the very basic ways in which the various institutional arenas are regulated, defined — namely in line with some combination of primordial, sacral and natural terms.

The major characteristics of this definition have been the strong emphasis on contextual frameworks and the concomitant relative weakness of fully formalized, abstract rules demarcating clearly between the different arenas of action, and defining them in abstract formal terms as separate entities. Any institutional arena — political, economic, family and cultural creativity, or individual, group or organizations — has been defined in terms of its relation to the social nexus in which it was embedded. Such nexus was defined in some — continuously changing — combination of primordial, sacral, natural and ascriptive terms. The distinctive characteristic of these terms was that they were not defined in relation to some principles transcending them.

Thus, social actors, individuals or institutional arenas have been defined in their relation to other such actors not as autonomous ontological entities, but in terms of their mutual interweaving in common frameworks or contexts. Concomitantly, the major arenas of social action have not been regulated above all by distinct autonomous, legal, bureaucratic or "voluntary" organizations or rules — even if such organizations have developed within them — but mostly through various less formal arrangements and networks which have in their turn usually been embedded in various ascriptively defined, and continuously redefined, social contexts.

Concomitantly there developed in Japan a strong tendency to the conflation of different occupational or class sectors within the different social contexts — be they enterprises, neighborhoods or such frameworks as various new religions — above all within the context of the overall national community. Concomitantly, in Japan the major elites and influentials were embedded in broader settings or contexts, defined in some combination of primordial, sacral, and natural terms in which symbols of kinship were often predominant.

This distinct mode of structuration has been most clearly evident in the double-pronged nature of the impact of movements of protest and processes of change, and of foreign influences on the dynamics of Japanese society.

Such processes have generated new modes of discourse and given rise to many "segregated" sectors of action as well as to a growing reflexivity, in which new types of cultural and social activities have flourished, and the awareness of many alternative cultural and social possibilities has been heightened. The various themes promulgated by such movements and by public responses to them and often under the impingement of outside forces, have been in many cases incorporated in the public discourse; new, more sophisticated discourses have developed, and many concrete demands have been acceded to. Above all, new social spaces have often been created in which many new patterns of economic and social activities, modes of cultural creativity and patterns of discourse could develop.

On the other hand, the continuous reformulation of the basic ontological conceptions and conceptions of social order prevalent in most sectors of Japanese society has been guided by and reformulated, as pointed out above, in contextual settings or templates defined in some combination of primordial, social and natural terms, and the new themes and orientations have not been, as it were, able to break through the relative hegemony of these themes.

It is these distinct features that characterize Japan as a highly dynamic non-Axial civilization. How can the "origins" and the continual reproduction of these characteristics be explained? Let's start first with the analysis of the historical "origins" of these constitutional and cultural patterns.

## II

The most plausible attempt to analyze the historical roots of the specific Japanese institutional formations and dynamics has been the one systematically presented by Johann P. Arnason, building on the earlier expositions and insights of Asakawa and George Sansom. The focal point of this analysis follows Max Weber in his analysis of the modes of disintegration of early clan-society. "... In the case of Japan the focal *historical* points are the Taika reform at the end of the 7th century" which attempted to create the first "Imperial" clan state in Japan and which ultimately resulted, as Asakawa underlines: "in the practical isolation, one from the other, of the two principles constituting the reform. The organization of Japan prior to 645 was a fictitious hierarchy, whose foundation, the clan or quasi-clan, was now theoretically destroyed, while the apex, the Emperor, was preserved and elevated... The loss was compensated by the imported conception of the state. How could the two be reconciled with each other? ...Combined with causes too deep and numerous to be even casually referred to here, the two fundamentally incongruous factors, the Emperor and the state, were gradually pulled apart from one another, until the authority of the former was completely usurped by the high civil officers who surrounded his person and the majority of whom issued from one and the same family, and the state lapsed into the real control of certain new military clans."

This bifurcation resulted in the crystallization of a specific mode of double parallel hegemony, that of power and authority, which contrasted greatly with the seemingly parallel development in Europe.

"The imperial court appropriated the cultural and symbolic hegemony, which was almost never challenged — and which seemingly could not have been effectively challenged. Indeed, it constituted *the* institution epitomizing the collective identity and consciousness, the encounter with the other — especially with China. At the same time political and economic power were continually vested in the various types of aristocratic or feudal groups. These however lacked any autonomous legitimation distinct from the imperial one. Hence, unlike for instance the Church in Europe, there did not develop any centers or bases of power which were autonomous from the feudal nexus and from the imperial center — nor did the cultural and the power and economic centers compete with each other for both power and legitimation." [1]

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1 J.P. Arnason, "Comparing Japan and the West: Prolegomena to a Research Programme", in L. Gule and O. Storebo, eds., *Development and Modernity: Perspectives on Western Theories of Modernization*, Bergen, Ariadne, 1993, pp.167-95, citing K. Asakawa, *The Early Institutional Life of Japan. A Study in the Reform of 645 A.D.*, New York, Paragon, 1963.

"It was also in this period that the specific bifurcation between power and anthority that was at the root of the specific pattern of state formation that developed in Japan, crystallised; it was also in the framework of this formation that the strong tendency to status dissociation developed in many sectors of Japanese society."

## III

This type of institutional development attendant on the disintegration of a clan-society is distinct both from the one that characterized the development of great pre-Axial patrimonial empires (like the ancient Egyptian ones) and from the various Axial civilizations. In such empires the transition from one stage of political development to another (e.g., from early state to archaic kingdom) has usually been connected with the reconstruction and widening of the kinship and/or territorial elements and ascriptive categories and symbols, with the growing importance of territorial units as opposed to purely kinship ones, and with what may be called the qualitative extension and diversification of basic cosmological conceptions. It was also characterized by the increasing specialization of the elites (who were, however, on the whole, embedded in various — and even very complex and wide-ranging — ascriptive units), by a close correspondence between structural differentiation and the differentiation of elite functions, and by the prevalence of cultural models and conceptions containing relatively low levels of tension between the transcendental and mundane orders. The centers that developed in such societies were ecologically and organizationally, but not symbolically, distinct from the periphery.

In contrast, the Axial Age civilizations were marked by growing distinctions, even discrepancies, between the structural differentiation of the social division of labor and the differentiation of elite functions. In addition, these societies witnessed the emergence of autonomous elites and concomitantly more radical developments or breakthroughs in cultural orientations, especially in the direction of the radical conception of the tension between the mundane and the transcendental orders. At the same time, different modes of institutional formations appeared including distinct, civilizational, or religious collectivities; different types of autonomous centers distinct from their peripheries. At the same time there developed in these civilizations a strong, tendency to ideological politics.

The distinctiveness of the institutional development in Japan was of an unusual combination of a very high level of structural differentiation together with a low level of distinction between roles and of autonomy of elite functions, that is, with the fact that in Japan the major elite functions were embedded in ascrip-

tive settings, and did not develop as culturally and socially autonomous units.

The major context in which the development of potentially highly specialized but not autonomous elites took place was indeed the differentiation in Japan of a clan-society into two distinct, non-competing centers — between the Emperor and the State, of power and of authority. In its turn the absence or weakness of such elites reinforced the continuity of these two non-competing centers and the bifurcation between power and authority. This mode of differentiation was also reinforced by the changes in the structure of family and kinship, connected with the shift from the "uji" (clan) to the "ie" system, which led among others to a growing tendency to primogeniture which took place around the Kamakura period.

## IV

The most important aspects of the Japanese family and kinship system from the point of view of our discussion — frameworks within which the specific patterns of behavior and institutional formations which have been prevalent in large sectors of Japanese society did crystallize and could be reproduced — i.e. from the point of view of their development have been, as first analyzed by Marion Levy and John Pelzel, and later on by Francis K. Hsu, and most recently by Jane Bachnik and were reaffirmed in many other researches. These are: a) the combination, at least from the time of the medieval Middle Ages, of fairly open unigeniture; the relatively wide practice — prevalent even if in changing form up till today — of adoption and of incorporation of people from outside the family into it, a practice continuing in very interesting ways up to the contemporary scene; b) the strong emphasis on functional adequacy and achievement performance, within the framework of family solidarity; c) the relatively strong emphasis, even if with many variations across regions, and at least from the medieval period, on the nuclear unit — the one which would in the Edo and Meiji periods become crystallized in the formalized "ie" system; d) the weakness of broader kinship units as manifest in the absence or vagueness of specific broader kinship terminology as against such general connotations as "uncle" or "cousin"; and the consequent lack of specification of obligations to such wider kin categories — very similar, as R. Smith has pointed out, to the English and American cases. Of crucial importance is that the *ie*, "the basic family unit," as it probably developed from the Middle Ages, has been conceived, not "as a kinship unit based on ties of descent, but as a corporate group that holds property, land, a reputation, works of art, or "cultural capital" in perpetuity. *Ie* are perhaps best understood as corporate groups which can serve a primary religious function, to

provide social welfare and the like. Pelzel succinctly describes the *ie* as "task performance". The fact that throughout most of Japanese history rights (especially, but not only, in land) were vested in the family was of course of crucial importance.

It is important however to emphasize that one has to distinguish here between on the one hand the more formalized "ie" structure which was instituted or institutionalized probably only in the Edo period and made the cornerstone of the Meiji legal family system; and which certainly was not also the only type of family organization in earlier times, and on the other hand the more analytical orientations which guided the construction of family relations, cutting across several types of family organisation.

The concrete forms of family varied greatly even in the Edo period — and certainly earlier — between regions and classes. Indeed, in several regions the older clan-like organization continued to be prevalent through the middle ages — as was the case also in several sectors of the lower strata. It seems however that many of the more general principles and orientations analyzed above have been of wider importance in structuring family relations in many sectors of Japanese society. One of the most important outcomes of all these characteristics of the *ie* has been the relatively high degree of availability of free resources within the family; the relative ease with which such resources have been mobilized within the family and used in directions which seemed appropriate to its leaders — and have often been redirected into other non-kinship groups which were yet organized to principles which have regulated the family structure. It is these features of the Japanese social structure which make up the "yemoto system", a term denoting, according to Francis X. Hsu, kinship-like groups or a group or setting which, according to him, constitutes the basic core of Japanese social structure.

As Jane Bachnik has recently (private communication) put it, especially with respect to the contemporary scene, "The ie itself can be viewed as a contextualized locus with permeable boundaries that is closely connected by a network of ties beyond itself (which are part of its organization). These ties are the focus of the organization for the members, and this kind of a focal organization connected with its ties is actually the model for the large industrial groupings of the keiretsu and kigyo shudan (vertical and horizontal groupings)."

It is these basic characteristics of the family and kinship settings — above all perhaps indeed the widespread practice of adoption which entailed the total transformation of the adopted person into the household and ancestry of the adoptee -- that have limited the "self-closure" of particularistic family and kin groups, and made them open to permeation by "outside," more "central" forces, by the center or centers. But at the same time society and its center or centers

have been continually defined in kinship symbols and legitimized in "internal" terms, in terms of their own existence, and not in some terms beyond them. Hence the family and kinship units have been open to such permeation by almost *any* power which was ultimately legitimated by the "familistic" social order ultimately symbolized by the figure or trope of the emperor, or of the collectivity. One manifestation of this openness, defined in terms of loyalty to any occupant of the respective center, is the specification in Japanese — as distinct from Chinese — neo-Confucianism of the primacy of the loyalty to one's lord as against one's father.

It was this combination of the openness of the family unit to outside forces and the fact that these forces were constructed in terms of wider kinship symbolism that explain the fact that the wider forces which impinged on the family and permeated it were themselves constructed and legitimated in terms of wider family and kinship symbolism. There developed the tendency, so strong in many sectors of Japanese society, to channel the very intensive changes that have taken place in different arenas, and the very strong achievement orientations connected with them, in the direction of the reconstruction of contexts defined in sacral, primordial or cultural terms and symbols, often in a kinship-like, "iemoto" structure.

This tendency to openness and predisposition to change together with the channelling of such change in the reconstruction of contexts defined in primordial natural or sacral terms has been reinforced in Japanese society by yet another central aspect of Japanese social organization. This has been the relative — obviously only relative — looseness of the relations between power, wealth, and status within any given setting or context, above all the relatively flexible way in which the relations between authority, power and wealth have been structured.

It is the special mode of status incongruence which has also developed in Japanese society in the early period of the formative stage of state crystallization, of the bifurcation between the emperor and the military leader, later the shogun, between power and authority, that has probably been of crucial importance in generating the strong predisposition to change to be found in large sectors of Japanese society, and in shaping the process of change within that society. The flexibility built into this pattern when connected with the family and kinship structure have created very wide institutional "empty spaces," i.e. spaces the concrete contents of which are not predetermined, which can be filled in different directions. It has provided also very strong incentives and created many structural opportunities for change. The combination of such relative disassociation between status, power, authority and wealth, and of a relatively decentralized pattern of political rule, has generated continuous processes of ecological, economic

and social mobility, and a wide range of possible combinations between them — thus creating continuous possibilities of institutional innovation. But at the same time the channelling of such innovations has been guided by orientation to the prestige vested in the center, and such prestige has usually been defined in terms of the basic symbolism of the center with its strong primordial-sacral and collective national components, with a very strong kinship symbolism, most fully epitomized in the symbolism of the Emperor.

This centrality of the emperor figure can be seen for instance in the fact that the specific pattern of ancestor worship that has developed in Japan, especially in modern times, especially by the Meiji state, but building on earlier dispositions, has promulgated the theme or idea that the imperial ancestor worship encompasses, to a very large extent, the ancestor worship of different households — very much in line with the basic characteristics of adoption in Japan. As the teachers manuals of history of 1920 stated: "Amaterasu Omikami is not only the ancestor of the Imperial House, but also of all Japanese."

In this context, of crucial importance is the fact that the Emperor symbolism entails, as R.N. Bellah and Shigeru Matsumoto[2] have pointed out, a very strong maternal grounding of authority. To follow Bellah:

"... But of course the emphasis on the feminine side is not something recently discovered by social scientists. Who is the most important figure in Japanese mythology? Of course the sun-goddess, Amaterasu ō mikami. Not only is she female but, unlike some more Amazonian types in other mythologies, her influence is exercised in a very feminine way. She is no patriarchal despot like Jehovah. She is often portrayed as confused; she relies on the advice of her counselors; she asks the will of higher gods through divination. She is often shown as relatively weak and defenseless, for example, as compared to the willful Susa no o no mikoto. She is a peacemaker, conciliator, mediator, not a despot.

"It is my contention that through Amaterasu we can understand the emperor in Japanese ideology, the very emperor who is the focus of the whole austere Confucian family-state unit."

"... But not only was there a base in the family (the mother) which provided emotional security for breaking with all traditional identifications of status and occupation, there was also an external base, namely the emperor. All kinds of aggressive and innovative behavior could be legitimated if it were for the sake of the emperor..."

"... The emperor, then, both in recent times and in the far distant past,

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2 S. Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga, 1730-1801*, Harvard East Asian Series, No.44, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1970.

has been primarily an emotional point of reference. He stands for no policy, no rules, no institution and no constitution. The men who rule and who build institutions may come and go. The imperial house is unaffected. This pattern has had the function of providing what Maruyama has called an empty envelope or empty bag. Anything can go in — there is almost infinite receptiveness and flexibility — yet also a stable point of reference unrelated to the particular cultural content of the moment. The difficulty is that this pattern makes it extremely difficult to establish higher order universalistic cultural controls..." [3]

It is this mode of grounding of authority that generates the combination of the openness of the family to outside, society-wide force which constitute the basis of extensions of trust beyond the family, with the couching of such extension in broader, generalized family and kinship terms and symbols, in a "iemoto" pattern, with very strong expressive components and not in terms of criteria beyond such kinship symbols. The crux of these processes is the generation of *generalized particularistic trust.*

## V

It is indeed the continual construction and reconstruction of *generalized particularistic trust* that constitutes the crux of the specific dynamics that developed in Japanese society.

Such trust is a generalized trust, yet defined in broad particularistic terms, which is close to but not identical with R.N. Bellah's generalised particularism.[4] This trust is not confined to narrow settings. It is generalized through the continual extension between many different settings or situations, but such generalization is not effected in universalistic terms, but rather through continually changing particularistic ones.

Such construction and reconstruction of generalized particularistic trust can be seen in the transitions from one setting to another, especially from the indulgent familial setting to the school, which do not, of crucial importance here, entail a total rupture between the solidarity and trust generated within the family and the outside, "achievement oriented" society. Rather, such transitions entail a combination of the emphasis on achievement together with the extension of trust generated in the family to a broader solidarity setting in which symbols of family and community are strongly emphasized. Such extension of trust is also very

3 R.N. Bellah, "The Japanese Emperor as a Mother Figure. Some Preliminary Notes", paper presented at the Colloquium of the Center for Japanese Studies and Korean Studies, 11 October 1967.

4 R.N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion. The Values of Pre-Industrial Japan*, Glencoe III., The Free Press, 1957.

closely connected with the construction of new spaces and contexts, structured according to the axes of omote and ura, tatemae and honne, soto and uchi — among them outlets for various forms of expressive behavior, ranging from the "small pleasures" of life to often inhibited sexual and aggressive drives, as well as very delicate aesthetic sensibilities.

Such reconstruction and broadening of the range of trust in terms of the extension of primordial, sacral and ascriptive — not transcendental — criteria, is closely connected with an emphasis on achievement set within expressive and solidary settings defined in these terms, and on the movement between the contexts of interaction defined in the dualistic terms of "tatemae and honne," "uchi and soto" and "omote and ura." Such reconstruction makes the extension of trust seem to flow naturally from one setting to another, from one context to another — seemingly unquestioned. Trust is here conceived as embedded in such settings, not as being conditional on adherence to some principles which are beyond these settings. It is, as we have already noted above, self-referential. This reconstruction of trust bears a very close similarity to the strong emphasis on finding transcendence in the rules of form — an emphasis which at the same time allows a very large scope for innovation in contents.

The result of the central importance of the continuous extension of trust from one solidary setting to another is, as Raymond Grew put it (personal communication), "a universal expectation that the behavior of others will be predictable, which reinforces the emphasis upon social form and also what has often been described as a pressure for conformity and an anti-individualistic quality. You can only trust what you know and expect. Recognizing that, the Japanese tend to present innovations in terms of continuity, individual contributions as expressions of the group..."

## VI

The potentiality for such extension of particularistic trust, for the continual reproduction of generalized particularistic trust, is given or generated in the various processes analyzed above with their historical roots in the specific pattern of the disintegration of the clan society; the confrontation between the two societies; the crystallization of the distinct characteristics of family structure and kin symbolism analyzed above.

But the continual construction and reconstruction of such generalized particularistic trust especially in complex, including of course modern, settings, is not automatically given or assured by the existence of these conditions. Indeed the very possibility of the reproduction of these conditions themselves and of the

continual reconstruction of generalized particularistic trust is contingent on the development and continuity of specific patterns of interaction between different social actors and sectors of the society, especially between different elite and sub-elite groups and broader sectors of the society.

The special characteristics of such processes of interaction and exchange which tended to develop in large sectors of Japanese society lies in the nature of the resources in the modes in which the basic resources — power, trust, prestige, information and instrumental resources — are combined in these processes. The special characteristic of this combination is the prevalence, in most patterns of exchange or social interaction, in many sectors of Japanese society, of a certain type of package deals in which solidarity, power and instrumental resources are continuously interwoven and organized in relatively enduring contexts, oriented to long term interaction. Unlike in many other, especially modern, societies, these different types of resources are not organized in separate *ad hoc* discrete activities or within organizational frameworks which are then connected through such formal frameworks as legal agencies, bureaucracies, or the impersonal market.

The major characteristic of these patterns of exchange which has been coined by Murakami and Rohlen, following Peter Blau's nomenclature, as "social exchange" is the continuous combination of various packages of resources under the canopy of long-range trust. Such packages of resources are channelled through the numerous chains of networks characteristic of Japanese society — and through the continual transmission of information within them.

This mode of interaction or of exchange is closely related to the far-reaching limitation on the tendencies to congruence between the different dimensions of status, and the concomitant limitations of the degree to which the respective resources — wealth, power and status — can be converted into one another.

These patterns of interaction have been effected in the numerous closely interwoven, very dense networks which characterize Japanese society. It is these dense networks that contribute, as Michael Hechter put it, to the very high level of mutual visibility to which most Japanese are exposed in most arenas of their life — in school, family, work place, neighborhood or leisure time activities. It is this high level of visibility which is so closely related to the repressive aspect of the modes of regulation in Japanese life that constitutes the other side of the interaction and trust relations analyzed above.

Many of these patterns of interaction can of course also be found in other societies - but not to the same extent as in Japan where they became hegemonic, in which they are prevalent in many arenas of social interaction in Japan, among them in the special pattern of patron-client relations.

## VII

These patterns of interaction and exchange have been closely related with the modes of control exercised by the major elites and subelites in Japanese society in their interaction with broader sectors of society.

One important component of such processes of control and regulation is the relatively (indeed only — and very — relatively) smaller scope of the coercion employed by the elites as compared to parallel situations in other societies. Coercion has been employed by the elites in Japan, as in all other societies, in order to resolve conflicts in the direction most convenient to them. In the modern period in Japan, as in all modern societies, the ruling groups have employed various means of repression and suppression — and to this very day the Japanese police suffers from the negative image and reputation they have inherited in the post-Meiji period. In most periods of Japanese history — even in those characterized by intensive strife and violent conflicts — the coercive measures employed by different elites have usually been closely interwoven with other modes of social control, with some distinct characteristics.

In Japan, these processes of repression have usually combined — albeit in different measures in different periods — with the tendency to leave some living space to the loser, or at least to some losers. Even if individual losers were executed, the groups with which they were connected were left some space, and were strongly interwoven with the less formal processes of control analyzed above. Even the most dramatic, conflictual changes in Japanese history, in which there was much bloodshed and many losers — leaders of rebellions of different faction like for instance Etō Shinpei, a Meiji leader who led a rebellion in 1874 and was executed, did not give rise to "regimes of terror."

Closely related to this mode of repression and regulation have been the continuous restructuring, by various influentials, gate keepers and elites, of networks, markets and of status hierarchies, together with a certain mode of responsiveness to the demands made by different groups, and the cooptation of different echelons onto middle and sometimes even higher rungs of the vertical hierarchies. Such restructuring of networks and markets has often been the result of the many policies promulgated in different periods of Japanese history which we have analyzed above and to which we shall turn shortly again. Such restructuring of networks and markets and of status hierarchies has been closely related to the dissociation between status and wealth (evident for instance in the lack of clear lines of promotion within departments of industries or firms).

One of the most important aspects of this process is the fact that the modes of regulation employed by the elites and influentials are basically very

similar to those prevalent within families. In other words it is not just the elites and influentials who constitute the major agency through which institutional formations are crystallized. Rather it is the continual interaction between them and the broader sectors that constitutes such agency.

The engagement in these patterns of interaction and of regulation does not mean, of course, that force, coercion and repression did not play an important role in the reproduction and reconstruction of the basic features of the institutional formations in Japan. It does not mean that no competition or conflicts develop between different groups in Japanese society and that no coercion is used by the elites to regulate or quell conflicts. What our analysis implies is that it is only in so far as force, coercion and repression were interwoven with these premises of interaction — and such interweaving greatly influenced the modes of coercion — that they were able to renegotiate and reconstruct these institutional patterns. Or in other words our analysis implies that competitions and conflict are regulated in many situations in Japan in a distinct way. Even when confrontational situations develop out of such conflicts, it is the re-establishment of trust, of a certain level of predictability within the prevalent basic premises of interaction — even if some of its terms are changed — that often constitutes a major objective of the contestants; and it is the ability to restructure the networks and trust under conditions of intensive change that constitutes the major challenge for the elites and influentials.

## VIII

These patterns of interaction and control have been closely related to the basic characteristics of the major elites and influentials, and their major coalitions — and counter-coalitions — and the modes of reflexivity that seem to have been predominant in different — even if not all — sectors of Japanese society, at least from the Kamakura period.

Such coalitions have been composed of many and varying actors — and their exact composition has naturally varied from place to place and from period to period. The most important among these have been the "functional" elites — political, military, economic, and cultural-religious — as well as representatives of the family, village, feudal or regional sectors, or in modern times different economic and bureaucratic actors.

Yet some common characteristics of these coalitions can be identified in most periods of Japanese history and most sectors of Japanese society. The most important characteristic of these elites, influentials, counter-elites and of their major coalitions has been their embedment in groups and settings mainly defined in

primordial, ascriptive, sacral, natural and often hierarchical terms, rather than in terms of specialized functional or strong universalistic criteria of social attributes. At the same time such coalitions have evinced a great openness, a strong tendency to coopt new members and to extend their membership and arenas of activities. They have usually been constructed and effected through vertical rather than horizontal ties and loyalties through the very numerous networks, even if this fact has not necessarily negated the existence and consciousness of such horizontal divisions within many sectors of Japanese society. Moreover these concrete coalitions have often been shifting, in the concrete composition of their membership, between different contexts.

At the same time, the members of different subgroups or networks within any such coalition have not been granted autonomous access to the centers of power within them, just as the members of different sectors of Japanese society have not generally possessed independent access to the centers of collectivities in which they have participated. The groups have themselves been supervised by their hierarchical superiors — a strong overlord, the shogun, and in rare cases by the emperor.

These characteristics of the major coalitions and counter-coalitions and the tendency to the extension of membership beyond the nuclear family are very close, even if not entirely identical, to those of the "iemoto" pattern analyzed by Francis X. Hsu, or to those of the "ie" society or organization, as defined by Murakami, Sato and Kumon or to the closely related contextual model analyzed by Hamaguchi and associates — the model of social organization they see as having been predominant in Japan from the early medieval period with the very strong emphasis on interlocking networks organized in multiple vertical arrangements.

The different specialized activities that have developed in these coalitions — economic, cultural or religious — have also often been combined with strong achievement orientations, but these have ultimately been oriented to broader contextual settings and were imbued with strong expressive dimensions and solidary components.

Closely related to the characteristics of these coalitions has been the relative weakness within each such setting and in between different settings, of autonomous cultural elites. Many cultural actors — priests, monks, scholars, and the like, and in the modern age, specialists and scientists — have participated in such coalitions. But with very few exceptions their participation has been defined in primordial sacral-liturgical or natural terms; in terms of achievement set within such settings and of the social obligations according to which these coalitions have been structured. Only secondarily has such participation been struc-

tured according to any distinct, autonomous criteria rooted in or related to "functional needs" or to distinct definitions of the arenas of cultural specialization in which they were active. Or, in other words, while many special social spaces and frameworks in which the specialized cultural activities have been undertaken have been continuously constituted and reconstructed, the overall cultural arenas have not been defined as distinct ones, autonomous from the broader social sectors.

Accordingly, the cultural religious and intellectual elites, while often engaged in very sophisticated cultural activities and discourse, have evinced little autonomy in the social and political realm, i.e., as actors upholding values and orientations not embedded in existing social frameworks, but enunciated and articulated by them, and according to which they would be recruited.

Yet at the same time the great openness of many such coalitions to new members, as well as their capacity to shift between different contexts, also explains the possibility of the creation of new spaces and of the ability for many people to move between the different spaces — so long as the activities undertaken in these spaces do not directly impinge on the centers of the respective coalitions or enter into a confrontational stance with them.

It is this embedment of the various specialized and above all of the cultural elites in broader social settings, defined in primordial, sacral and often hierarchical terms, that has made it very difficult, as can be seen in the mode of "Japanization" of Confucianism and Buddhism, as well as of Western influences analyzed above, for universalistic criteria based on a transcendental vision, stressing the existence of a chasm between the transcendental and mundane orders, or on functional specialization, to become predominant in the major arenas of action. Such orientations and criteria have tended to become subsumed under the various contextual ones.

This embedment of the cultural elites in prevalent social settings or contexts, their ensuing self-referentiality, to use Murakami's expression — hermeneutical reflexivity — has made it also, as can be seen in the numerous discussions of various rebellions in the last years of the Tokugawa regime which led to the Meiji restoration, difficult for them to become connected with other rebellious groups, or with various national or religious elites. The absence or weakness of such actors could be seen in the process of the Meiji Restoration, where no such groups — in comparison with the European, Russian, and Chinese revolutions — have played an independent, formative role. But at the same time it is those coalitions of elites — especially the willingness of elites and influentials to incorporate new actors within the existing coalitions and networks, and the parallel continual development of new spaces — that have facilitated the construction

and extension of generalized yet particularistic trust.

## IX

It is such extension of the range of particularistic trust and the grounding of such extension in the combination of the modes of regulation and control and modes of interaction and exchange analyzed above and represented in continuous kinship-family symbolism, with its strong maternal components, and in hermeneutical reflexivity, that provide the crucial key for understanding the dynamics of social interaction in Japanese society. It is this activation of such extension of trust that explains the relative success of the channelling of the strong and active predispositions to change that have developed in Japanese society in the "contextual" direction, i.e., the specific patterns of change and continuity that have developed in Japan and which we have analyzed above.

But such reproduction and the success of these modes of regulation of the various protests, of changes under the impact of endogenous and exogenous forces in these directions has not been given naturally — is indeed never given naturally. It has been contingent on the continual interaction between elites, influentials and broader sectors of society according to the specific modes of exchange and of regulation analyzed above.

Such linkages of trust may indeed break down. When these patterns of control and interaction have broken down — as was the case in many situations of crisis (as for instance during the students' outbreaks in the sixties or in some of the cases of status conflict analyzed by Susan Pharr, or in cases of mental breakdown or intensive conflict) — an unregulated anomic situation, often with great potentialities for aggression, has arisen. In other cases the breakdown of the ability to move between different contexts and to construct new contexts may give rise to the dissolution of groups or organizations.[20]

Significantly, such breakdown is usually connected with the quest to reestablish such linkages, even if in a new form, which may or may not be reestablished. When reestablished, whether through old or new networks — although quite often such linkages may not be reestablished — it is the extensions of trust and solidarity and their symbols that are crucial in them. But the success of such reestablishment of linkages is not automatic or continuously reflexive; it may break down. It may especially break down when the overall environment in which any concrete institutional patterns which had crystallized at a certain moment changes drastically. The possibility of such breakdown in such situations may be also intensified because of the seeming lack of access to symbolic resources beyond the given social nexus, beyond the particularistic — even

if generalized — trust. This is probably one of the most important challenges facing contemporary Japan.